

### What Can Be Done Now— and Later

Experience indicates that the best results may be obtained by dividing the project into two parts—one a long-range program of teacher training, with the ultimate aim of incorporating essential materials of social and mental hygiene and parenthood education into the school curriculum (an integrated program starting with the first grade); and the other concerned with the things that should be done immediately. First should come the establishment of more community study groups for parents and older young people, in order to give help with their most pressing problems. Then must come the establishment of more courses in family life in our secondary schools and colleges. These courses should not be confined to the home economics departments, as is often the case, but should be so planned that boys as well as girls can profit by the instruction without damage to the masculine ego.

By learning to live in harmony with our families, we learn to live with peo-

ple in the larger community and in the world. At present, the development of the program is handicapped by a shortage of trained workers; but this difficulty should only serve to show us the need for establishing more training centers and make us redouble our efforts, since a beginning must be made. Family life education, superimposed on a sound basic education program which should include practical courses in government administration, might well turn our politicians of twenty years from now into real statesmen.

American boys and girls in the next generation, as never before, should take the leadership in the formation of international policy. If we can help them now to a full development of their capabilities, if we can help them develop the strength, the wisdom, the courage, and the compassion that we wish for them, it is possible that they may really create that better world of which we dream. But if we hope to do it for our children we must start with ourselves, and we should get busy at once. It's a big job, and there is little time.

## *A Rural Community Goes to School*—

CARL F. BROWN

Carl F. Brown, College of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville, reports some of the ways in which teachers and parents in a consolidated rural school share common responsibilities for the welfare of their children.

FIVE YEARS AGO a new principal came to the consolidated rural school which enrolls 631 pupils from the kindergarten through the twelfth grade.

Some of the children live in the small community in which the school is located, but most of the children come on school busses from their rural homes.

The principal had developed a philosophy which made it an important part of his planning to bring the school and the parents into a close association for the betterment of the school and the community. He found a teaching staff which welcomed the leadership he was prepared to give. Together they began to evaluate their school program with the needs of the community in mind, and to investigate the areas in which the school could make a better contribution to the people it served. The growth has been gradual. The community now takes considerable pride in the fact that the parents and teachers have learned to work together for a better place in which children can grow up and in a better school in which the children learn the things the community feels they should know. This report of some of the ways in which teachers and parents share their common responsibilities indicates how the program has been carried forward.

### **School-Community Health**

Health in this community is menaced by the large incidence of hookworm. The teachers felt that the entire community should study the health problems and take effective measures for the improvement of health. The aid of the community leaders and of agencies already in existence was solicited and the result was the establishment of a Health Council. Represented on the Council are the Woman's Club, the Parent-Teacher Association, the local civic club, the County Health Department, the teachers, the visiting teacher, the secondary teachers, and students elected from grades nine through twelve. The school faculty has worked with the

Health Council in outlining the chief objectives for each year for the improvement of health. Much attention has been directed to the methods of preventing the spread of hookworm infection and for the effective treatment of those already infected. Considerable improvement has been noted, though much remains to be done. Other health areas which have been emphasized are the giving of necessary immunizations and booster shots, making hemoglobin tests, making dental examinations and corrections, making audiometer tests, and giving tests for malaria.

The teaching of health is no longer a purely academic matter. It has taken on a practical significance because of the emphasis given to it by the parents of the children and by the entire community. Local resource persons have been brought into the classrooms to aid in the study of health. The physical education department has secured the cooperation of the local physician and the County Health Department in giving a complete physical examination to each child each school year.

A need was felt for a health clinic building and the students of the high school renovated an old store building with materials furnished by the community. Their work was supervised by the teachers of agriculture. Thus, the health needs of the community are being attacked, and the health and industrial arts areas of the school curriculum are taking on a practical aspect.

### **Recreation Program**

There was a realization that the community offered little in the way of wholesome recreation for the children, youth, and adults. A Recreation Council

was formed to study this problem. Represented on the Council are persons elected from each local church, each local club, the County Recreation Unit, the teachers, and one student from each of grades ten, eleven, and twelve. The work of this Council has resulted in the establishment of a community fun night held at the school each Friday night. Leadership from the community and the teaching staff has assured a planned program including fun for all ages. The industrial arts shop and the vocational agriculture shops are open to adults and young people. The athletic equipment and facilities are made available for athletic events. The high school girls, under the direction of the teacher of home economics, operate a nursery for the small children of parents who participate in this program and the other meetings scheduled at the school.

Two teachers are employed by the Recreation Council to direct a planned program for the summer months. The school shops are open to young people and adults. The library, which is always open to the community, is available for a reading period; and there is a playground schedule during which the athletic equipment of the school is used. Swimming is taught for six weeks, and driver education is taught to those who qualify.

