

ward the achievement of a common goal. The school should cease to be an institution and become a little community.

Need to Preserve and Extend Democracy

Life in a democracy demands certain ways of learning together, working together, and living together. Co-operative and purposeful learning to meet the needs of good living is still in its infancy. Pupils do not have a part in determining or accepting the learning goals. They are not in the habit of directing their own learning enterprises or their own discussions. Growing persons need to have a part in

planning; they need to gather from time to time to share what they have done. They need to know how to give and take constructive criticism cheerfully. They need to learn to value the rights and perform the duties of a potential member of a free society. Living in school should be an apprenticeship to citizenship in a democracy.

In this discussion we have identified needs as they arise in self-adjustment, in everyday living, in group behavior, and in preserving a free state. To summarize, the needs of life are those things without which individual and group living is incomplete or imperfect. Life needs are, therefore, the essentials of good living in a free society.

Progress in Life Adjustment Education

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There is a growing recognition on the part of those who teach in our secondary schools that instructional programs must be geared to the life needs of the youth they serve. The Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Youth was appointed by the U. S. Commissioner of Education to encourage the development of functional programs for high school students. In this article J. Dan Hull, assistant director of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Schools, U. S. Office of Education, tells the story of the Commission.

"IN OUR HIGH SCHOOL out here in the state of Washington," the White Salmon superintendent said, "we have only 200 pupils, but twenty states and two foreign countries are represented in this



Long Beach (Calif.) Public Schools

group. We are doing our best to enroll and retain all youth of high school age in the district."

"And we are making real progress," he adds, "since we have convinced our pupils, teachers, and community leaders that unnecessary absences from school constitute a drain on our school finances. We're giving these kids an interesting program of learning experiences, teaching them how to get along with one another, preparing them to get and hold jobs, and helping them to understand and adjust to the social and economic problems in our community."

From the Middle West, the director of secondary education in the St. Paul, Minnesota, schools states: "Of the pupils who entered the sophomore class in September, 1946, eighty-two percent remained to be graduated from our high schools in 1949."

How did St. Paul do it? By studying individual pupils and providing tasks to meet the needs and abilities of each pupil even though it often meant individual teaching. St. Paul's teachers, supervisors, and administrators judge a pupil on how well he has learned to use his *native* ability, rather than on the average performance of the group.

These examples illustrate two of the guiding principles undergirding the work of the Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Youth: each school should attempt to enroll and retain all youth of the community; for each pupil, life adjustment education is an individual matter. The Commission believes that in each local school the program should be built upon the discovered needs of youth and of society.

The efforts of White Salmon and St. Paul are being duplicated in thou-

sands of schools from Maine to Texas, from California to New York. Actually, programs of life adjustment education have been increasing in number since the end of the first world war. *The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* in 1918 challenged alert teachers and administrators to relate school work to the life objectives of their pupils. Since then many similar reports and studies have pointed in the same direction. The present emphasis on improved and lengthened secondary school education stems mainly from the increasing recognition by our people that a complex industrialized society demands informed and active citizens.

Background of the Commission

The Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Youth exists to encourage action and to aid in conducting action programs. It believes that the time is long overdue for the translation of theory into practice. Because of the Commission's origin it represents a joint effort on the part of the leadership of vocational and general education to stimulate a broad all-inclusive attack on the problem of creating a more realistic and practical program of secondary education. The Commission, composed of one representative from each of nine national organizations of educators, was appointed by United States Commissioner of Education John W. Studebaker following a recommendation made by a conference of educational leaders in May, 1947, at Chicago.

This conference grew out of a resolution presented by Charles A. Prosser, former director of Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis, and unanimously

adopted by a group of vocational educators. The original resolution was as follows:

It is the belief of this conference that, with the aid of this report in final form, the vocational school of a community will be able better to prepare twenty percent of the youth of secondary school age for entrance upon desirable skilled occupations; and that the high school will continue to prepare another twenty percent for entrance to college. We do not believe that the remaining sixty percent of our youth of secondary school age will receive the life adjustment training they need and to which they are entitled as American citizens—unless and until the administrators of public education with the assistance of the vocational education leaders formulate a similar program for this group.

We therefore request the U. S. Commissioner of Education and the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education to call at some early date a conference or a series of regional conferences between an equal number of representatives of general and of vocational education—to consider this problem and to take such initial steps as may be found advisable for its solution.

After the organization of the Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Youth, the first question which the Commission faced was: "Should the Commission's efforts be concerned with all youth or with only the so-called sixty percent?" The label "sixty percent" had been given much point by the fact that over the nation approximately sixty percent of youth drop out of school before graduation. Dr. Prosser had used the words "sixty percent" to indicate approximately the portion of adults who are working at tasks for which they could have been given little specialized education. He was pointing to the need for education

for the common activities of life. Obviously youth in college preparatory courses and in vocational classes need life adjustment education just as other youth do. Therefore, the Commission decided to focus attention on the individual pupil and to avoid an emphasis on dividing American youth into separate and distinct groups.

