asked for well equipped and comfortable classrooms with due regard to eyes, ears and body temperature. They seemed to reject the ridiculous fantasy that they come to school to read, write and figure *only*. They want to use their skills and competencies to achieve ends and purposes more vital to them. Children want to include such informal activities as parties, dances, plays, games and committee work as a part of the regular school day.

From the child's point of view, good education for him must consider all aspects of his living; it must take account of his total environment. Since this coincides with important principles of good learning, perhaps the school would do well to listen more often to the voices of its children. Again may it be pointed out that pupils and modern education are close together in theory, not so close together in practice.

Developing Maturity in Youth

ARTHUR E. HAMALAINEN

How schools can assist children and youth toward higher levels of maturity is discussed by Arthur E. Hamalainen, Principal, Plandome School, Manhasset, New York.

"MATURITY" as a goal in education has probably always been a major objective of teachers. At various times we have labeled this aim, "Education for Growth," "Education for Citizenship," "Education for Life Adjustment" or by some other similar terminology. Certainly every teacher at all conscientious has believed that his job is to help children grow toward maturity. Since this seems so evident it may well be questioned why at this time we should again attempt to redefine a point so obvious to us all.

The real fact, as Overstreet has indicated,[1] is that maturity as a concept representing growth of the individual's total life has had to wait for a historical process of development in many fields. Formulation of an adequate basis of maturity has had to await development of an adequate mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, physiology and psychology. So, while the schools since time immemorial have taught for maturity as a fundamental goal, a truly functional statement of maturity has had to wait until the present century. Only now have the synthesis of these fields of thought and the reexamination of old values in the light of this synthesis brought us a workable concept of maturity.

This new synthesis has supplied us with enough tools and information to make a school which will help youth in developing a quality of maturity not previously thought possible. We have better means of knowing when children and youth are matching their

[1] Harry Overstreet, *The Mature Mind*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1949.

powers of execution with an increasing awareness of the consequences of their acts. Or, to put it another way, we understand more completely when children are meeting their developmental tasks with ease. The period of early experimental investigation has passed and we have arrived at the point where we can devise signposts to guide us in the development of maturity in youth.

Individual Must Meet Maturity Levels

There are, however, certain precautions to be used with any signposts formulated. First of all, whatever signposts a teacher may use as a gauge of growth of the individual toward maturity, it is important to recall what is now a truism—each age has its own stages of maturity through which it must pass. Thus, if the signposts are to be used intelligently, the obligation is upon us to recognize the maturity levels we can reasonably expect of normal boys and girls at each level. Success or failure of the individual in meeting these maturity levels will roughly indicate his progress toward maturity. Those children who have problems are the boys and girls who have met only partial success in meeting the developmental tasks of their age.

The fact that the maturity levels of any particular age are not met does not mean, however, that the child is "bad," nor does it mean that he lacks knowledge. It is more likely to mean that something has happened to him along the road of his development which has kept him from achieving adequate growth toward maturity. Our job is neither to scold nor essentially to give more information, but rather to find out what happened to this normal individual which has caused him to act in an immature manner.

Maturity Levels Are Interrlated

Another characteristic of the maturity levels of any age, as Tryon and Lilienthal have pointed out,[2] is that they are interrelated and as we help a boy or girl to the successful accomplishment of any developmental task we not only facilitate mastery of other tasks but we also create readiness for more difficult tasks. Yet, it should be noted, the mere fact that a child acts maturely for a particular age level is no assurance that he is growing toward maturity. More important is the understanding which the child holds of the act he is performing. If we are deceived by the superficial act we may find ourselves forcing the child's development and thus hindering his progress toward maturity. It is at this point that it is so essential to keep in mind that growth toward maturity takes time. Tryon and Lilienthal[3] have estimated six months as a minimum for any developmental task to be really learned. Certainly many developmental tasks take much longer.

Signposts of Maturity

With an awareness of the foregoing statements we may use signposts such as the following to indicate the direction in which a boy or girl is growing:

---

[2] Caroline Tryon and Jesse W. Lilienthal III, "Developmental Tasks: 1. The Concept and Its Importance." *Fostering Mental Health in Our Schools.* Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, 1950 Yearbook, pp. 77-79.

[3] *Ibid.*

- Does this boy or girl have fun—can he laugh easily?
- Does this boy or girl have emotional warmth and empathy?
- Does this boy or girl have personal integration in such a way that he is growing in knowledge of his own major motives, desires, goals, ambitions, inhibitions, compensations, defenses and inferiority feelings, and thus how to avoid major conflicts within himself?
- Is this boy or girl developing self-esteem which is neither too high nor too low?
- Is this boy or girl able to express hostility or aggression when it is necessary or desirable?
- Is this boy or girl able to "relax" psychologically, to drop his psychological defenses, his "front"?
- Is this boy or girl able to accept himself within his own abilities and thus establish reasonable goals for himself?
- Is this boy or girl able to fix attention, to concentrate upon things important to his own growth?
- Does this boy or girl have a realistic outlook on the world which enables him to withstand all the ordinary shocks of life?
- Is this boy or girl achieving rapport with society and a feeling of identification with the group?
- Does this boy or girl have several interests?
- Does this boy or girl cooperate with the inevitable?

