Since the great majority of students in our schools will become parents and homemakers, many public schools are assuming responsibility to help them prepare for these important functions. Katharine Whiteside-Taylor, coordinator of Family Life Education in Long Beach, California, City College, describes the program developed in that city.

THE FAMILY is the most potent educator in the life of every child. We recognize this in providing as often as possible a foster family for children who have lost their own. There is really no adequate substitute for happy family living in promoting the individual's best development.

Families—Our Most Potent Educators

All parents, then, are educators in the deepest sense. As such, they need specific help and training for their job as much as other teachers. Since at least eighty percent of those now in school will become parents and homemakers, education for family living should be provided for all.

The last decade, ushered in by three outstanding volumes on education for family life,* has seen much growth in providing family life education for teenage students. Indeed, preparation for family life in this country has been provided by high school courses in social studies, home economics, personal problems, and core courses. Some schools have gone far in providing both the basic understandings and the skills needed for developing and maintaining a happy and constructive family life.

But at best, all this is only a beginning of what is needed in most communities. Even if many more high school people are having school experiences in this area, the great majority of those who are parents today still have missed it, in spite of a number of excellent parent education programs as far back as the 20's. Most grandparents, who often exert great influence in family life, also have missed it. And those who do not get to high school are denied help in this area since most elementary schools have meager programs which prepare specifically for guiding the families of the future.

The task ahead is great if more and more parents, present and future, are to develop families which are not only potent but excellent educators. When asked, "Where shall we start in our family life program?" a leading educator answered, "You must start with all generations at once. Nothing less will do the job." Community-wide programs, then, are the only adequate answer.

The importance of extending family

life education to more and more generations was fully recognized by the administrators of the public schools and City College of Long Beach, California, and plans for expanding an already vital program are being made in this rapidly growing city of nearly 300,000 population, twenty-five miles south of Los Angeles.

Underlying Philosophy

The expanded program of Family Life Education begun in January, 1948, is built upon the following underlying points of view:

► Family influence is of greatest importance. It is virtually unrivaled during the impressionable early years. Because of the strong emotional ties, it remains extremely important throughout childhood and youth and the rest of an individual's lifetime.

► The proportion of time spent at home, at least until high school years, is far greater than time spent elsewhere. (Out of the total 168 hours each week, the child spends only 30 to 35 hours in school.)

► Significant studies in many related fields indicate that what every individual becomes at maturity as marriage partner, parent, breadwinner, citizen, and contributor to our democracy, is determined more by the quality of his early family experience than by all other factors combined. The home is thus our most important educational institution in the formation of those character and personality traits which last throughout life.

► Furthermore, there is nothing fraught with greater potentialities for good or evil in the total adjustment of every adult than the quality of family living he enjoys. If bad, it will cause devastating suffering; if good, it will bring him continuing joy, releasing energies for constructive work.

► Since wholesome family living is so essential to the welfare of the individual and the nation, and since the lack of adequate preparation for it is so general, education to improve all aspects of family living deserves major emphasis in every forward-looking educational program. The field is relatively new; willingness to experiment and create new approaches is essential.

Long-Time Goals

With this underlying philosophy in mind, and on the basis of experience in the community, the following long-time goals have been agreed upon:

C. To establish in every citizen a recognition of the basic importance of family life and a readiness to seek for himself and his children education in the insights and skills needed to make it successful.

C. To provide for every citizen in the community instruction including preparation for marriage, husband-wife relations, preparation for parenthood, the development and guidance of infant and child, the development and guidance of adolescents, family interactions, family health, food and nutrition, home planning and management, home arts and crafts, clothing selection and construction, consumer education and money management, home-school-community relations.

C. To help all family members from preschoolers through grandparents gain understandings that will help them contribute and be appreciated as family members.

C. To establish an ever-closer collaboration between homes and schools so that each may support and reinforce the other.

C. To work toward the gradual establishment of truly family-centered communities where both parents and children gain as much joy and recognition for what they contribute to their families as for what they contribute in their outside activities or jobs.

C. To promote the best of family attitudes and feelings in the whole community, so that genuine respect for the individual, considerateness, mutual appreciation, and cooperation may gradually supersede hostility, envy, greed, and exploitation.

Educational Leadership
Background Factors

During the past two decades Long Beach has developed certain background features particularly favorable to the implementation of a community-wide family life education program based on these goals. In addition to the development of a large number of adult classes in the various phases of homemaking, there has been a steady growth in parent education, especially through pre-school parents' observation classes of which there are now thirty-one. During the last few years these observation classes have been given the added dignity and status of being organized, along with homemaking and other adult classes, as a part of the General Adult Division of the Long Beach City College. Since the College is a part of the Long Beach Public Schools, it is possible to offer preparation for home and family life even in the kindergarten, and, carrying on through the grades, high school, college, and the various phases of home and family development for parents, to include finally the contributions of grandparents.