Some parents come to the school during the club periods and sponsor clubs dealing with dramatics and speech, hobbies, and other areas in which they are competent.

This cooperation between the school and the community led a seventh grade to center its study for a period on "Knowing Your Community." Local resources were used and the children

either visited or were visited by representatives of the major activities of the area.

### Reporting Student Progress

Dissatisfaction was expressed over the methods used by the school in evaluating student progress and in reporting that progress to the parents. The room parents, in their regular meetings, discussed this problem and small committees were appointed to make a further study. This study resulted in the formation of a School Committee on Reports composed of teachers, one parent from each room, and students from the eleventh and twelfth grades.

Report forms from many sections of the country were gathered and studied. Recommendations were made for the improvement of the report forms then in use, and the changes were put into effect. After the first report to parents using the new forms was made, a public meeting was conducted by the Woman's Club to evaluate the new forms. The suggestions for the improvement of these forms were gladly accepted by the School Committee on Reports which is anxious to make the reports to parents more meaningful.

A discussion in the senior class on how these changes took place led them to undertake a study of "How Changes Are Made in America."

### School Lunchroom Program

A very effective lunchroom program is operated by the school. Planning is done by the Lunchroom Committee composed of representatives of the local clubs, the PTA, and the lunchroom committee of the Student Council. Their work is closely related to the ef-

forts to improve health in the community. The boys studying vocational agriculture grow vegetables for use in the school lunchroom. Surpluses are prepared and canned by the school cannery under the guidance of the vocational agriculture and the home economics departments. Surpluses from the community which cannot find a ready market are donated to the school, and parents assist in the canning of such surpluses of meats and vegetables for use in the lunchroom.

### Adult Programs

This rural school believes that the community should participate in the planning of all of the activities under the direction of the school, but it also believes that the school should serve the community. Some of this service is indirect, as shown in the discussion above, and some of it is a direct service to the adults of the area.

A survey was made to determine the individuals who, for various reasons, failed to graduate from high school. For those who were close to graduation when it became necessary for them to leave school, a program has been developed which will permit them to gain enough credit for graduation. Much of this work is of a practical nature. Such courses include, as laboratory experience, the work in which the individuals are engaged. A busy mother may take a course in child care, studying the basic materials and showing improvement in her own methods of child care. A person who needs typing ability in his work may take a course in typing, with his business becoming the laboratory experience for his work. Courses for adults in home economics involve such things

as improvement in home decoration, renovation of furnishings, making of slip covers, and a study of foods.

The school also offers courses for adults in first aid, industrial arts courses in repair of farm equipment, agriculture courses in better methods of farming and gardening, selection and grading of seeds, care of laying flock, animal husbandry and care, and disease control for plants and animals. The Veterans' Vocational Program is also taught at the school each week. The shops, cannery, and other facilities of the school are available when needed by adults.

### Techniques of the Program

The above description of some aspects of the program in this rural school indicates some of the ways in which parents and teachers can work together. In discussing the program the principal stated, "We don't do anything without the parents." The organization of community councils in the areas of health and recreation was one way of bringing about the cooperation desired. Another was to get the aid of parents in the study and solution of school problems such as in the revision of reports of pupil progress. The parents, when aware of the needs of the school, gave freely of their time and means as shown by the donation and preparation of produce for use in the lunchroom. The school frequently called upon the people and other resources of the community in the study of curricular areas where the parents could make a distinct contribution. One further point is that the school attempted to serve the community with its adult classes and the special services rendered by its specialists in agriculture and home economics.

The principal of the school seems to have furnished the leadership in getting the program started. He states that it would have been impossible without the cooperation of the entire teaching staff and the readiness for such a program in the community. There were agencies already at work within the community, but his leadership was used to bring these agencies together for a common purpose rather than to have each agency work alone for the furtherance of its objectives. The principal indicates that throughout the program an effort has been made to develop local leadership, and he feels that the work which has been started would continue without him.

An effort is made to have definite objectives in mind and to evaluate progress continually. A record of accomplishments is kept and additional needs are

always being noted. A letter goes from the school to the parents and other interested people twice each month. This letter indicates the progress in the accomplishment of the objectives accepted at the beginning of the school year, solicits the better understanding and cooperation of the patrons of the school, and indicates additional needs.

There has been much evidence that the parents and teachers are working together for the betterment of the school and the community. The program has resulted in the improvement of the community, the development of a school curriculum which is more nearly based upon the needs of the children, and a better understanding of some of the processes of democracy in America. What has been accomplished in this community could be repeated in many rural areas.

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