

Serving as an *interpreter of the characteristics of a good school to parents* is the third role that teachers have the opportunity to perform. Parents see only the school that they create in their psychological behavior. Unless they understand child development, the meaning of creative learning, the psychology of the so-called tools of learning, and the reasons supporting newer instructional methods, they may find it easier to express criticism than to give cooperative support to the leadership of teachers. Parents should be encouraged to visit the classroom to observe teacher and pupils at work. Group meetings should be provided that enable parents to create a better understanding of the purposes and enabling

activities of the school. In the degree that teachers and parents create similar goals for children, unity in educational leadership will emerge.

### What School Do You See?

Each individual sees the school of his own psychological creation. Through cooperative study and discussion, there can arise similar criteria for designing and for evaluating a school program appropriate to the psychological needs of all children and to the cultural requirements of a complex society. Unity in educational leadership depends upon the schools we see and the goals we seek to achieve in providing improved living and learning opportunities for tomorrow's citizens.

## Continuity in Growth

---

NELLE WRIGHT

Nelle Wright, director of instruction in the Waynesboro Public Schools, Virginia, describes a study in which elementary teachers moved along with the same group of children to facilitate planning for continuity in growth.

FOR SEVEN YEARS a group of teachers in an elementary school has been experimenting with a plan of having pupils remain with the same teacher for more than one school year. For elementary schools the plan seems possible, reasonable, and desirable. In this twenty-two teacher elementary school, eight teachers moved along at various grade levels with the same group of children. The purpose was to give teachers additional help in understanding and deal-

ing effectively with children. To do this, direct experiences with children of as many age levels as possible seemed necessary.

### A Workable Plan

Two types of "shifts" were employed in operating this plan—one within the division such as primary, intermediate, or upper grades, and the other between the divisions such as from primary to intermediate. The longest period of

time that any teacher remained with the same group was three years in the primary division.

According to this plan, groups of children progressed through the seven elementary grades with fewer changes of teachers than is customary. One group reaching the seventh grade had three teachers instead of the usual seven. This group had one teacher for the first three grades, one teacher for the two intermediate grades, and one teacher for the two upper grades. Upon reaching the eighth grade, which is considered the first year of high school, the nucleus of this group was held together for a homeroom period and for two class periods with the same teacher. For their other two classes they had different teachers.

Many changes from grade level to grade level occurred within the divisions of the primary, intermediate, or upper grades when teachers chose to advance with a group, remain a year longer at the same level, or regress to work with a new group. Some examples of this showed that primary children usually had one or two teachers during this three-year period. Similar "shifts" were operating in the intermediate and upper grade divisions which involved a third grade teacher advancing to a fourth grade, a fourth grade teacher advancing to a fifth grade, a sixth grade teacher advancing to a seventh grade. This gave one group two teachers and the other group three teachers for both intermediate and upper grades.

#### Organizing for Child Study

Each teacher made a careful study of the records of each group before assuming responsibility for extending and

maintaining the children's learning experiences. This was done through the channel of an organized child study group made up of these teachers who met regularly twice a month.

The general assumptions agreed upon by these teachers were that a child should be in a group in which he is best stimulated to make whatever contribution he is able to make, a group in which he can feel he belongs, one that is appropriate to his developmental level and needs, and one which provides him with experiences that help him understand how to act in relation to people and surroundings. This type of grouping may be directly related to the learning experiences of the child as well as those of the teacher. Some effects on the child and his learning experiences may be illustrated by the comments from children. These comments deal briefly with long-range planning and social skills.

#### When Children Plan

Frequently students have little opportunity to plan constructively without being interfered with or disturbed. As a result, they have not been able to learn how to plan for the maintenance of work on any sustained long-range purposeful activity. If given time and encouraged by appropriate experiences, the child can and will accept tasks which demand persistence and skills. These skills are timely and yet aid in the extension of pupils' experiences in planning and living together.

Statements made by fifth grade pupils during the fifth year of their continuous grouping will give some idea of how they felt about planning.

"Time just flies when you are working on your own ideas."

"This week we learned to plan for a whole week's schedule of work. Makes me feel grown-up."

"I never realized before how much a teacher had to think in order that we get our work planned each day."

"Some think planning is fun because it takes up time. It does take up time, but I always know what I have to do."

"We set up our own guides and if we break one of these we are the losers."

"We used to argue an awful lot—but now we either agree to follow the schedules we make or work out some compromise."

"We are left on our own more this year than ever before, and we sometimes don't know it when the teacher is away for our planning period. We have learned how to plan and work together."

"I keep my own records for the whole year and then the teacher and I get together and make the ratings on my card for each six-weeks' period."

### Social Skills

An extended period of time for work also provides opportunity for the development and maintenance of social skills. At the same time, it gives opportunity for the teacher to note the social skills which are acceptable to the individual youngsters at various developmental levels. Some of the more general skills developed are: a feeling of belongingness as shown by unity in work done because of the interest and planning of group projects by members of the group; pride in doing a job well; and individuals accepting the demands or requests made by group members.

### Comments from Pupils

Comments from one group of third grade pupils who had been together with the same teacher for three years show a few developments in social skills.

"Betty should be the announcer for our play because she has a clear voice."

"Let's give Joe another chance to be room manager."

"Nancy is absent. I'll make a get-well card today and send it to her from the class."

"As soon as I can control my temper I want to be room manager."

"I didn't know there were so many people in our community who keep us healthy." (While the group was writing a play "Our Helpers.")

Today Barton asked Tessie to be his helper. (Barton had been timid and was a newcomer to the group.)

"I looked up and at the audience today when I practiced my part in the play."

"Why don't we let Bobby choose the ones who are to paint the scenery because he knows the most about colors and how to paint large?"

