

A Program of Moral and Spiritual Values in Education

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Kentucky's program of moral and spiritual values in education is described by William Clayton Bower, Professor Emeritus, University of Chicago, and part-time Professor, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

THE Kentucky Program of Moral and Spiritual Values in Education has arisen quite spontaneously out of a growing concern on the part of educators, parents and civic leaders over the lack of emphasis upon values in the program of the school, and an attempt to remedy the defect. These citizens are convinced that the school is as much responsible for the development of moral and spiritual values as for teaching knowledge, the tools of learning, and the techniques of citizenship. They feel that education should be concerned with the total interaction of the whole person with the world of nature, society and the cultural heritage, and that a basic phase of that interaction has to do with moral judgments and spiritual sensitivity.

To implement these convictions, the State Department of Education appointed a Committee on Moral and Spiritual Values in 1946, composed mostly of laymen, with J. Mansir Tydings as chairman, and an Advisory Committee, composed of professional educators, in 1948, with William Clayton Bower as chairman. At a state-wide conference of teachers, superintendents and heads of the teacher-education institutions of the commonwealth in 1948, a basic philosophy and steps of

procedure were unanimously adopted. Six pilot experimental schools were jointly chosen by the State Department of Education, the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and the four state teachers colleges. Two workshops were held at the University of Kentucky, the first in June, 1949, to prepare the supervisors and teachers of the pilot schools for the programs of experimentation, and the second in June, 1950, to analyze and appraise the results of the year's experiments and to produce materials for the use of schools interested in an emphasis upon moral and spiritual values. The reports of these workshops have been published as bulletins of the Department of Education.

VALUES IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

The philosophy upon which the program is based may be summarized as follows:

¶ Moral and spiritual education is defined as that phase of the school program which seeks to help growing persons to achieve an understanding of their relations to nature and society; to discover the moral and spiritual nature of these relations and the moral obligations involved in them in the light of the growing

moral and spiritual values which man has tested through centuries of living and which are recorded in his cultural traditions; to learn to judge and control their conduct by these values; and to achieve a philosophy of life.

¶ The program should be based upon the complete separation of church and state.

¶ Morality and spirituality, rather than being abstract "traits," are qualities that potentially attach to any and every experience of growing persons in their interaction with their natural, social and cosmic world, and are to be experienced through discovery and through functional use in living.

¶ It follows that moral and spiritual values are indigenous to the school community and the educative process, and not something to be injected into the school program by some outside agency. Values are to be discovered, raised into consciousness, and developed as they emerge within the school experience and with the resources available to the school. The school becomes a laboratory in which the normal experiences of social living and learning are subject to analysis, appraisal and experimental testing in the school community.

¶ Method in this area is of great importance. It should seek to develop the abilities and habits of discrimination, constructive criticism, self-reliance and cooperation. The center of education should shift from teaching to learning so that character may become an achievement of self-realizing persons rather than the result of external inculcation. To this end the

highest function of the teacher is that of an understanding counselor and guide.

¶ It follows that such a program should be one of emphasis, and should be made an integral part of the total school program, rather than one consisting of additional courses or a new department.

¶ Since experiences of pupils cut across institutional boundaries, the school program should foster understanding cooperation with all constructive community agencies.

¶ Such a program should be worked out democratically by the teachers themselves in the light of their classroom and school experience, and in cooperation with superintendents, principals and supervisors.

¶ The program should be undertaken experimentally, so that corrections and emergent leads may be derived from actual experience.

PROCEDURES IN STUDYING VALUES

The basic pattern of procedure developed in two workshops is the following: (1) to discover moral and spiritual values as they arise within the normal experience of growing boys and girls in relation to the school community and the educative process; (2) to raise these emergent values into consciousness and to identify them; and (3) to develop these potential values as functioning factors of interpretation, appraisal and control in the experience of growing boys and girls and of the school as a community.

For this purpose the experience of the school was divided, in the workshop and the subsequent experiments, into five areas:

• *Social Analysis of the School Community*: Purpose of this group was to discover the relations, functions and behavior situations which pupils, teachers and administrators encounter in living and working together in the school as a community. The group found that such an analysis involved use of two techniques: (1) for the discovery and listing, with descriptions, of behavior situations in which moral and spiritual values are generated; (2) for dealing with these situations, once they have been discovered, through analysis of the situation for its factors and possible outcomes in the light of the tested moral and spiritual values in the cultural traditions, the making of choices and the carrying of these choices through into action.

