Dutchtown Develops a Community Program

Specific developments in the community program of Dutchtown High School, Ascension Parish, Donaldsonville, Louisiana, have resulted through cooperation of agencies and organizations of the school community.

DUTCHTOWN High School of Ascension Parish, Louisiana, is a rural school. Its enrollment is close to five hundred students. In the past few years this school has made good progress toward changing from a traditional program of education to a program which seems more meaningful both to students and to the community which it serves.

Objectives which we set up in keeping with the Ascension Parish program might be classified under the heading, "Improvement of Community Living Through Education."

In our school, we are not only continuing instruction in academic areas but in some instances we have put increased emphasis upon these aspects of the school program. However, we also believe that in order for our children to develop a desirable balance of attitudes, concepts and skills that will result for them in useful, happy, democratic ways of life, there must run, concurrently with these, other programs of instruction and action.

Need for Revamped Program

The curriculum of Dutchtown High School had been for years more or less traditional in nature and functional only for a small percentage of students who were going to be able to attend college. As a result of consolidation of smaller schools and provision of means of transportation, school population became much more heterogeneous than it had ever been previously. Need for enrichment and broadening of the scope of the school program became increasingly apparent. We realized that it was still our job to provide well for those pupils going to college but at the same time we knew that if our school were to meet adequately the needs of pupils and of the community various changes must be made.

Increased emphasis was placed upon academic work. At the same time, new activities and areas of instruction were inaugurated. Materials of instruction, including audio-visual aids, library books, maps, charts and pamphlets have been greatly increased and are better organized. All these supplementary devices have been selected with a view toward providing proper balance in the education of our children and patrons.

In the training of youths, as well as in the guiding of their parents, the school community center plays an important part. The lunchroom program serves to introduce balanced meals in the homes. The shop, in which patrons may repair tractors, trucks and cars, is a continuing service to the community. Exhibits and displays that show how
rural life can be made more attractive and efficient are used with telling effect.

An important phase in the curriculum development was a series of five work conferences. Teachers met in grade-level and subject-matter groups. They discussed mutual problems and formulated plans of instruction that they hoped would result in increased achievement in these important phases of school work. Various specialists and agencies from the state and the parish, as well as patrons of the school, attended these conferences and gave assistance.

In the course of several years, as an outgrowth of conferences and teacher-student planning, many teaching aids and procedures have evolved which have proved beneficial.

**Teachers Deal with Problem Areas**

Social studies teachers now pay more attention to current problems than they do to any predetermined list of topics. The teaching is often correlated with material from other fields, such as those of art and literature. Research work might include the development and history of Dutchtown High School, a study of early letters and industries, or the retelling of the rich folklore and legends of Louisiana.

A bibliography of professional books on teaching of social studies has proved also of help to teachers. In addition to the text, current history is studied in newspapers and periodicals. Whenever need arises, materials in the school library are supplemented by others obtained through the Louisiana Library Commission located in Baton Rouge. Vertical files in the library also make educational clippings and pictures available to social studies students. Population and economic surveys of the school community have been conducted, and population maps have been made which show the location of the home of each family enrolled in the school.

**Communication Through Practice**

The English and language arts program is based on experiences needed to give students effective skill in reading, speaking, writing and listening. The courses are organized so as to meet the needs of all, while special opportunities are provided students who plan to enter college.

Literature and reading, and grammar and composition, are taught alternately.

*The Newsletter*, a weekly publication sponsored by the senior English class, with reporters and staff comprised of members representing all grades, is sent into the homes free of charge. Through this medium the home receives weekly accounts of school activities and events, announcements and notices of interest to students and patrons.

The English teachers and the school librarian cooperate in encouraging reading in the homes. Books may be obtained from the school library, and statistics show a wide monthly circulation. The Teen-Age Book Club also has encouraged and stimulated reading. Dramatizations, choral reading and debating are further activities which have created interest and provided much opportunity for participation.

