

understanding. For here the teacher has an opportunity to study a variety of situations in which he sees children at work. He has face-to-face relationships over a longer period of time which offer opportunities for trying out ideas,

extending, testing, and modifying theory through an analysis of curriculum materials and teaching procedures. The teacher becomes aware of the importance of maturation and other readiness factors in learning.

Teachers Grow in Understanding Children

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This article reports a research study of teacher growth in certain skills, attitudes, and understandings as a result of participation in organized child study. Hugh V. Perkins, Jr., is associated with the Institute for Child Study, University of Maryland.

MANY A TEACHER spends long hours preparing curriculum experiences which are designed to motivate and promote student learning. To this end she searches for new materials, develops improved procedures, attends workshops, and serves on curriculum committees. Tests evaluating what children learn from these experiences, however, often reveal outcomes which fall short of her expectations. This common experience has convinced many teachers and supervisors that basic to any program of curriculum development is the need for an adequate understanding of the unique factor in the learning process—the learner himself.

Helping teachers gain this understanding of children was a major objective of the program initiated by the Commission on Teacher Education, a commis-

sion set up in 1939 by the American Council on Education.¹ As the result of the stimulation provided by this program, teacher groups in many parts of the country have been studying and learning about children. This study of children in teacher groups has been possible because interest and support were given this in-service program by participating school systems, and consultant service was rendered by staffs of field consultants who were competent in the area of child development and skilled in working with groups.

Those experiences and procedures which teacher groups and consultants found most helpful in studying children became the curriculum of the three-

¹ Commission on Teacher Education. *Helping Teachers Understand Children*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1945.

year program that evolved. During each of the three years of study each teacher builds up a case record of information on one child. From lectures, readings, and discussion she develops with the group a synthesis of scientific knowledge which assists in interpreting the behavior and development of each child studied in the group. The gathering of adequate objective data on each child is stressed, especially in the first year of child study. Throughout the three years of study an ever-growing synthesis of scientific principles which explain behavior and development is expected to produce in teachers deeper insights into the causes of behavior. A research study recently completed sought to ascertain whether these expected skills and insights were revealed by teacher child study groups at each of the three years of study.²

Some of the questions answered by this research were:

- ❑ Do teacher groups with more child study experience express more child development concepts than teacher groups with less child study experience?
- ❑ As the result of studying and understanding children do teachers become warmer and more objective in their attitudes toward children?
- ❑ Do teacher groups studying children grow in their ability to use facts and scientific principles in supporting statements made?
- ❑ Do teachers who reveal the greatest knowledge of child development concepts rank correspondingly high in the other kinds of learning?

Six groups, two at each year level, were studied by this research. Participa-

tion in these groups was voluntary. Groups varied in size from eight to sixteen, and they met for about an hour and a half every two weeks throughout the school year. A leader skilled in child study procedures was assigned to each group. The group experience for all groups consisted of each teacher reading her case record information about a child, after which the group discussed and analyzed behavior using child development principles.

Teachers Reveal

a Knowledge of Concepts

Teachers need to know a great many scientific concepts about behavior and development in order to understand adequately the children in their classrooms. It was anticipated that teachers in second and third year child study would express proportionately more concepts than would teachers in the first year of the program. Results of this research indicated that this was substantially true. Statements of teachers in second year groups contained a slightly higher proportion of child development concepts than did those of teachers in third year groups and a markedly higher proportion of concepts than did those of teachers in first year groups.

The superiority of second and third year groups can partially be explained by the fact that these groups use an organizing framework to assist them in analyzing behavior. Many of the sub-items of this framework suggest concepts which are important in understanding behavior and development. The slight superiority of second year groups over third year groups in the number of child development concepts expressed had been anticipated. Second year

² Hugh V. Perkins, Jr. "The Effects of Social-Emotional Climate and Curriculum on Group Learning of In-Service Teachers." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1949.

groups in classifying case record data using the framework are usually able to express more concepts per given unit of time than can third year groups where emphasis and more time is given to the slower and more difficult task of interpreting case records.