Obviously no child proceeds along an entirely even front in his growth toward maturity. He varies from every other child in his progress toward each goal. More significant than his achievement of any goal, however, is the way in which an individual meets the particular tasks of his age. This is true because his approach to the developmental tasks is most clearly an indication of how he is growing toward maturity. His approach to these tasks may be also a sign of what has happened to him up to the time he was more or less successful in meeting normally the problems he faces. The manner in which the individual faces the maturity levels expected of him is so much more important than the mere giving of the outward appearance of having attained these maturity levels that it may be said that unless the maturity levels are reached with ease, maturity is at best a superficial matter.

Crimson Thread of Anxiety

This conclusion was clearly indicated in a study W. C. Porter made of 300 soldiers hospitalized during World War II because of mental and nervous breakdowns.[4] On investigation of the backgrounds of these soldiers he found "a crimson thread of anxiety and emotional insecurity running through the childhood of each soldier."

Thus, what doing a task does to a boy or girl is equally as important as what that boy or girl does to the task. If school experience of any nature is such as to cause prolonged thumb-sucking, enuresis, shyness, nailbiting, sulkiness or similar manifestations, such reaction is probably an indication that the experience is keeping this boy or girl from developing toward ma-

[4] Quoted by W. C. Barger in speech to Nassau County, N. Y., Elementary Principals' Assoc., March 1947.

turity regardless of whether or not he is able to perform the task.

Selection of Subject Matter

In this light let us look, for example, to the question of subject matter in school life. The argument whether we should have subject matter or not has always been a specious one. Subject matter is important, but important only to the degree that we use it to raise the quality of the youngster's experiences as he faces his daily life. Subject matter should always be approached with at least the following questions in mind:

- Is this material such that it will enable this boy or girl to raise the quality of his own living?
- Is this material which is found in the dynamics of human behavior?
- Does this subject matter represent the learnings which the individual would naturally select out of his past experience to deal with the simple and complex affairs of living?
- Does the material result at once in sounder maturity, clearer meanings, more critical thinking?
- Does the subject matter lead to clearer understanding of the learning process?
- Does the material lead to unity in the child's own living?
- Is this subject matter accepted by the learners as valuable, reasonable, needed, practical?[5]

Once we judge material on these bases, we can feel more certain that it will be living subject matter for the child and will furnish experiences that will lead toward maturity. At present the subject matter with which we deal is for the most part made up of non-human material, remote from the child's own experience, not understandable by him because of his background and thus often incomprehensible and meaningless to him.

Learnings Can Promote Maturity

In attempting to appraise these learning experiences and discover how they lead toward greater maturity, we ask not only what has the child learned, but what has happened to him while he has been learning the subject matter.

We may well consider how the school can undertake this further objective. In the past seventy years, although the school year has been lengthened the school day has not been lengthened one bit. Yet, in the meantime, teachers have had to take over many added duties, to do many jobs the home once did, to prepare youth for vocations, to deal with problems arising from a more heterogeneous population and from overcrowded schools, and to perform a myriad of other tasks which seem daily to increase. These increasing activities and responsibilities of the school emphasize all the more the reason why in this period of synthesis in educational thought, we must re-examine and re-evaluate our objectives in the light of these newer insights into human behavior. We must ask whether the job we are now doing is the right job to prepare mature people for mature living in this bewildering world.

[5] For a more detailed discussion of these points see L. Thomas Hopkins, "The Minimum Essentials—What Are They?" *Teachers College Record*, May 1945, pp. 493-500.

Even though we as teachers may not be able to provide for children a completely effective education for maturity, we should give attention to the following:

- We can attempt to turn our thinking from a quantity to a quality frame of reference. Our quantitative thinking has led us to believe that knowledge is wisdom—the more knowledge the greater the wisdom. But wisdom is more than knowledge; it is meaningful experiencing.
- We can live vigorous lives ourselves, for no person is a better teacher than he or she is a human being. If we are small, narrow, petty persons, our teaching will be carping and filled with the minutiae. If our own lives are full of rich experiences, our teaching will be rich and we will help children grow toward maturity. We should not be afraid to be normal.[6]
- We can remember that there are three points that have been proved in practice on the elementary school level: The factor of readiness; children learn much from one another; and the length of time spent on a particular study varies from class to class and pupil to pupil.
- We can realize that it is more important to know how a child approaches a task than whether he has learned the task.
- We can know that a school or classroom is good in inverse ratio to the amount of pressure, rules and regulations that are needed. The school developing maturity has few rules.[7]
- We are able to understand the child we are with if we know what he has and where he is going.
- We can stop to consider that the obvious answer to a behavior problem is almost always certainly wrong.
- We can know that to help a child grow toward maturity we do all we can to improve him; to punish him is to hurt him.
- We can recall that maturity, like success, is never absolute. There is never complete maturity nor is any child completely immature.
- We can look about us to see that whether we will it or not, the world the child knows is an adult world. His patterns of maturity or immaturity are therefore acquired from our ways of acting.
- We can recall that children are not essentially "good" or "bad." Children are immature or mature.
- We can go beyond the letter of the law. The education law usually provides for the minimum for each child. Children to grow toward maturity need a maximum of rich experience.
- We can be sure that each child has at least one friend. Accept children, sit less in judgment upon them.

The knowledge, the materials, the tools for developing schools which will greatly facilitate the urge of children to grow toward maturity are at hand. The major question is—do we have the courage, do we respect the integrity of each individual child and youth sufficiently to build such schools?

---

[6] Howard Lane, in address to Classroom Teachers National Conference, Oxford, Ohio, July 19, 1948.

[7] *Ibid.*