

the people" know that the ideas we have called anathema will help them to break down democracy, or at least to keep it, as in Pericles' Athens, for the few.

The surge of democracy grows from strength to strength. Great as it is, it can be turned aside, even stopped. It is young but strong. Young, it will have to be nurtured, to be protected. Democracy allows so much that its enemies find it easy to win tolerance. This permissiveness may well be necessary. If it is, and I believe that it is, the democracy surrounding these malignant

spots will preserve health only if truly vigorous. The educator certainly is challenged in this health program! As an expert in the school, he or she must be diligent to study community, pupil and subject. As a citizen, he or she must join organizations dedicated to the enhancement of liberalism and the improvement of the schools. As a citizen, he or she can hardly afford not to be a "reformer," zealous for universal democracy (minority rights, for example). The citizen fulfilling this active role is the fitting partner in classroom democracy.

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## *Children Express Their Values*

ALICE V. KELIHER

Value judgments and reflections begin early, and school and home have primary responsibility in shaping these, according to Alice V. Keliher, Professor of Education, New York University, New York.

ASKED what she expects to do when eighteen, a ten-year-old girl replies, "I expect to be a tap dancer. If I can't do that I'll be a teacher."

A six-year-old boy doubles up his arm proudly, saying, "Boy, feel that muscle!"

A four-year-old climbs to the top of the jungle gym calling out, "Look at me! Look at me! I'm at the top!"

A girl of six proudly points out how her hair ribbon, socks and dress match.

A seven-year-old, echoed by the three-year-old brother, inquires, "Daddy, did you bring me a present from New York?"

A five-year-old boy has his first view of the kindergarten room, fixes his

gaze on the house play equipment, snorts, "Huh! Sissy stuff!"

A fifteen-year-old girl spends the evening dissolved in tears. She has not yet been invited to the spring prom but her girl friend has.

An eight-year-old boy has had trouble with spelling. He gets his first 100 per cent mark. He rushes home, paper in hand to show it exultantly to mother. It blows from his hand to the tracks. Chasing it, he is killed.

These expressions and activities of boys and girls, ranging from trivial to tragic, are subtle assertions of values. Almost every move we make and everything we say is somehow an indication of what we value, what we hold dear.

## **Value Judgments Start Early**

We start early with value judgments and reflections. At three the little girl is aware of the importance of money, at four the little boy feels the importance of getting to the top, at five a boy is already concerned that his environment be truly masculine. The six-year-old girl is proud of her clothes and the boy of his hard muscle. The eight-year-old has yearned to take a gift of 100 per cent in spelling to his mother and disregards what he has been taught about avoiding the tracks to retrieve this precious object. The ten-year-old girl, impressed with television tap dancers, puts dancing first in her life goals. The adolescent girl is hurt that her invitation to the prom does not materialize as soon as that of her girl friend. And so, on and on, we see reflections of what children value. We could add many more. The loyalty of the middle-aged child to his peer group, the desire of the adolescent for some form of genuine community service, the observance of birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and Mothers' Day are all expressions of the values we hold in relation to the people we love.

It is evident that the first, and probably deepest values come from home and family. In his lifetime, Wendell Willkie paid tribute to his father and mother for the value they placed on family relations and especially on lively conversations between family members. Abraham Lincoln paid tribute to his mother for transmitting to him the sturdy human values which he held and exemplified in his life. From infancy the family values are absorbed, many of them unconsciously. The child

who has known warm and generous expressions of love seeks to find and to give love in his own life. The parents who openheartedly accept people on their merits and on every possible occasion seek to rid their family scene of prejudice are likely to rear children who value human beings for what they are. The way parents *live*, far more than what they say, governs their children's choices of values.

## **Parents Need Help in Recognizing Values**

It is a happy obligation of school people to help parents to be aware of the way they pass values on to their children. The young mother who made a wry face each time she fed her infant cod liver oil did not realize it but she was teaching the baby how she felt about the remedy. Many sincere parents do not know that the raised eyebrow, the spelled-out words, the "Let's not talk about it now," or the "You're too young to know" incidents are teaching their children in a very lasting and fundamental way what they do value. For example, decent, honest and simple answers to children's questions may engender lasting respect for the values of decency, honesty and simplicity in human relations.

But it is even a more pressing and important obligation of school people, clergymen and other leaders to help parents to recognize and scrutinize the values they do hold. Oftentimes parents will fix upon the 100 per cent in spelling or success in first grade reading or passing college entrance examinations, not because these are the deepest values they wish to emphasize in the minds of their children, but be-

cause tradition has taken hold, or perhaps because they are anxious and insecure and seek to hold onto such specifics as these. Children then inevitably get the idea that the way to win parental love is to excel in these things whether or not they have the needed ability or interest, and to the exclusion of human values that have much to do with happiness in later marriage, family life and occupation.

