

as a practical matter only a small proportion of the public will be able to participate in the formation of educational programs and most educational policies, there is an obligation to keep the entire public informed about the purposes and work of the schools. All appropriate media of communication should be used. The program should be adapted to the needs of various community groups. Visits by parents and other citizens to the schools and cooperative programs with other official and civic agencies illustrate valuable school-community relationships. School boards and school staffs should be especially diligent to study the community and to interpret the community to the school. The programs of the school should serve both individual pupils and the community. These practices will hasten community acceptance of the contributions of the professional educator.

### Progress Is Assured

The tempo of progress in school-community relationships is uneven. At one moment, professionals and the laymen who really believe in public education may forge ahead in serving children; at the next moment, there may be reaction, with those who believe education is less important eager to exploit its place close to the people in order to restrict unreasonably its services to children. The pendulum is never still. Educational progress once made, however, if it is true progress in terms of the welfare of pupils, is seldom lost for very long in our country. As a people, we believe in education as the hope of the future, and we understand how our unique system of universal education is the first essential of our democratic freedoms. Upon such belief and understandings the future of public education largely depends.

## *Education for Better Living* \_\_\_\_\_

HELEN CREASY HUNTER

Helen Creasy Hunter suggests that we look at our individual and national shortcomings if we are to help today's boys and girls become better citizens in a better world. She outlines briefly what North Carolina is doing to develop mentally healthy and socially adjusted children. Mrs. Hunter, of Charlotte, N.C., is vice president of the North Carolina Family Life Council, chairman of the state Mental Health Council, and immediate past president of the N. C. Congress of Parents and Teachers.

WE WERE STARTLED when Dr. Brock Chisholm, director of the World Health Organization, advised us to take a new look at our children and at the way they are developing. "For," he

warned, "if we are not very careful, and very conscientious, there is grave danger that our children may turn out to be the same kind of people we are! And nothing could be more disastrous than

that." Whereupon he invited our consideration of some of our most unfortunate and objectionable individual and national shortcomings.

### Creating Tomorrow's Leaders

This year, when the attention of those who are interested in child welfare is focused on preparations for the Mid-century White House Conference on Children and Youth, it becomes increasingly obvious that many of us have taken Dr. Chisholm's advice seriously and are not completely happy over the result of our observations. Not only have we taken a good look at our children but we have also attempted to look at ourselves and our generation objectively—and have been gravely concerned at the things we have seen.

A consideration of the mounting tension of modern living with its accompanying increase in the percentage of mental breakdown, recognition of our ineptness in handling our own governmental concerns, our bungling relations with other countries, our reluctance to accept new patterns of thought, and our inability to cope with the problems of a jet-propelled social order have forced us to study our backgrounds for an understanding of our failures. What we have found makes us realize that we must surely plan in order that our children may not be handicapped as we are, that they may enter upon their adult responsibilities well equipped to take leadership in the future. *The hope lies in education.*

### A Joint Responsibility

The timeless partnership of parent and teacher assumes, therefore, a new significance and a new importance. The

traditional pattern of mutual helpfulness should, of course, be continued. Teachers need to have specific knowledge of the homes and backgrounds of their pupils; and parents must know and understand the school program in order that they may support it and interpret it to the community, especially in matters of legislation and finance. The partnership now, however, must be deepened and broadened.

Parents and teachers agree that they have not completely fulfilled their obligation to the children entrusted to their care until they have given each one of them an opportunity to develop his ability to the fullest: mentally, spiritually, physically, socially, and emotionally. This is not a job that can be done by either alone; it is a joint responsibility and a joint privilege. They must plan and work together for the utilization of all community health, welfare, religious, recreational, and social resources.

Certainly the parent's concept of his own job has broadened considerably in the last decade. Today we recognize our deficiencies, and we are attempting to do something about them so that our children may profit by our efforts and our mistakes. This is one of the most encouraging signs of the times.

### Mentally Healthy Children

Of fundamental concern, it seems to me, is the need for recognizing the importance of the mental hygiene approach. We are all willing to grant that it is impossible to expect Bobby to learn very much from an explanation of an arithmetic problem if he has remained awake half the night before, terrified after hearing his parents bemoan their

financial status. But how many of us do anything about it? How many parents, immersed in their own troubles, take time to wonder what effect their airing has on Bobby? And how many teachers, pressed by the need for instructing forty other Bobbys, have the time or understanding to help one little boy regain his sense of security? Yet much can be done if the problem is attacked intelligently.

