

The Importance of People

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Why Become a Core Teacher?

A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER who is a friend of mine tells me that he is under considerable pressure from his principal, a few of his colleagues, and his university professor to become interested in being a core teacher. His life is pretty well organized, with his classes, textbooks and extracurricular activities. He takes pride in the fact that he is a good teacher, does his part in sponsoring a club, and attends PTA regularly. Now he is asked to consider a whole new way of life, as far as his working hours are concerned. He wants to know why he should ask for all that trouble.

I did not get a chance to answer him, because by the time he had posed his question, the human eddies had pushed us down the corridor in opposite directions. When I see him again, however, I will tell him some of the reasons why I think he should trade comfort for action.

In the situation described by my friend, everybody is comfortable and happy except the learners. Indeed, some of *them* are happy and contented, because their tasks are simple, well suited to their abilities, and free from

all responsibility. The whole scene has a semblance of order and contentment, and of course most of the trouble-makers have left school.

The primary reason for the core curriculum is that it gives the learner an opportunity to work in keeping with his own purposes. We know now that each human being is uniquely purposive. This means that there are some things to do that are in line with the individual learner's unique purpose, and some things that are not. Some activities make sense to the learner, some do not.

We know that when a person is working in accordance with his purposes, what he learns has meaning to him, and because it is significant to him, it stays with him longer. Also, he will do more—learn more—when the activity is along the line of his purpose, rather than against it, or across the grain.

Cooperative Planning

If the learner is to have a chance to do those things which make sense to him, he will have to be consulted as to what is going to take place. This is called teacher-pupil planning. It means that the activities of the class are derived from the class, with the assistance of the teacher, instead of being decided in advance by the teacher. By this

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means, the unique learner can find something to do which is constructive and still in keeping with his purpose.

Helping to plan the program of the class throws responsibility on the learner, at least in part, whereas before it was always assumed by the teacher. If the semester (or still worse, the four year period) is a poor one, part of the blame must fall on the individual student who helped plan it. Being in a position of responsibility, the learner has to help contrive a good learning experience. This experience, if successful, will be something new, something which has not been before, something creative.

The teacher-pupil planning without which there can be no core curriculum has a further advantage in that it takes all of the human beings involved in the project into account. From the standpoint of human values, it is indecent and immoral for thirty people to start on a semester's journey when only one of them (the teacher) knows where they are going or what is to take place, or has given consent to it.

When the teacher enters into sincere planning with his learners, he has to be prepared to give up some of the items he has valued, and cherish the values of his students. Of course if the planning is not sincere, then it is best not to do it at all. The teacher who has his mind made up as to what is going to be done and tries to make his stu-

dents think they planned it will be spotted by them for the faker he is.

An Invitation to Life

When genuine planning takes place, dividing lines between so-called subjects or "disciplines" will disappear. This is true because these disciplines do not come separated in life, but they come all together. It is in school and *only* in school that history, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, English and art come separately. When a class plans to study the local waterworks, for example, all of these subjects and many more are studied in their natural setting. So we need not say that we deliberately reduce the walls between subjects. They simply do not exist except as we put them in, and when we approach life and learning freely and naturally, it never occurs to us to fractionate them.

In like manner, we will have longer class periods, because when we no longer build walls between subjects, we have no need to go somewhere else. The reason why our high school folks all jump up and run every forty-five minutes is because this is "taught" here and that is "taught" there. The walls between subjects make the bells, and the bells pour our whole student body into our corridors at once, so that we need wide corridors, to be used only five minutes out of fifty. Long class periods are the *result* of teacher-pupil planning, because running down the hall no longer meets our need.

There are a good many so-called core classes which are substituted for two "disciplines." English and social studies, for example. Too often the teacher teaches English for one period

and social studies for the other. This is somewhat better than having the classes separate, in separate rooms with different teachers. It is better because the teacher can come to know thirty people better than sixty, and because it saves time. It may also be the beginning of something better. I would not, however, call it core because it lacks student-teacher planning and all of the goods that follow.

So I will tell my friend, when I see him again, that I think he has received an invitation to life, and that he ought to give it serious consideration. It is an invitation to life because it takes teaching out of routine, out of the settled past, and puts it into creative action. It is an invitation to youth, because those who live creatively do not grow old. They cannot, because each move is new. Old age comes from repetition, routine, and a life devoid of exploration and adventure. Age is a symptom of already anticipated action; action which has occurred many times before, and out of which all juice has long since been squeezed. The universe is in process of being created, and my friend can be one of the architects. He cannot, however, if he values security and habit over adventure. If he becomes a core teacher, he will have adventure abundantly.

—EARL C. KELLEY, *professor of secondary education, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan.*



THE TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP

by ROBERT NELSON BUSH
Stanford University

This book focuses upon the heart of the educational process—the relationship between the teacher and the pupil in the classroom. It is about *people* in schools, how they feel and behave toward one another. The author presents the concrete case of Miss Brown and her class of pupils in a public school. Her relations with each pupil and with the class as a whole are described in detail with accompanying graphic material.

256 pages • 5½" x 8¾"
Published October 1954

TEACHER-PARENT INTERVIEWS

by GRACE LANGDON, *Child Development Consultant,* and IRVING W. STOUT, *Arizona State College (Tempe, Ariz.)*

This is a book written for teachers from nursery school through high school. It is based on the conviction that there is something very important to be gained by teacher and parents talking directly with each other. The kind of interview discussed is the kind that any teacher who wants to can do and learn to do well. Suggestions on what to talk about, on how to go about having an interview, are plentiful, specific, concrete, and detailed—but not dogmatic.

356 pages • 5½" x 8¾"
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