Science and mathematics teachers are compiling many needed supplementary materials. Tests in mathematics at different grade levels have indicated to the

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teachers those children who need special help.

Planning in both science and mathematics is being definitely applied to local situations. Problems based on the conditions and facts of Ascension Parish are used. Units in science are usually concerned with problems of individual home improvement.

Shops Serve the Community

Vocational education, too, is based on community needs. The school, serving its rural agricultural community, offers studies and practices on a five-year basis. Boys study jobs and then undertake related projects at home under supervision of a teacher. The Future Farmers of America chapter of Dutch-town was represented at the national convention this past year.

The home economics curriculum provides experiences in cooking and sewing, meal planning, and gives information concerning food values and dietary needs. Various aspects of child development are studied also. A nursery school is conducted in conjunction with this study.

The vocational departments of agriculture and home economics cooperate in sponsoring annually a school community fair. All the school clubs, the faculty and the school's patrons combine their efforts and participate wholeheartedly in this annual activity.

For boys in the seventh through the twelfth grades, courses are offered in forging and blacksmithing, auto mechanics, electricity, wiring and repair of motors, repair of farm machinery, cabinet making and repair of furniture, and carpentry. This department has constructed attractive typing desks for the commerce department and tables for the modern lunchroom. We have found that success in these vocational courses often encourages an individual toward improvement in the more strictly academic areas.

Music Program Inaugurated

A comprehensive music program is one of the most recent developments in our school. The state supervisor of music and the American Music Conference are rendering invaluable assistance in the inauguration of the program and in helping all classroom teachers make plans for music instruction. Mothers in the community have organized a music club. The school now has two bands (beginners' and advanced students'), a senior chorus and an eighth-grade chorus. Twenty record-players and a good collection of records are now available for school use.

Health Program Aids Community

A functional and instructive health program has been instituted in Dutch-town High School. The program is divided into eleven areas: school lunch program and nutrition education, dental program, conservation of vision, speech, hearing, handicapped children, height-weight, testing program, preschool clinic, mental health and the school community center. These phases of the health program are not isolated but are interwoven into the fabric of the academic work of the school.

The 1949-50 report of the health committee indicated progress in all areas. The school lunch provided approximately fifty per cent of the daily needs of the child. Surveys conducted by a research nutritionist over a period of

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three consecutive years revealed the improved food habits of the children.

The report revealed additional information: thirty-three per cent of the students in the speech clinic were dismissed; ninety-four per cent gained weight; forty-nine mothers attended the pre-school clinic; school activities were well attended by patrons. In all these activities, parents played an integral part.

The community survey showed progress in the following home improvements: screening of windows and doors, installation of electricity, drilling of deep wells, year-round home gardens, and home canning.

Success attained in the program at Dutchtown High School is based on the excellent cooperation of patrons, friends, agencies and organizations (civic, religious and professional) of the school community. Teamwork is everywhere and at all times evident. The school assists the community and the community assists the school.

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**Year-Round Programs of Professional Service**

W. R. McIntosh

Full-time salary schedules for teachers have been accompanied by development of programs of year-round professional service in several communities. W. R. McIntosh is Superintendent of Schools in Rockford, Illinois.

MANY teachers have felt the need for more income and for additional time in which to plan their work. They believe both should be provided as concomitants to the full-time pursuit of their profession. Many lay citizens, too, have wondered why their school buildings and grounds should be used only nine months and why their teachers should take a three-month vacation. In a few communities the search for answers to these questions has resulted in development of full-time salary schedules and of patterns of year-round professional service that give promise of rich returns in professional growth of teachers and in expanded services to the community’s children.

A year-round program of professional service should not be confused with those situations in many communities in which, for example, the band instructor or the teacher of agriculture is employed during the summer months to put in extra time for extra pay. Neither should the salary schedules in communities giving a year-round program of professional service be confused with the plan of dividing the nine months’ salary into twelve or twenty-four equal installments to be paid monthly or semi-monthly throughout the calendar year. A year-round program of professional service does not mean that the length of the regular school year is extended.

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