### Comments from Teachers

The following are evaluative statements made by the teachers participating in this study. These give some ideas of how this type of grouping relates to the teacher's learning experiences.

"It tends to eliminate prejudices of grade levels, that is, by saying that such and such work was supposed to be taught by the teacher below or above a particular grade level."

"I have become more objective in my observations of children's behavior. I see behavior not as something put on to please or annoy the teacher but as something which is caused. It often differs from one grade level to another."

"Observations which I have recorded over a shorter period of time are very often inaccurate, prejudiced, or superficial."

"I have learned to withhold my judgment for longer periods of time. Example: I have seen children who couldn't read at the close of the first grade begin reading the second or third month in the second grade."

"A longer period gives me more time to discover difficulties and to find ways for diagnosing them."

"Knowledge of a child's progress over a period of time gives me a better understanding of individual development. Example: A speech difficulty disappeared in the third grade."

"Provides a chance to carry out a flexible promotion policy. A child may be placed in a more advanced group when maturity with its accompanying growth and learning patterns indicate it."

"A longer period of time enables me to note sex differences and accompanying interests at different age levels of development."

"Provides opportunity for continuous evaluations."

"Provides more stimulation for the development of professional attitudes and gives an opportunity to initiate child study."

"Provides an opportunity to become aware of, and to gain some knowledge of, the factors influencing child development and growth, such as changes in physical growth and its accompanying emotional behavior, interests and attitudes, change of values, and efforts of children to assert their independence and to break away from the adult world."

### The Case of Jay

In connection with this plan, teachers kept anecdotal records of individual children. These records formed the basis for group study and analysis of individual needs.

In this illustration we see how a teacher is challenged by a child's disturbing behavior to seek real causes of the behavior and to provide experiences for him which will correct these causes. As a result of a thorough study of the child the teacher is able to discover a great many needs which are not being met at home or at school. School experiences are planned in light of these needs. Getting the pupil's own purposes into his school activities and providing activities within his range of ability result in desirable progress for him.

Jay, a nine-year-old in the third grade, seemed to be lacking in security and a sense of belonging to the new group which he had joined at the beginning

of the new school year. His present teacher talked over Jay's progress and difficulties with his former teachers. The first day of school Jay told his new teacher that he would like to stay in this group since his pal Bill was there. This statement came from Jay when the teacher said that due to the overcrowded condition some children would be moved to another room. Frequently he stayed after school to talk things over with his teacher. Often he was in very disturbing situations, such as spilling paint, breaking the radio cord, fighting on the school ground, and being overbearing about the home runs he made in baseball. On Valentine Day he remarked to his teacher, "I brought a Valentine for each one of my classmates. I hope I get as many as I brought."

### Background Data Helps

The teacher kept an anecdotal record of his behavior and made a study of his physical, social, emotional, and mental development. She discovered among other things that he had an interest in rhythmical activities, talent in drawing, a dislike for reading, and a lack of interest in arithmetic. On one occasion he refused to read during a class-sharing period, saying, "I can't read very well." At another time Jay said, "Let's not read today. I'd like to make one of those little houses like our class made last year." The teacher helped Jay find short stories that he was capable of reading. He was given extra help by one of his classmates and his teacher. By mid-term Jay was much happier about his reading and voluntarily read before the group at different times.

Jay was making poor progress in arithmetic, and the teacher sensed the

fact that arithmetic had little meaning for him. She began to look for opportunities through which he might find his arithmetic useful. When the price of milk went up first to six cents, then to seven, Jay, who was milk monitor, found he had to learn how to multiply by sixes and sevens or lose his job. With a real purpose and help from his parents and classmates, he soon had mastered this skill. Through such practical experiences Jay began to see meaning in arithmetic and learned to become skilled in its use.

### Providing Purposeful Experiences

In order to help him develop into a well-rounded person, the teacher gave Jay opportunities for a greater variety of experiences based on his needs, interests, and abilities. He was given free time for drawing and was encouraged to work with the music teacher in singing and interpretive dancing. He had extra time for practice in skills.

The teacher learned through talking with Jay that he was not getting the proper sleep and she noted, too, how easily he tired from physical activity. She provided time each day for him to rest during school hours. During the year Jay's health condition improved. He had his teeth corrected and he gained weight. It was thought that the gain in weight might have been due to his learning to make wiser choices of food at the cafeteria.

Many opportunities were given for planning and participating in social activities. It was a happy time for Jay when he took part in planning and making the decorations for a Valentine party. He showed skill in directing games during the physical education

period. He was chosen to dance in the May Day program. As Jay became more confident of the teacher's genuine interest in his welfare, he talked more freely to her of his personal problems. One day he remained after school to tell about the fight which he had had on the school grounds.

By the close of the school year the teacher could observe many changes in Jay's personality. He participated in group activities and willingly accepted responsibility for certain jobs which he could do. He no longer attempted to win his way on the playground by fighting, but usually found ways of reasoning things out with his group. He laughed with others and often expressed joy over school experiences. Other children included him in the work they planned to do, and he had several good friends. The teacher felt that because he was given opportunity to work out his personal problems and to make contributions to the group, he was released to the extent that he experienced success in many areas.

### Benefits and Difficulties

As this type of study progressed in an elementary school, certain difficulties were encountered. Among these were administrative problems in classification of students and rigid promotion policies; creating an understanding among teachers who were not participating in the study; acceptance of teachers by parents; securing teachers whose training and experience have contributed to understanding of values derived from experimental studies.

This plan is illustrative of one way in which child development principles may become an integral part of a teacher's

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

---

HUGH V. PERKINS, Jr.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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-

---

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

Copyright © 1950 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.