

### *School and Community*

**C**OOPERATION between school and community is an area close to the heart of every person interested in curriculum development. The curriculum movement, dynamic and vital as it is, has from its inception placed great emphasis upon the need for such cooperation. Justification for this mutual effort may be stated quite simply: The basic reason why the school should try to cooperate with its community or the community with its school is that such cooperation has promise for bringing about for children and youth a better quality of learning—and as a consequence a better quality of living.

As a topic, community and school cooperation is familiar to all readers of this journal. A study of ASCD publications shows almost immediately our concern for improving the objectives and techniques of such cooperation. Conferences, workshops and other professional meetings sponsored by our Association over a period of years have also dealt confidently and constructively with this area.

As curriculum workers we believe that when the forces, institutions and resources of the community are aligned with those of the school, a better education results. In going beyond a concept of education which was in reality a very limited form of schooling, curriculum workers recognized a fact that is basic to today's education—that not all effective learning takes place inside the classroom or within the school. Growth and development of children and youth are continuous and are affected by many social forces and institutions. Among these the school is but one.

In a democratic society, the effective citizen is the creative individual who uses the method of intelligence and the technique of group decision in the guidance of his living. To school people this indicates that democratic education must foster in all persons the qualities of creativeness and intelligence and the ability to work constructively and happily with others. Toward accomplishment of this purpose, education should fully utilize all resources, whether they be the pedagogical areas traditionally assigned to the school or whether they be persons, materials or institutions available only in the larger community.

As it attempts to construct such a program, the school today is faced with many obstacles. One of these is the increasing separation of the individual, particularly the young, from firsthand acquaintance with the productive elements of the community. Resulting from our nation's growing industrialization and urbanization, this separation has multiplied the difficulty of the school's task of explaining, clarifying, enriching, and of encouraging exploration and experimentation. Some experiences the school is well equipped to provide; for others the learner must turn, preferably with the school's encouragement and guidance, to the firsthand impressions and contacts provided only outside the school.

An effective education will provide children and youth with a wide range of firsthand experience, personal contact and rich observation. Apparently such experiences, once provided incidentally by the very nature of the community, must now be planned for deliberately through the mutual and

cooperative effort of school and community. Only through such primary contacts can learners draw valid and meaningful concepts, form enduring values and develop sound generalizations.

### **Mutual Benefits**

What is the "community" with which the school seeks to cooperate? Obviously, any attempt on the school's part to cooperate with the creative elements of the community, whether political, economic or social, will reveal the complexity of such an undertaking. The purposes, the degree of involvement, the areas concerned, the institutions and individuals contacted—these will vary according to the maturity and the concern of the persons affected. For example, very young children, in their general exploration of the near neighborhood, will be involved in cooperation at one level. A group of interested junior high school students who are observing at firsthand the functioning of a state or federal court is involved at a different level and for a more specialized purpose.

Adults, too, have varying levels of involvement in school-community cooperation. For example, parents who come into their own child's elementary school to assist in celebration of a special festival usually feel themselves involved in the school's program in a very personal and creative way. At a more impersonal level and in a more highly specialized area, a team of adults from a local bank might be invited into the secondary school to help a class to arrive at a better understanding of the function of a clearinghouse.

The persons, institutions, levels of involvement vary, yet the children and youth are experiencing at firsthand, making themselves acquainted with the creative and productive elements

of their community. Similarly, the community members who are involved may very frequently examine their own roles, and thus relate themselves anew to the creative process of education.

Several articles in this issue illustrate the mutual benefits that arise when school and community work together. Parents of children attending the Maury School in Richmond, Virginia, are constantly involved in the creative instructional program of the school. Working with the teaching staff, they help to plan and then actually to provide for their children fresh opportunities for learning. The article describing the growth and development of the "country homes for city schools" in Bremen, Germany, also shows the concern of parents and other citizens for cooperating with professional school people in order to extend to children and young people opportunities which otherwise would not be open to them. Several articles illustrate various other aspects of school and community cooperation.

It is well that cooperation between school and community is stressed in our current thinking. While there is always danger in oversimplifying the objectives and techniques involved in this relationship there can be little question as to the mutual benefit which arises once such cooperative study and action are undertaken. The school has always needed the understanding and sympathetic support of its community; never has it needed these more than at the present time. The community, we believe, has always needed the keen understanding and insightful interpretation of itself which only its schools can give; never has this been more applicable than it is today. —*Robert R. Leeper*, associate editor, *Educational Leadership*.

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