We know that much mental illness has its roots in childhood, and we know that we can never build a better world with citizens who are mentally ill. It is of primary importance, therefore, that our children be mentally healthy, well adjusted to their environment, and possessed of well-rounded personalities. We, as parents, should be as deeply concerned with this development of stable personalities as we are with the actual subject matter of the school curriculum.

#### **Personality Development at Home and School**

It is generally recognized that the two factors most markedly affecting personality development are the home and the school. Home attitudes must be of first importance. Since we have all come to believe the old saying that conduct is "caught" more easily than it is taught, we must recognize the importance of a good example. Certainly it has been demonstrated that personality traits are not accidents but are the direct result of cause and effect. Consequently, early deviations from normal behavior should be recognized and the cause corrected.

Under our present social system American children spend a large proportion of their waking hours in the

schoolroom. Many deviations necessarily first occur there. Since early recognition of difficulties is essential if help is to be given, it would seem that all of our teachers as well as all of our parents should be at least embryo mental hygienists. How many of us are prepared for such responsibility?

#### **What One State Is Doing**

North Carolina is one of the states that is making some attempt to meet this need. Officially, the State Departments of Public Instruction and Health are operating a Mental Hygiene Division as part of their School-Health Coordinating Service. The Director of this division attempts to act as a connecting link between the mental health resources of the state and the public school system. There has also been established within the State Department of Public Instruction a Division of Special Education; an effort is being made to secure a Visiting Teacher or School Social Work program; and two of the larger cities have the services of a Family Life Consultant, paid for jointly by federal, state, and local funds. But trained personnel are scarce, and money for this type of service is hard to wrest from a materialistic legislature. Official efforts will need a broad supporting base of sympathetic understanding and activity from the general public for some time to come if they are to achieve any notable success.

Last year the North Carolina Congress of Parents and Teachers became so concerned over the matter that it published a mental hygiene primer for the use of its members. Keeping in mind that one of the first important things in tackling this job was securing public in-

terest, even before attempting to interpret the problem, the title of the publication, "Is Your Child Happy?" attempts to slip up on the "blind side" of the potential reader by appealing to a fundamental personal interest. Having asked the question, the primer proceeds to expand the idea that a child who is mentally and physically healthy is a happy child. The subject matter, presented in question and answer form and attractively illustrated, is concerned with a discussion of some of the things that parents should expect and respect in the normal growth of their children, how to decide when a child needs mental hygiene guidance, and the place of the PTA in such a program. Helpful types of activity are outlined for both parent and teacher, and PTA members are urged to let their school administrators know that they want teachers with mental hygiene training.

The primer, prepared by a State Congress chairman, who is a parent member of the Board, is the second venture that the organization has made in this field. It is the companion piece to a school readiness publication, "School Is Fun for Boys and Girls," brought out some months previously and prepared by another State Congress chairman who is a teacher member on the Board. This was designed for use in connection with pre-school clinics and has proved the inspiration for many study groups. It starts with the question, "Is your child starting to school?" and seeks to point out how the parent can help him prepare for this exciting experience.

Although these publications are far from perfect, the effect of the use of the 50,000 copies already mailed from

the State Congress office, in response to direct requests, is easily discernible in the work of the North Carolina PTA and in the thinking of its members. Their preparation and use as joint projects of parents and teachers have proved to be a step in the right direction.

### Education for Family Living

Since we feel that the matter of home attitudes is of such vast importance, much reason for encouragement is seen in the recent forceful expression of interest in family life education. Today all over the country parents are asking for practical help with the problems of parenthood and family living. There is a growing insistence that some plan be worked out for an effective, over-all program that will help parents with their responsibilities to the members of the family and will help parents, teachers, social workers, and related agencies in their job of guiding young persons into physical and mental maturity and into emotional, social, and spiritual adulthood.

The object of such a program, of course, is to help boys and girls form more desirable personal and social habits of living and to help them gain a better understanding of the problems of family life—a program that will really guide them to the basic security necessary for confident living in a modern world. In many states some progress is being made, although the field has been barely scratched. Lay and education groups, working with social, religious, recreational, and health agencies, are gradually evolving a pattern from which some progress may result. The basic concerns of the PTA make it ideally fitted to spearhead such a program.

### 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.

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