

School Affiliation—One Answer to a Wide Problem

MARJORIE P. SCHAUFFLER

How can children identify themselves more closely with boys and girls in other lands? This article tells how the School Affiliation Service offers one possible answer to this current problem.

HAVE you ever seen an eight-year-old flushed with the discovery that another eight-year-old *on the far side of the world is his friend*? Another eight-year-old, all the way across the ocean, who speaks another language, eats different food, wears different clothes but is part of a family as he is, loves the things he loves and *is his friend*?

How can a school promote such discovery?

MR. JOE DOAKS, principal of Dobbin Elementary School, eight grades, looks at the situation in his school:

"I'm an alert, forward-looking school principal, conscious that pupils in my school are entering an international world. Their parents and their teachers and I don't know much about that world and aren't ready for it ourselves.

"We have an able, lively faculty, an interested parent group, an established but growing curriculum, well related to our community. But while we've looked at it, that community has stretched out of Dobbin County to include Germany and Korea and all the rest of the world. How can our children gain any real understanding of other countries in such a wide community? We've had various international programs in the school—and still do, but how can our pupils—or

those in high school—or we adults—effectively relate ourselves to people in those other countries without seeing them?

"If the theories of learning apply, we probably ought to start with just one other country and with people in somewhat the same position as ourselves. We ought to get into contact with them and somehow make a partnership with a principal, teachers, pupils and, if possible, parents, in a school there. And we ought to *do* something about it, not just talk. But how can we find such a school, somewhat like ours, and with people who are just as interested as we are? And what can we do that they would like? And what kind of people are they? And what could they add to our school? This begins to sound like work. Are we really interested enough to attempt it?"

What One School Tried

The Oak Lane Country Day School of Temple University in Philadelphia, felt itself in a position somewhat like that of Mr. Doaks. At that time, however, it learned about the School Affiliation Service of the American Friends Service Committee. Faculty members decided, "Maybe this is our answer." The principal, John H. Niemeyer,

asked for material describing the program and what other schools have done. Then an SAS staff member attended a faculty meeting to explain further, answer questions, and discover Oak Lane's particular interests as to country, kind of school and community setting.

Actually, only in France could SAS immediately propose a school, relatively similar in character, number and ages of pupils, that was looking for partnership. It was the Maison d'Enfants in Sevres, near Paris. During World War II, under the guidance of a courageous director, Mme. Yvonne Hagnauer, this school gave home and education to stranded children from three to fourteen years of age.

The faculty members of Oak Lane considered and liked what they heard about the school in Sevres and invited an SAS staff member to discuss the program and the particular school at an evening PTA meeting. Some of the older children in the school were included in the consultation. (When an American high school considers affiliation, student representatives usually join in the initial planning.)

Meanwhile in France, an SAS staff representative gave the description Oak Lane had prepared of itself to Mme. Hagnauer. This description was discussed by the faculty and older students of the Maison d'Enfants school.

Both schools decided to attempt the new venture and letters of greeting were exchanged by the directors. Several Oak Lane teachers wrote, but received scant replies or none at all. American children sent examples of their classwork. Some fine artwork from France was at length received. A

few class letters were exchanged, but only with long, discouraging time lags.

The difficulty in understanding and the language barrier seemed to preclude sufficient response to feed American enthusiasm. The project took on new life, however, when the SAS director and school visitor in France visited this country, to give firsthand interpretation of the schools in France to their American partners. The warmth and increased understanding created by such personal sharing of the life of the partner school vitalized the affiliation.

This led to a peak of experience the following summer. Mme. Hagnauer, director of the school in Sevres, came to the United States as Oak Lane's guest for three months. Funds for her visit to Oak Lane were raised jointly by faculty, parents and students.

Mme. Hagnauer stayed in the home of the principal, Mr. Niemeyer, and with various teachers and parents. She attended a two-week public school summer workshop in South Carolina, and visited in Washington and at the United Nations. She shared in a month of summer school and in the first month of the fall term at Oak Lane. She became well acquainted with all the Oak Lane children and they with her. She taught them how to make puppets and she took back with her messages and student handiwork for every class in Sevres. Most important, however, she took back an increased understanding of common hopes and aims in education.

