THE CAREER HIGH SCHOOL

What special offerings can the career high school provide to meet the needs of today's talented youth? This article discusses the theory and practice upon which the career school is based.

IN CURRENT educational thinking about the organization of high schools, two broad points of view may be discerned. Some authorities feel that all adolescents should be educated in a comprehensive high school and that provisions for individual differences can be made within the same school building. Others regard the individual differences in an unselected group of adolescents as so wide that the needs of some of the individuals can best be served in special, or career, high schools. A smaller community may have no choice except a comprehensive high school. In such large cities as New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, it is feasible, if it is so desired, to organize specialized, or career, high schools. The courses offered by the career schools may be designed to provide for various degrees of specialization among the pupils attending the schools.

Types of Career Schools

The career high schools in New York City, for example, are of many different types. Some schools are designed for students who have exceptional ability in science, most of whom will enter colleges and have major courses in the sciences or mathematics. Other schools are designed for students of superior aptitude for engineering and technical fields, most of whom will become engineers and technicians. Still others are designed for students who are talented in music and art or in the performing arts. A number of the specialized high schools are designed for those students who wish to enter the various industries or trades, such as the needle trades, automotive trades, aviation trades, printing trades, or to enter such business occupations as bookkeeping, merchandising, or office machines. The career high schools, then, may be broadly classified into: (a) schools for special college preparation, and (b) schools for special terminal education in trades, industries, or business occupations.

Premises for Career High Schools

Proponents of the career, or specialized, high school have formulated the premises upon which the rationale for this type of school rests. These premises are summarized briefly in the following paragraphs.

First, student selection on the basis of interest, ability and terminal aims creates both a favorable learning situation and a democratically desirable social environment. This selection tends
to make for a more homogeneous student body than would probably be found in the typical general high school. The student body, however, is not uniform because there is a range of general academic competence as well as of specific competencies among the students in any one career school.

Second, the career high school provides many students with a purpose which, for them, the general high school can not supply. Purpose is the motive power of the learning process. Students can accomplish tasks beyond the degree of competence they usually display if they have a strong purpose to motivate them. The students of exceptional competence, who have a purpose, profit from the specialized high school because they can employ extra time and effort in projects and activities of a special nature that would not be required or even possible in most of the general high schools.

Third, the career high school is consistent with the ideal of a well-rounded education. The career high school does not encourage narrow specialization. The specialized subjects, or courses, may very largely take the place of the more formal subjects offered in the general school, but these students have about as much time devoted to so-called cultural subjects as do students in the general school. Basic subjects in the career schools cover the range of general education, for example, English, social studies, and mathematics, and are similar to offerings in the general high schools.

Fourth, the career high school makes possible a better integration of the curriculum. The career school permits the development of an interest and a purpose which for a number of students is not possible in the general high school. This central purpose or special interest, which underlies the curriculum of each school, permits the interpretation and integration of such basic disciplines as English, social studies, science and mathematics with the special purpose of the curriculum in the school. Thus, content of a subject and the work of the student, for example, in English or in mathematics or in other subjects, can be related to such career interests as science, music, etc.

Fifth, the career high schools develop marketable skills. The teaching of marketable skills is now generally recognized as a legitimate objective of a public school system. The advantage of the career high school over the general high school in this respect is obvious, especially when expensive and space-consuming equipment is required as in technical courses in the electrical, printing, and needle trades.

Selection of Students for Career High Schools

In cities where career high schools have been organized, the general practice has been for the specialized school to select its students on the basis of interest and ability to succeed along the lines of the particular activities to which the school curriculum leads. This should not be interpreted to mean that the student bodies of the career high schools must be very superior in general academic competence. The student bodies of some specialized high schools have high average IQ's; other specialized schools may enroll students, some of whom are of average or less than average scholastic ability.
Selection of College-Bound Students

In those career high schools which prepare for college admission, the selection of students is generally made on the basis of special entrance examinations and an analysis of the cumulative school record of the student, as well as the recommendations of the supervisors or guidance counselors of the feeding schools. The entrance examinations are mainly of the academic aptitude test type. They stress the ability of the individual to handle abstract symbols. As a result, the students selected tend to have relatively high IQ's as well as having and exhibiting an interest in the particular career represented in the special courses of the school.

Selection of Terminal Course Students

The selection of students for career high schools with terminal courses is also in many instances based upon an entrance examination as well as upon an examination of the cumulative record of the student and the recommendation of supervisors or guidance counselors. The specific entrance tests vary from school to school and are based upon the particular abilities or aptitudes required in the courses offered in these schools. The Needle Trades High School in New York City for example, stresses in its examination the ability to visualize spatial relations and to exhibit eye and hand coordination.