The sad thing is that sincere parents, unaware of the restricted set of values they are stressing with their children, are ready victims of those who consciously seek to pare down the program of our public schools and see that they are returned to the limited program of the three R's. We have seen evidence in the past few troubled and anxious years that parents have joined in efforts designed to reduce the scope of educational opportunity for their children. They are told that their children cannot spell, read and compute as they should. Believing this, some parents immediately proceed, in disregard of all the evidence to the contrary, to do what they have been told is the "right thing" for their boys and girls.

Yet when these same parents are helped to bring their deepest values to the surface, when they see that they cannot focus their present anxieties about the future on the things they learned in a school of the past, they name such values as happiness, health, emotional security, competence in a chosen field of endeavor. At this time, school leaders need to display more insight and courage than ever, and to help parents bring their dearest values to the surface where they can compare

the relative importance of the various demands they make upon their children. Most parents *want the best* for their boys and girls, but they are often confused about what that best may be. They need understanding and sympathetic help in coming to a working knowledge of what is best in the light of those things they really cherish for their children.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF VALUES

Several rather simple approaches have been used successfully in helping parents to put first things first. One is to ask a group to name the one wish they have for their children if they had only one. Usually the choice is health or happiness. Given a second wish, the parents may express these two choices in different order and emotional security or balance is likely to be named also. When parents themselves name these values, it then is possible to follow these suggestions with descriptions of the ways through which schools seek to realize these values in a modern program.

Another approach to be used, though sparingly, perhaps, brings immediate highlighting of important values and it works as well for teachers as for parents. The question is put, "Suppose you knew, in some way, that *this* is the last day your children will have, what would you want the day to be like?" Teachers say they would share their favorite music, poetry, passages from the *Bible*. They would take time to hear the troubles and experiences children had wanted to tell them about when there had seemed to be no time to stop and listen. They would visit their favorite brook and enjoy its

ounds. They would try to make it a day of beauty, depth and quiet happiness. The question, then, is, "Why should this last day differ in the quality of values sought from all other days in the child's life?"

### Values Come Through Varied Contacts

We have indicated so far that the home is the deepest source of values and of the drives which lead children to seek these values. And we have indi-

cated that some of the most telling and compelling values are held unconsciously and that parents sometimes need help in seeing what they do cherish and why. But, of course, many vital values are absorbed from the church, the school, the neighborhood. While ethical and moral values may be taught in church and Sunday school, they become most deeply rooted when they are *lived* as they are taught. Engaging children and particularly adolescents



Courtesy, Waco Public Schools

*They would visit their favorite brook and enjoy its sounds.*

in community service through their church affiliation is one sure way to help them to learn the value of losing themselves to find themselves in a day when there is far too much fatalistic feeling that there is "no future."

The need for schools to see *how* they teach values and *what* values are accepted by the children is perennial. Each year we need a soul-searching time when we ask ourselves what our program, our procedures, our reports to parents, our rewards and punishments, are teaching children to value. What happens to the child who finds himself seated according to his ability in reading? What of the monitor who was selected for being among the "best behaved," in that he kept still and quiet in the classroom, but later became dictatorial with other children on the stairs? What of the children whose "perfect" arithmetic and spelling papers are always displayed on the bulletin board? What of those whose papers are never put on display? What of the child who is classified in the "bright group" and his age-mate who is in the "slow" group? What of the children who get "free lunches" and who must stand in a different queue from the others? What of the child who is not as well dressed and well bathed as the other boys and girls? Does the teacher unconsciously reject him and fail to give him a chance to help with the coveted activities of the group? What of the ninth grade boy who unfortunately must make a final choice of his high school course, knowing that he wants and is best suited for a technical program, but realizing that his parents and the community place higher value on the academic program?

### We Need to Clarify Our Values

We have the inescapable obligation of bringing to the surface those values we emphasize throughout the school day and of examining them to see whether they are really the ones we seek. Or may we be, perhaps, like the parents, deeply sincere in wanting to do what is "right" for the children without seeing clearly what we are accepting as "right." One of the most disgusting, and for the boys involved, tragic situations of this school season is the story of the alleged basketball "fix" among college students in one of our larger cities. Many commentators have condemned the boys involved. But the real issue may be that which was pointed out by one newspaper editor. He warns the American public that this incident may be only one symptom of many that our values are suspect. He calls our attention to the alleged "five percenters," the lures offered high school athletes to choose certain colleges, the income tax evaders, and the many, many people in America who seem to be seeking the "easy way" to accumulate material gains at the cost of moral values.

At this moment in the world's history we need as never before to clarify our values. The basic question is whether or not the essential dignity of the human being shall be held as a high and noble value the world over. This question is not remote. It is with us in everything we do. It is asked at the breakfast table, in the Sunday school lesson, in the high school science class, in the hospitals and the old folks' homes. The quality of our answer is the measure of our moral strength.

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