• *Analysis of Curriculum Content*: This group undertook three tasks: an analysis of the curriculum as found in most Kentucky schools; a statement of values essential for creative and democratic living; and a search for these values in the content of the curriculum.

For this purpose the group separated the courses of study into the subjects that have to do with the *cultural heritage*: the humanities (language, music, art, literature), the social sciences (history, geography, civics, economics, social studies, problems of democracy), the natural sciences (astronomy, geology, chemistry, physics, biology, physiology), mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry); and the *life adjustment* subjects falling under vocational exploratory areas (agriculture, industrial arts, commercial subjects, home economics, health, physical education). This analysis yielded a

wealth of moral and spiritual values when these are not injected into the curriculum, but dealt with objectively and normally when and as they occur as constituent elements of the great cultural traditions.

• *Personal and Group Counseling*: This group was convinced, in dealing with cases, that most adjustment problems involve, in one way or another, moral and spiritual values in their resolution. For this reason, counseling offers a particularly rich field for the discovery and development of moral and spiritual values. The group felt that the function of counseling is to free the ability of the pupil to meet his own problems by viewing them in a new light and by re-examining his values. With this in view, the various techniques of counseling were studied and appraised, and the place of counseling in the school program was explored.

• *Sports and Recreation*: This group found that the area of sports and recreation is particularly replete with specific and concrete behavior situations and because of the vividness of its experiences offers a most fruitful field for the discovery and development of moral and spiritual values. The group listed these potential values and suggested principles for the guidance of coaches, administrators and participants, together with an athletic policy for which the entire school is responsible, along with criteria for judging such a policy.

• *Symbolic Expression*: This group explored the function of symbols as means of giving concrete expression to moral and spiritual values and of rendering them communicable and capable of being reproduced in the grow-

ing experience of pupils and the school community. Instead of imposing stereotyped slogans, ceremonials and celebrations upon the school, the group examined the possibility of developing creatively suitable living symbolic expressions of these values as they are generated in the school experience and of utilizing, whenever appropriate, the great historic art forms, ceremonials and celebrations.

Each of these project groups assembled a considerable volume of case histories drawn from actual school experience, and the beginning of a body of source materials also.

CHANGED ATTITUDES NOTICEABLE

Initial results of the experiments in the pilot schools have been most reassuring. One important result has been the changed attitudes of teachers and supervisors. Participation in the workshops and the continuing experimentation was an enriching and stimulating personal experience in a process of democratic, cooperative and creative inquiry in a field where there are few marked trails and precedents.

Informal personal evaluations by teachers, pupils and parents reveal significant changes in attitudes and behavior. The following typical excerpts are indicative of such changes: "My way of teaching has been completely changed since I became aware of the need for better moral and spiritual programs" (from a fifth grade teacher); "I have found a new interest in my work. My own life has been greatly enriched" (a high school teacher); "The study of moral and spiritual values has been very valuable" (a mother).

One of the primary needs in the further development of the program is the use of scientifically devised tests for measuring changes in attitudes and behaviors.

RESULTS USED TO FURTHER PROGRAM

There has been a definite purpose not to develop stereotyped procedures to be imposed upon schools. Rather, there has been an attempt to describe actual school and classroom situations, to present an abundance of case material, and to make available suitable resource material for the use of teachers and administrators in working out their own programs in the light of their own situations and experiences.

The Kentucky program has passed through its first stage of exploration and formulation. One of the significant phases of its next stage will be the incorporation of the results of the workshops and the initial experimentation into the curriculum guide for elementary and secondary schools by the state department of education. A second development will be the introduction of courses or workshops in moral and spiritual values into the regular programs of all public teacher-education institutions of the state in the summer of 1951.

It is not the purpose of the department of education to impose this program upon the schools, but to make its resources available to those schools that feel the need of emphasis upon moral and spiritual values. Thus the future development of the movement will grow out of the shared convictions and purposes of the teachers and administrators of Kentucky schools.

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