How the Commission Works

The Commission is an advisory committee to the Divisions of Vocational Education and Elementary and Secondary Schools in the U. S. Office of Education. The Commission itself has no sharply defined pattern. It makes as few pronouncements as possible, but it urges that something be done about previous education statements, such as *What the High Schools Ought to Teach*,¹ *Education for All American Youth*,² and *Planning for American Youth*.³ These documents furnish the most promising leads to the why, what, and how of life adjustment education.

State-local cooperation

Both the Commission and the Office of Education believe that education in this country is and should remain a state and local function. The Commission, therefore, works only through state departments of education. It has urged the appointment in each state of a committee of representative laymen and educators to get state programs of

¹ *What the High Schools Ought to Teach*. Washington, D.C.: American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education, 1940.

² *Education for All American Youth*. Washington, D.C.: Educational Policies Commission, NEA, 1944.

³ *Planning for American Youth*. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, NEA, 1944.

life adjustment education under way. It suggests that each state committee select a few schools to cooperate in planned efforts to achieve the goals of an improved curriculum program. The Commission, in its turn, proposes to serve as a clearing house for information and materials, and for reporting effective practices.

More than one-third of the states have either appointed or designated state commissions on life adjustment education for youth. In Florida, Kansas, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia, state life adjustment education publications have been issued. A number of local school systems have also prepared publications. Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, and North Dakota have appointed cooperating schools. In New York a special committee of nineteen lay leaders advises the committee of educators working on life adjustment education problems.

Private aid

Since the Commission receives no grant from the Office of Education to carry on the program, it would have been completely without finances had it not been for private aid. The Sears Roebuck Foundation appropriated a sum to pay the expenses incurred by Commission members in attending meetings. The American Technical Society paid for the production of the popularly styled brochure, "High School—What's In It for Me?" and distributed thousands of single copies free to educators. Science Research Associates is paying for a similar brochure to be distributed to lay organizations.

Stimulating good practices

Originally only one member of the

Office of Education staff was assigned to serve the Commission. However, from the beginning other staff members have given time to life adjustment education. At the request of state departments of education and local school systems which have funds for the expenses of curriculum consultants, Office of Education staff members have visited educational meetings in many different states and explained the plans of the Commission.

Because of the lack of financial resources, the clearing house activities of the Commission are seriously handicapped. Wide circulation, however, has been given to a number of important publications: *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth*; *High School—What's In It for Me?*; *Getting State Programs of Life Adjustment Education Under Way*; and *Developing Life Adjustment Education in a Local School*. Many stories and articles have been prepared for newspapers and popular magazines. Information has been and will be provided for editors, staff members, and free-lance writers who are interested in making their own presentations.

It has been mentioned that neither the Office of Education nor the Commission has or wants controls over education in the United States. The only way, then, that either could develop a national action program is through a series of conferences and, through them, the building of consensus. Therefore, a number of conferences of educational and lay leaders have been held by the Commission in the development of its program. The largest, held in Washington in October, 1949, was attended by 224 educators from

thirty-two states, at their own expense. The most recent, called at the request of the superintendents of school systems in cities of more than 200,000 population, was held in Chicago in January, 1950.

The Illinois Program

The program in Illinois is an excellent example of the broadly based and comprehensive activity which the Commission has attempted to encourage. It was launched independently on September 1, 1947, as the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program, and has since been called also the Illinois Life Adjustment Education Program. It is sponsored by the State Department of Public Instruction in cooperation with colleges and universities, the Illinois Secondary School Principal's Association, and thirty-eight lay and professional groups. C. W. Sanford of the University of Illinois is the director.

Several bulletins and reports have been issued in connection with the Illinois program. One of them summarizes the results of four basic studies which have been carried on in local high schools. A holding-power study was conducted in seventy-six representative schools, a study of hidden tuition costs in seventy-nine, one on the extent and character of pupil participation in extra-class activities in thirteen, and a fourth on the adequacy of available guidance services in ninety-six schools. Follow-up studies are being conducted in ninety-seven schools.

Teams of consultants from the colleges, universities, State Department, and other high schools are aiding staffs in thirty-eight selected school systems

in attempting to improve the curriculum through seventy-three carefully planned projects. These projects are concerned with the improvement of existing courses, with enrichment in broad fields, with the development of common learnings courses, and with projects which cut across subject lines.