This research revealed further differences between groups at each year level in the kinds of child development concepts expressed. Teachers in first year groups were significantly superior in the proportion of concepts which dealt with basic principles of child study, i.e. behavior is caused, every individual is valuable, etc. Second year groups ranked highest in the proportion of self-adjustment concepts expressed, and third year groups expressed proportionately more concepts dealing with peer group and physical dynamics.

Superiority of first year groups in expression of basic principles and third year groups in expression of peer group concepts represent realized outcomes of child study experiences at each level. Gaining some understanding of the development and adjustment of self is a major objective of third year, but concepts revealed by third year groups contained no greater proportion of self concepts than did those of first and second year groups. *Learning did take place in all six groups, however, for each group expressed proportionately more concepts during the second half of the learning period than it had during the first half.*

Child development principles and concepts most frequently expressed in all groups were the following:

- † Judgments about a child are valid to the extent that they are based upon evidence

which is objective, factual, specific, and descriptive.

- † Age, the pattern of physical growth, and description of a child's activities and interests are evidences used in approximating a child's maturity or developmental level.
- † Facts about the family constellation, the child's relationship to his family and the relationship of each member to each other reveal important information about the affectional climate of the home.
- † In daily interaction children who can associate with each other on a basis of relative equality gradually develop a series of feelings toward one another. These feelings are expressed in the interpersonal relationships of children.
- † Information about a family's living habits, education of parents, occupational status of the breadwinner, location and condition of home, rituals, beliefs, and intimate associations suggest its approximate position in the social class structure.
- † Each individual develops characteristic ways of meeting emotional situations which enable him to defend, reassure, and comfort himself.

Teachers' Attitudes Change

Changes in teachers toward a greater understanding of children is further revealed in the quality of their feelings toward them. Attitudes toward children which could be inferred in a teacher's statement were judged using two qualitative criteria: the degree of objective detachment or emotional attachment in the teacher's feeling toward the child; and the degree of warmth, acceptance, and affection or the contrasting conventionality, coldness, or inconsistency revealed in the teacher's attitude toward a child.

Teachers in second and third year groups were warmer and more accepting in their attitudes toward children than were the teachers in first year groups. But teachers in second and third

year groups revealed no more objective detachment in their feelings toward children than did teachers in first year groups. Only teachers in second year groups showed significantly more warmth and acceptance in their attitudes toward children during the second half of the learning period than they had during the first half. On the other hand, teachers at all levels were no more objective in their attitudes toward children during the second half of the learning period than they had been during the first half. Thus, while there is some indication that teachers who have studied children are warmer and more accepting in their attitudes toward them, the evidence is conflicting and inconclusive. The evidence suggests rather that *attitudes are highly unique and their formation and modification are less influenced by group experience than are the other aspects of learning studied by this research.*

Growth in Statement Substantiation

Because of our past training and experience, all of us are prone to use snap judgments and personal opinion in judging the behavior of others. Teachers in child study groups strive to replace this unscientific mode of thinking by habitually giving facts and scientific principles in support of statements made.

Statements of teachers in second and third year groups were more fully supported by facts or scientific principles than were the statements of teachers in first year groups. Furthermore, the statements of teachers in second and third year child study contained fewer judgments and unsupported opinions than did the statements by first year participants. This evidence suggests that

teacher groups studying children do grow in their use of facts and scientific principles to support statements about children.

Inter-relationships between Factors

Do teachers who express the most concepts also rank highest in giving adequate evidence in support of statements made? Do teachers who participate most frequently learn more than teachers who participate less frequently? A study of the inter-relationships between group learning and interaction factors provided the answers to these and other questions.

Results of this research indicated that teachers who participated most frequently tended to express more child development concepts, were more likely to experience individual or group tension, and were more likely to find tension release through laughter. The effect of tension on group learning was strikingly revealed. Teacher statements indicating presence of tension contained fewer child development concepts, lacked warmth and acceptance of children, were less adequately supported, and were more subjective and self-involved.

Teachers who ranked highest in number and ratio of expressed child development concepts tended also to support their statements more fully and to show more real insight and sounder qualities of reasoning in the interpretation of behavior. Attitudes of warmth and acceptance of children, however, appeared to be unrelated to other evidences of learning. Thus, *knowledge of child development concepts and the ability to support statements adequately were related evidences of group learning, but atti-*

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

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

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