Career High Schools in New York City

Since career high schools in New York City are best known by the author of this article, they will be used to illustrate more specifically the general considerations that have been discussed. For purposes of a brief presentation, the schools have been classified according to those which emphasize special college preparatory courses and those which emphasize terminal courses.

Careers Requiring College Preparation

The career schools preparing for college entrance include such high schools as the Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, The High School of Music and Art, the High School of Performing Arts, and Stuyvesant High School. The Bronx High School of Science is a specialized high school for able science minded boys and girls interested in careers for which science and mathematics are of paramount importance. Admission is by special examination, study of the student's previous record in school and an interview. The school offers advanced courses in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics.

Brooklyn Technical High School is a polytechnic high school which prepares competent students who have scientific and technical interests for admission to engineering colleges and for direct entrance into industry as technicians. Admission to this school, also, is based upon an entrance examination, the applicant's previous school record and the recommendation of supervisors and guidance personnel of the previous schools the student has attended.

The High School of Music and Art is a specialized secondary school for

J. Wayne Wrightstone is director, Bureau of Educational Research, Board of Education of the City of New York, New York.
children who are talented in music and art. Most of the students are admitted to this school by means of entrance examinations, including aptitude tests in music and art, as well as by observing and judging the products or performance of the child in art or music. The child's previous record and the appraisal of previous supervisors and school personnel are considered. The school develops the student's special ability in music and art, either for professional or cultural purposes.

The High School of Performing Arts specializes in the dance for boys and girls who plan to become professional dancers, in music for boys and girls who plan to become professional musicians, and in dramatic arts for talented boys and girls who plan to enter the field of the theater.

In all instances audition and entrance tests are used to select the pupils. In addition to the usual academic work, instruction is provided in the student's special field, and normally includes three additional periods per day.

Stuyvesant High School is a school for boys with superior academic competence who seek enriched opportunities in mechanic arts, mathematics and science. The admission to this school is similar to that of others, in that the students are admitted on the basis of an entrance examination, a review of previous school records and the recommendations of supervisors and guidance personnel in schools previously attended.

Career Schools for Terminal Courses

The career schools for terminal courses in business, industry and various trades frequently select the pupils more on a basis of interest and potential ability than on the basis of the high academic standards of the college preparatory specialized schools. These schools in New York City include the following:

Brooklyn High School of Automotive Trades specializes in developing skilled workers in the automotive field.

Brooklyn High School for Home-making specializes in training girls and women in nursing and homemaking, including beauty culture.

Central Commercial High School is designed to train students for entry into commercial occupations such as bookkeeping, merchandising and salesmanship, clerical practices, stenography and typing.

Central High School of Needle Trades is a specialized school which seeks to prepare young people for entrance into the needle trades. It also offers technical education for the students who wish to enter the junior college, Fashion Institute of Technology and Design.

Food Trades High School is a vocational school designed to train young people in the basic skills and tools of the food industry, and prepares cooks, bakers and restaurant workers.

Machine and Metal Trades High School offers training in the machine and metal trades. It prepares its technical course students to become tool designers, draftsmen, expediters and maintenance engineers.

Manhattan High School of Aviation Trades is a specialized high school devoted to the training of aviation mechanics.

Metropolitan Vocational High School includes several specialized
schools within its organization. The Maritime High School, for example, trains young boys to enter into such maritime occupations as those of able bodied seaman, quartermaster, and deck storekeeper. This school is also the home of the School of Performing Arts as well as general vocation courses.

New York School of Printing is a specialized school which provides extension courses for journeymen and apprentices, and all day pre-employment courses for youth who intend to enter the printing trades. This school is closely associated with the printing industry and unions in New York City.

School of Industrial Arts is a specialized high school designed to prepare talented young men and women to enter into such art occupations as advertising art, commercial art, architectural drafting, cartooning, fashion design, and display. Admission to the school is by special entrance examination.

Washington Irving High School is a comprehensive high school in which girls may receive specialized training in the fine and applied arts, for admission to advanced schools or colleges or for such occupations as dress design and textile design.

The range of career high schools is wide in New York City. Both interest and aptitude are required for admission to these schools, many of which prepare students for admission to colleges or technical institutes. However, students may select terminal courses in many of these schools and enter into technical trades, industry, or business occupations.

Summary

The career high schools have grown up, especially in New York City, for a number of reasons. They give to a sizable number of adolescents a purpose which makes possible the development of a strong motivating interest in education for a particular career. They make possible a more closely integrated curriculum of general and special courses than the system of constants and variables now found in the general high schools. Without producing uniformity, they reduce the extent of the variation found in a given class or a given school and thereby improve both the learning and the social situation. Some of the schools teach their students marketable skills which permit the students to adjust more rapidly to the operations and techniques of production in the world of today. They provide many students with a purpose and a center of interest to which many activities can be related. They encourage the individual to develop his special interests and talents for the benefit of society and of himself.