Although much of this is still in the planning stage, there are well-grounded beginnings in many areas and significant plans for others. The concept of an all-embracing program is actively promoted and supported by the school administration and Board of Education.

City-Wide Lectures

One effective initial effort in promoting the long-time goal of widening community understanding of, and readiness for more extensive education for family life, was the presentation of weekly lectures for parents by the coordinator. These were given in a centrally located high school auditorium co-sponsored by the Long Beach Council of Parents and Teachers and the City College. They were widely publicized through press, radio, printed leaflets, and word of mouth by the Public Relations Department of the Long Beach Schools and the teachers and members of parent observation classes as well as by Adult Division administrators.

These lectures had excellent attendance with averages of 500 to 1,000 at two of the more popular series, and never falling under 100.

Another series of lectures was given during the second year by authorities brought in from outside. Each of these lectures was sponsored by a particular PTA which provided a presiding chairman, ushers, and hostesses for each meeting.

Simultaneously with these central lectures, local discussion groups have been carried on in a number of schools under professional leadership, along with the pre-school parents' observation groups and cooperative nursery school to be described in following sections.

Another method of increasing community awareness of the importance of the parents' job has been the running of a weekly column called the "Parents' Question Box" in the Sunday magazine section of the leading local paper. In this a question chosen from those handed in at the lecture-discussion meetings was discussed and the availability of education for parents pointed out. Each discussion was illustrated by a photograph of a local observation group or nursery school
family that had participated in some phase of the program, demonstrating a sound and happy way of meeting problems. Even though the family or group's names were not given, participation in the making of the pictures added interest.

It is impossible in one article to present all phases of this many-sided program. Therefore, the following paragraphs will be limited to developments and plans in the areas of child and adolescent guidance, marriage, and family relationships, which have been the primary responsibilities of this writer. Another article of at least equal length would be required to do full justice to the many other areas grouped generally in the broad field of home economics. But it should be emphasized that an outstanding feature of the Long Beach plan is to promote all aspects of learning that make for better homes and families in one inclusive program of education for family life.

Extending Education Through Observation

Although of course no phase of education is ever really "finished," those responsible for education need to make sure that individuals have opportunity for more and more mature experience, as well as exposure to ever-expanding areas of subject matter. A desirable sequence of educational processes may be delineated as follows:

1. Absorption through lectures and reading.
2. Analysis of facts, principles, and problems through discussion.
3. Observation and interpretation of processes, principles, and practices.
4. Participation in the understood and accepted principles and practices carried on by the teacher.
5. Taking full responsibility for making plans and carrying on projects based on ever-evolving principles (the most adult level of education). At this level further professional help would be sought on a consultative basis and arranged in response to felt needs on the part of the learners.

Pre-school parents' observation classes, similar to those carried on for some years in Pasadena, have proven highly valuable in providing both the second and third steps in the desired educational sequence for Long Beach parents. Parents come one morning each week to these groups, bringing their pre-school child or children. In the group they make careful recordings of the behavior of the children, who are guided by a professional parent education teacher.

The following method has been effective in making the observations meaningful: after three or four discussion periods, which bring out basic principles, including careful directions for observing, each student is asked to make written recordings of everything that is done by a given child or group of children during a morning, leaving a space at the left for the time of the recording and a wider space at the right for a written interpretation of what has happened. The interpretation is made by analyzing what has been recorded. Only the most skilled observer can make adequate interpretations at the same time they are recording. These records are then read over and analyzed further by the teacher, then returned to the student. Those of particular value are presented to the class for discussion, both of the activities recorded and of the interpretations made by the student.

A short sample of a recording may illustrate this method.

Educational Leadership
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>What child does and says</th>
<th>What teacher does and says</th>
<th>Interpretations of causes of children's behavior and principles illustrated by teacher's behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Three children go to teacher and show her their paintings. She is interested in what they have to show and what they say. Talks to them with as much respect as is shown any adult.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher interest and respect for children builds relationship and releases creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40</td>
<td>Four boys holding dolls and rubbing cheeks against dolls while watching a group build a “farm.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Boys as interested in parenthood as girls. Their interest was accepted, not rebuked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50</td>
<td>Margaret buttons Ruth’s apron. Ruth smiles and gives a happy little skip. She puts large paper down onto floor to start painting on it.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willing to accept help from another child. Independent also.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Ruth dips brush into paint with another child using the same paint pot and is happily busy. She smiles as she watches the work of other children. Is not irritated when a little boy bumps her and a little girl knocks her arm.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willing to share. Happy in her own work. Understands and accepts accidental bumps. All these incidents together indicate Ruth is well adjusted socially and emotionally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presenting such samples in the preliminary discussion is helpful in starting students on the path to deepened insight in their own interpretations of behavior observed.

