

*tudes toward children appeared to be an independent evidence of group or individual learning.*

Assessment of the actual learning which took place in these teachers would depend upon evidence that these teachers changed in their ways of working with children—an outcome which could not be measured by this study. Since knowledge of child development

principles, objective and warm attitudes, and skills in objectively analyzing evidence are prerequisite to understanding the behavior and development of children, we may feel certain that through these experiences teachers gained the insights into behavior which become a spur to influencing changes in the classroom consistent with a growing understanding of children.

## *The Child Study Program in Corpus Christi*

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VIRGINIA HUFSTEDLER

This is the story of an in-service program in the Corpus Christi, Texas, schools in which major attention was given to the study of children. Virginia Hufstедler, formerly with the Corpus Christi schools, is associated with the Institute for Child Study, University of Maryland.

IN 1938 the Corpus Christi public schools began a series of in-service education programs. Details of the program varied from year to year according to the needs of participants, but were always centered around problems of mental hygiene. Since 1944, however, the activities have been based on a direct study of children.

### **Toward Better Understanding**

The Child Study program grew out of the activities of a self-appointed committee which was studying the use of cumulative records in the spring of 1943. The committee was composed of the principal of Corpus Christi Senior High School, the counselor of the same school, the principal of a neighboring

junior high school, and a visiting consultant from a nearby university. The immediate concern of the committee was the fact that many teachers in secondary schools were not making use of data on cumulative records. As the group attempted to determine why these data were not being used, they also tried to determine what information would help teachers to better understand children.

It soon became evident to the members of the group that they needed to know more about children and their behavior before much progress would be made on these problems. As a consequence, the three local persons attended the Human Development Workshop at the University of Chicago in

the summer of 1943. There they worked on problems relating to cumulative records with the assistance of several consultants and, at the same time, took part in the seminars and interest groups of the workshop. One of the interest groups in which the trio participated explored the benefits derived from a direct study of children. It was in this group that the Corpus Christi committee became interested in a child study program.

### Workshop Plans

The experience of the summer workshop was so stimulating and helpful to the trio that upon their return to Corpus Christi they made a detailed report to the superintendent of schools. This report included the recommendation that the administrative staff investigate the possibilities of a program of in-service education based on a study of children. The committee also suggested that a local workshop be held the following summer for the purpose of exploring further the possibilities of such a program with teachers and principals. Study of these suggestions by the superintendent and his staff resulted in plans for D. A. Prescott, University of Chicago, to direct a two-week workshop in June, 1944.

A series of committees made up of principals and teachers were set up to formulate definite plans for the summer. It was decided that all the administrative staff, the guidance staff, and one teacher from each school faculty (a total of fifty persons) would be invited to participate in the workshop. An old hotel in a small fishing village on Copano Bay was leased to house the workshop. School cafeteria equipment was

moved to the hotel, cots were set up, and preparations were made for the group to "camp" for two weeks.

### Our Objectives

The objectives for the workshop were developed through a series of letters between Prescott and one of the committees. The final objectives as outlined in a letter from Prescott to the superintendent were:

- ❑ To give the leaders in the school system an overview of the basic scientific principles that explain how children develop and why they behave as they do
- ❑ To demonstrate to school leaders that a great deal of information about an individual child is necessary in order to understand that child
- ❑ To demonstrate how this needed information about children can be secured, how it can be organized, and how it can be interpreted by classroom teachers, counselors, and school principals, and what use it is to them in helping children
- ❑ To plan a practical program of work for the coming year if the participants wished
- ❑ To plan for the development of a "leadership group" that would guide the work of the child study program during the year if such a program were adopted.

The final scheduling of activities took place on the opening day of the workshop. The day was divided into work periods: one for a lecture by Prescott, one for examining child study records, and one for discussion of school problems. At the close of this two-week period, plans were made to begin a child study program in September.

Objectives of the long-term program were: (1) to increase the classroom effectiveness of teachers; (2) to

increase the guidance role of teachers; (3) to develop gradually a more helpful body of records about children; (4) to consider the implications of the child study program for curriculum revision.