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Following Mme. Hagnauer's visit, exchanges of materials and letters between the affiliates greatly increased. From a brief record of exchanges during 1952 come these items:

From France: A beautiful scrapbook of pictures painted by the kindergarten children and a group photograph of themselves; individual paintings with descriptions as told by the children from the first grade; beautifully decorated letters to children in the second and third grades from their French counterparts; a water color, framed and ready to be hung in the class room, from a fourth grade pupil; a stereopticon from the fifth and sixth grades with slides of scenes of Paris on Christmas Eve; from the junior high school came translations of compositions that the Oak Lane children had sent.

From Oak Lane: Pictures from kindergartners painted by themselves; a group of children's inexpensive outgrown shoes that Oak Lane children brought in and that were shined by the kindergarten children; one of his own possessions from each child in the second grade; a train book from the second grade; tape recordings by the seventh graders of patriotic hymns and American poetry; pamphlets about the United States, and particularly about American Indians; information about mineral deposits in the U.S. and samples of ore sent by ninth graders, who had gathered the information by writing to various companies.

Personal Visits

Personal visits also enlivened the affiliation among faculty and parents. In 1952 letters and handsome pictures for each Oak Lane parent who con-

tributed to the school's French Fund and for each parent who had entertained Mme. Hagnauer came from the French school. A woodcut reproduction was also sent from France, signed on the back by the children of Maison d'Enfants. Individual letters between the two faculties have been numerous, with at least one Oak Lane faculty member sending a letter each week to a faculty member in Sevres.

In '53-54, the fourth year of the affiliation, Mr. Niemeyer, through funds from the Ford Foundation and a year's leave generously granted by Temple University, was a special member of the School Affiliation staff in France.

His year began with language refresher work in Mme. Hagnauer's home. Following that he moved into the setting of the Maison d'Enfants (where, too, his daughter studied for the year). He then gained an intimate picture of French educational practice and philosophy. He made many visits with fellow staff members to other affiliated French schools of many types and strengthened ties with other French educators with whom contacts have been patiently built up by SAS staff members since 1946.

Later, Mr. Niemeyer had a month of similar experience in affiliation service in Germany and contacts with educators in England. He shared in interschool conferences of teachers and pupils, and was a participant in an international workshop of teachers from affiliates before leaving Europe. All through the year he had been reporting and interpreting his experiences to teachers, parents and pupils at Oak Lane and working with SAS staff members in Europe and the United States

to see new implications for their program.

This Applies to Other Schools

Not every school has the interest, resources and freedom of Oak Lane. Successful affiliation requires at least some degree of all three. The purpose of the School Affiliation Service is to offer a practical channel to schools that have these qualifications plus the conviction that education for our time must build a world view.

The program is small (150 partnerships), necessarily so at present, because it requires staff at both ends. This is made up of teachers with international experience and sensitivity, who speak the language of the country. Such a combination is hard to find and sometimes must be developed in the Service. Overseas partners are now principally in France and Germany, a few in Italy and the Netherlands, three in Japan and one in England.

Staff members in the U.S. and overseas offer schools suggestions for fruitful activities and relations through the media of bulletins and correspondence, through school visits and talks with students and faculty (hopefully once a year, sometimes oftener) and through interschool conferences. At such conferences, teachers and students, including guests from overseas, discuss practical problems and get new ideas and other help from one another.

Schools and their communities get into the heart of the program when some of their representatives undertake personal visits between the partner schools. Support for affiliation is increased even more when principals or directors plan for such visits. Sev-

eral schools have begun with exchanges of teachers. Many high schools have begun with student exchanges. In the six years of the program's life, affiliated schools in Europe have sent about 40 students to their U.S. partner schools for a year, and 10 Americans from affiliated schools have gone to visit their European partners. Many students and a number of teachers, either in groups or as individuals, have had summer international experiences growing out of the program. Perhaps the most promising of these are the week-long international workshop conferences for teachers which have taken place in Europe. The sixth such group, 50 teachers and staff from five countries, met in July 1953 in Holland.

U.S. schools find additional face-to-face stimulus in visits by some of the many teachers from other countries who come to the U.S. under the visiting teacher program of the U.S. Office of Education, which plans the time of many of these visitors. The Office of Education welcomes information from the School Affiliation Service about any schools that will extend hospitality for a few days, for a month or longer.

The broadly interested affiliated school discovers that affiliation does not preclude other international or local interests. Rather, it gives these interests added relevance. For example, a big city school with a large mixture of Italian, Jewish and Negro families finds itself closer knit because all these elements are so much appreciated by its partner school in France.

Oak Lane Country Day School of Temple University and the Maison d'Enfants have profited greatly by these mutual visits.

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