Hundreds of school administrators and teachers have attended one or more three-day workshops. Approximately 4,900 teachers and administrators from twenty-seven counties have attended the twenty-two county meetings. The extent of the general interest may be judged from the fact that the eight co-operating schools chosen for across-the-board curriculum development were not selected until more than 100 schools which had applied for these places had been personally visited by members of the state director's staff. The pervasiveness of the interest may be judged by the fact that requirements in teacher-education institutions are being cooperatively studied and revised.

Drop-Out Studies Lead to Curriculum Revision

Because there are many facets to the problems faced by local schools, it is easy to point to examples of practices in specific situations that are desirable and effective in certain respects. It is not so easy to find well-balanced programs that are desirable and effective in all respects. In any event, it is possible here to do little more than mention a few local examples.

In the public schools of Wilmington, Delaware, many changes and adjustments have developed from basic studies of pupils, the community, and the school itself. In a study of the pupils

who dropped out of Wilmington High School between September, 1945, and June, 1948, no significant difference was found between the IQ's of those who left school and the regular pupil population. During a period of two years, the staff surveyed all aspects of the city schools. In many school units community councils were developed. Building and city-wide child study clinics were conducted. Changes which have come from these systematic studies include greatly expanded guidance services, extensive programs of work experience, the adjustment of schedules to permit teacher conferences during school time, the introduction of core programs in several schools, and the development of parallel courses in English, science, and mathematics in grades eleven and twelve appropriate to the needs of all pupils.

Laymen Help Determine Goals

In many communities laymen have been involved in the determining of goals for the schools and in the planning of school programs. In Midland, Michigan, under the authority of the board of education, committees of educators and non-educators studied the community, the physical plant, and the educational offerings. Recommendations were made for enriching the high school program and extending it to include a community college. Although these recommendations meant increased financial expenditures, they were accepted by the community because community leaders had made them.

The self-survey provided a broad base for many improvements in the curriculum, including actual work ex-

perience for every business education student and systematic provisions in business education to meet the needs of four types of students: (1) the drop-out, (2) the graduating student who will work after completing high school, (3) the graduating student who plans to work while attending college, and (4) the business specialist.

Common Learnings Program

Life adjustment education is focused upon home membership, work, and citizenship. Related to these three major categories are the problems common to all high school youth, such as developing an effective personality, living healthfully and safely, managing personal finances wisely, and spending leisure time in a wholesome fashion. In a few schools (for example, in Lakeview, Illinois, and Minneapolis, Minesota) there are being developed common learnings programs through which common problems of all pupils are directly attacked. Beyond the common learnings, all regular and traditional courses are elective. In some senior high schools and in many junior high schools these problems are included in a core where they are related to subject matter. Often areas not treated adequately are grouped in a single course which may be called "social living." In many schools, staffs are seeking to include in traditionally organized courses more adequate treatment of areas related to these common problems of youth.

Family Living Study

Encouraged by Parents

In Moline, Illinois, both pupils and parents aided in identifying the needs

of pupils in the area of family living by checking a questionnaire designed by the teaching staff. The items in the questionnaire were classified under the categories of home duties, disagreements, courtesies, recreation, money, and friends. The responses of pupils compared with those of parents for each grade provided a sound basis for the planning of resource units. When some such procedure is followed it is very often apparent that parents, even more than teachers, are interested in an emphasis on life-like activities in the school.

Varying Approaches

In the Nott Terrace Senior High School of Schenectady, New York, a special class of twenty-five pupils with low IQ's has been guided through junior high school. When they entered senior high school, they were placed with one teacher for their work in science, history, and English where the program was adjusted to their needs and abilities. They carried work in regular classes in shop, homemaking, and physical education. They are now seniors in high school and will receive diplomas. They understand that they will not be admitted to college.

In Forrest Hills, New York, High School the staff justifies teacher-pupil planning and science education based upon the pressing problems of pupils by pointing to a remarkable record in winning state scholarships and national Science Talent Search awards. During the past four years, pupils interested in science have been identified while they were still in the elementary

schools. They have been placed in special science groups, given individual attention, and encouraged to work on their own problems. Records from a carefully controlled experiment revealed marked superiority for an experimental group.

At West Philadelphia Catholic Girls High School, there is a continual examining of the traditional courses of study in order to eliminate the least functional activities and replace them with more suitable activities. Three types of English classes have been developed: one for girls going on to college; one for those not planning for college; and one for the group of especially poor achievers. Personal and social problems are treated as an integral part of the English program.

The Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Youth urges the schools of the nation to capitalize on the great interest which exists in improving secondary school programs.

The Commission knows that real progress will be made by the staffs of local schools and not by members of national planning committees. The Commission would serve as a clearing house to coordinate worthwhile state and local efforts.

The secondary schools of the nation are moving toward functional education and education for all American youth. For those school staffs eager to get started or to move forward from their present positions, the Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Youth exists to provide a broad base for encouragement and a service of coordination.

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