### Enthusiastic Participation

Each principal and teacher who attended the workshop was to invite other members of the school faculty to join him in forming a group within the school. If a sufficient number was not available to constitute a group in each school, provision was made for combined groups. All participation was to be on a voluntary basis and it was agreed that no pressure would be placed on anyone to enter the program. The school board and administration gave support to the program to the extent that meetings were to be held on school time and consultant service was to be furnished each group.

During the school term 1944-45, approximately one hundred fifty teachers and principals participated in child study groups which met for a two-hour period twice a month under the leadership of a school principal. Three consultants from the University of Chicago visited the schools and met with the groups during the year.

The interest in the program was evidenced by the growth of number of participants and their continued study. In the second year of the program, one hundred twenty-five of the first year participants continued their study, and over one hundred additional teachers entered for the first time. The program continued to grow until, by 1949, five years later, over five hundred persons had engaged in the study for three or more consecutive years. After com-

pleting the three years of "Child Study," numbers of teachers formed groups to continue study of the implications of child development for cumulative records, home visitations, reporting to parents, curriculum development, and various other problems of interest to them.

Workshops were held each summer with an average attendance of one hundred fifteen persons. The nature of each workshop changed with changing needs of the participants. The emphasis continued to be on child development but there was an increasing amount of study of the implications for a more effective guidance program, cumulative records, and for curriculum development.

### Evaluation

Almost continuous efforts have been made to evaluate the results of participation in the child study program in Corpus Christi schools, but satisfactory methods of evaluation have not been found. However, expressions from administrators and teachers indicate that many changes occurred in administrative policies, methods of teaching, and ways of working with children as individuals and groups. Two formal attempts to evaluate the program have been made by Whitehead and Pockrus.

Whitehead, in a study made in 1947, reported that principals and teachers agreed that participation in the program was worthwhile.<sup>1</sup> Principals expressed the belief that teachers developed a more accepting attitude toward children and became more skilled in working with "discipline problems."

<sup>1</sup> William W. Whitehead, "An Evaluation of the Child Study Program of the Corpus Christi, Texas, Public Schools." Unpublished thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, 1947.

Teachers indicated that they believed themselves to be more understanding of all children.

In August, 1949, Pockrus reported the results of a questionnaire sent to each member of the Corpus Christi school staff.<sup>2</sup> Over five hundred teachers and principals (four-fifths of the total staff) answered the questionnaire. Eighty-six percent of those answering had completed three years of the program or were active in it in 1949. Eighty-four percent of those responding indicated that the experience in the program had been of value to them and worth the time involved. Seventy-eight percent of the total group stated that the direct study of children had helped them to become more understanding teachers.

The value placed on the program by

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<sup>2</sup> Flora Fulbright Pockrus. "An Appraisal of the Child Study Program in the Corpus Christi Public Schools." Unpublished thesis, Texas College of Arts and Industries, Kingsville, 1949.

teachers was also evidenced by the fact that seventy-eight percent of those answering the questionnaire advised new teachers to participate in child study. Another interesting outcome of the survey was that ninety percent of the five hundred believed that throughout the system there was a better understanding of children. In other words, some of the fourteen percent who had never taken part in the program felt that this change had occurred in the system as a whole.

Probably the most significant evaluation of the child study program in Corpus Christi is to be seen in the continued participation. The sixth consecutive year of the program is coming to a close, and plans are being formulated for another workshop. Neither the administrators nor the teachers, however, would suggest a program such as this as the panacea for all school problems. It is one approach we have found successful.

## *Learning to Interpret Child Behavior*

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JOHN J. KURTZ

This description of the activities of a group of teachers during their first year of organized child study tells how they gained skill in interpreting child behavior. John J. Kurtz is associated with the Institute for Child Study, University of Maryland.

THE DIRECT STUDY of children is one of the more challenging programs for professional improvement in our schools today. Teachers have long been concerned about understanding children. But it is only recently that they

have had a chance to participate in systematic and continuous programs of child study. At present in more than a dozen states thousands of teachers meet regularly every two weeks in local study groups. Meetings usually are held after

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