This method has been used for some years in the writer's classes for mothers preparing to run cooperative play groups and nursery schools, including those in Long Beach. During the past year it has been extended to a group of kindergarten mothers who are enthusiastic about the deeper understanding of child guidance and appreciation of school procedures they have attained in the process. While the scheduling of mothers for observations and attending the meetings where these were analyzed has taken extra time for both the kindergarten teacher and the principal involved, both have been glad of the increased spirit of cooperation, greater insight, and appreciation of school procedures shown by mothers.

Plans are under consideration for extending a similar experience to other kindergarten mothers, and, as propitious spots are found, to other grades. The steady growth of the parents' preschool observation groups in Long Beach during the last decade has created a veritable gold mine of parental readiness for this type of education, and also for participation in the even more intensive education of collaborating parents' cooperative nursery schools.

**Responsibility: Final Step in the Educatve Process**

The most fruitful source of significant education for family life known to this writer is that provided by cooperative play groups and nursery schools in which the parents themselves take full responsibility for organizing and running them, after careful pre-
limentary training, and continuing in-service training. Since this plan has been fully described in other publications, readers wanting further details may refer to these articles.* Suffice it to say that eight such cooperative nursery schools have been established in Long Beach as a result of training given in that city during the last two years.

The potentialities called into play when parents are really on their own with just enough help from professional leaders, promote development that is often amazing. Eight of the mothers who have “grown up” in the Seattle Cooperative Play Groups program have been added to the Adult Homemaking staff in that city, where such a program has been in operation for eight years. They have become professional workers who go about giving help as needed to the fifty successful cooperatives there. There is reason to hope that equally vigorous development will take place in Long Beach as plans can be adapted to the California laws.

Beyond this, plans are also under discussion for the utilization of mothers trained in the cooperatives as voluntary assistants in kindergarten one day a week. Obviously, after intensive experience in planning for and participating in cooperatives, they are more ready for such experience than mothers who have just observed. Also, parents who realize how they have grown through helping in cooperatives are eager to continue contributing to the child’s life at school. Such a plan would be of great benefit to schools where more adult hands are needed at times, to the mothers who would grow further and further in their understanding of children’s needs, and of course to the children whose total environment both at the school and at home would be improved in the process. Some fathers who work on night shifts and have helped in cooperatives may be ready to participate, too. This might help bring some of the much-needed masculine element into the lives of children at school.

A further word about a most valuable and interesting new development with high school students. A group of “senior problems teachers,” at the suggestion of the home economics teacher, has carried out a plan of sending representative students from each class to visit one of the cooperatives in ac-

“It Takes Both Home and School.” Childhood Education, October, 1945.
tion, the parents' class which prepares for participation, one of the monthly parents' business meetings discussing problems of operating their cooperative, and a monthly meeting of the Cooperative Play Groups Council where there is an interchange of new developments and continuing in-service training.

The teachers report that the students are enthusiastic about what they have gained, not only in understanding children's needs, but parent-child interaction which cannot usually be observed in child care centers and nursery schools run entirely by professionals. They have grown also in appreciation of the potentialities of continuing parent education, and of a most significant social process in our democratic way of life, meeting mutual needs through cooperative effort. And the parents are impressed with the understanding and intelligence of high school students.

From these plans and developments it can be seen that cooperative play groups have unlimited potentials as vital centers of education for family life. They not only provide intensive education for parents in their immediate job, but prepare them for continuing growth through participating in the education of their children. They also afford unique opportunities as observation centers for the parents of the future—the high school and college students of today.

**Immediate Next Steps**

A six-weeks' workshop in Family Life Education is to be held this spring for all teachers and administrators who are responsible for any aspect of education in this area under the leadership of Professor Emeritus Flora Thurston of Cornell University's College of Home Economics and one time Executive Secretary of the National Council of Parent Education. It is hoped that as a result of this workshop there will be not only improved teaching and better courses of study, but that there will be much closer working relations between the home economics, parent education, social problems, and psychology teachers.

Starting this past February, a course in Marriage and the Family and one in Child Development are being given for the college students in the Liberal Arts Division of the Long Beach City College, groundwork having been laid by two short lecture series on Preparation for Marriage. It is planned that these courses will be the beginning of a Family Life Education Department on that Campus with all appropriate courses in family relations, child guidance, and home economics included.

Excellent help has been given by many churches, the City Recreation Commission, and Housing Projects in providing meeting places for parents' observation groups and cooperative nursery schools. There has been much referral of parents to the Community Welfare Council for individual counseling. Lectures have been provided groups upon request. Each phase of the program has been planned by specific committees of those most immediately concerned. The whole program has been developed with the help of a Family Life Education Advisory Committee with representatives from various community groups. Its growth has been and will continue to be the product of creative interaction.