

classroom. The curriculum problem is one to which curriculum specialists must give further attention.

The other question concerns financial support of the public schools. Obviously, the right to move about in order to find a better job or to do one's present job in another place, or to find a pleasant environment is a generally accepted part of American citizenship. And it is clear

that people *do* move. Children who are educated in one state become residents of other states. Thus the question is how best to finance the schools to provide maximum educational opportunity for all children. Some argue the need for Federal assistance on the basis of the evidence of mobility. In answering the question of financing the schools the factor of mobility must certainly be considered.

MILDRED M. HOYT

Newcomers as Resources

A teacher's first concern is with the feelings of the newcomers. He then is eager to turn their knowledge of other places and their fresh point of view to good account academically.

NINE-YEAR-OLD Helga skipped a little and then ran a little to keep pace with the rapid stride of Miss Purly, the school principal, as they covered the long hall to Helga's "new room." Helga was breathing hard and had a very strange feeling in her tummy as they came to the right door. The principal beckoned to the teacher as she steered Helga into a room full of boys and girls—thirty-two pairs of eyes all on Helga! After a hasty, whispered conference with Miss Kent, the teacher, Miss Purly departed. Miss Kent pointed out a distant desk and said, "Helga, you may sit back there for now. I'll take care of you when we have finished our spelling lesson." Helga made her way clumsily up an endless aisle and shriveled down into the seat indicated for her. Tears hovered threateningly back of her lids. She felt very small and very much alone.

Helga *was* alone, of course, because she was so entirely outside the group situation. The efficient teacher went on pronouncing words. The inquisitive children cast furtive glances at Helga while they wrote. No one was really *unkind*, but neither had a single person in this whole big school said a real word of welcome or given so much as a reassuring pat on the shoulder. Finally, to be sure, Helga would be drawn into the group because she was a charge and a responsibility. Finally, the teacher and the children would discover that this unprepossessing girl spoke both French and German passably, drew very good maps, and played the flute with mounting skill. But it is doubtful if this child herself would ever forget how clumsy, how unworthy, how unattractive, how unneeded she felt on that memorable first day in Miss Kent's fifth grade.

It has been every teacher's problem or privilege to find a place for a newcomer in his classroom at one time or another. Many teachers, in fact, go through the procedure regularly, especially if their school is near an Army base or in an area inviting to migrant workers. To some teachers a new arrival is an added burden to an already overcrowded program. But to others a newcomer is a real challenge. Rather than accepting the child as merely another personality to be plied with learning, creative teachers find ways to make use of the child's uniqueness as a valuable teaching resource.

A newcomer, burdened with misgivings about his new status, is not an immediately promising contributor. He needs reassurance desperately. Often welcoming him becomes merely ritualistic. The teacher sets the stage, the children mutter the proper incantations of welcome in high-pitched, sing-song voices and then settle back into their comfortable pattern—one in which the faint-hearted new arrival does not yet fit. Although any welcome is momentarily heartening, it serves to establish that important feeling of belongingness only if it is followed up with tangible evidence that the child is really a desirable addition to the group. When released from fear and concern over his status with his peers, a child can give freely of himself. And often he has great gifts for his group.

Becoming a Group Member

In our schools today good teachers are going far beyond academic learnings in their zeal to help children with the pressing problems of social orientation. Their

MILDRED M. HOYT is assistant professor of education, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado.

concern is that children come to understand the feelings of others, that they gradually learn to accept responsibility for others, that they practice common courtesy and consideration, that they develop appreciation for differences in others, and that they show willingness to learn from their peers. Teachers concerned with social values are always looking for the kind of firsthand experiences which will give them a chance to inculcate these vital learnings. Newcomers provide the ideal opportunity.

Every new child in a class effects great changes in the existing pattern. Thus his presence, from the moment of arrival, sets in motion a chain of readjustments. Gradually, perhaps, but steadily and inevitably, he becomes an integral part of the group. Perhaps he will change the character of a clique or become a part of a new twosome or threesome. The realignments called for require expert guidance on the part of the teacher. He has a job to do and must do it unobtrusively. The noisy, heavy-handed, overhearted approach may only serve to make the newcomer feel that his own worth had to be bolstered by teacher influence. How much better for him to feel that he has won his way with his peers because he is pretty special himself. The sensitive teacher quietly pulls the right strings, and, in so doing, develops a "resource" rather than a "responsibility."

Transient children in all parts of the United States become regular resource persons not only for the teaching of social values but also for "sparking" interest in new ideas and new places. Sometimes they are the children of Army personnel obliged to keep moving to new installations. Often they are the children of migrant workers whose sustenance depends on finding jobs in new industrial plants or "following the crops." Teachers

have sometimes felt imposed upon by the necessary disruption created by these frequent new arrivals. They say, "What can we do for them? They may soon be leaving again."

Achieving Acceptance

Teachers can, first of all, create a climate conducive to maximum acceptance of, and maximum participation by, such children. Boys and girls who do not have a stable home environment often need more certainty of acceptance and more continuous evidence of their own personal worth than do other children. Their feeling of acceptance is not generated by kindness and tolerance alone, but grows from the certainty that they can make a worthwhile contribution to their new classmates. The wise teacher studies their records from previous schools, visits their parents, observes their behavior patterns, takes note of special interests, and searches for the skills that may bring them special attention from their peers.

How does a child achieve acceptance and become a "resource" in the classroom? Let us look at Jim who has just arrived from a distant state. He is a timid, small boy who has little to share orally with the gabby fifth graders in Miss Dole's room. But Miss Dole knows that Jim's dad is a colorful character who has come to town to supervise the new dam. Jim's dad is invited to school to tell the children about the dam, and Jim has a chance to bask in the reflected glory of such a special parent. With new courage, Jim can help arrange the field trip to the dam, and can answer many of the questions children ask about such an exciting project.

Eleven-year-old Pierre has difficulty expressing himself in English. Pierre's mother, a war bride who has finally been

able to bring her son to join his father in America, speaks French fluently. The teacher wisely invites her to school as a resource person, and soon she is teaching all the children French phrases on Friday afternoons. Pierre's adeptness at French gives him a chance at uniqueness as he impresses his own skills upon the group.

Seven-year-old David comes to a rural community after spending all his life in New York City where he never lived in an apartment below the eighth story. He has many things to tell and pictures to draw about life in a great city, and the children love to hear about ways in which their town differs from his former home. David becomes acceptable and interesting in his role as "authority" on city life.

Twelve-year-old Manuel's father "moves with the crops" and Manuel has had to help in the great harvests too, for there is a large family to feed. Because of many moves, Manuel is far behind in his studies and feels on the defensive about reciting. The teacher wisely promotes the unit on Farming to give Manuel his opportunity to be an "expert" on products of the soil.

When Sara Mai comes into the kindergarten at Christmas time, she enjoys the distinction of being the only Negro child in the group. Happily she is a born actress, and her contributions to "show and tell" time are dynamic. Her teacher sees how she "spices" the period and uses her to show others how to be more "fun to listen to."

Rod is pretty shy with his new fourth grade friends until his teacher discovers that he is a great collector. She sees that his rocks, his jars of water snakes, and his fungus collection appear on classroom shelves and tables. They invite curiosity, of course, and soon Rod can be counted on for special science exhibits.

A Flexible Program

Although every good teacher's first concern is with the feelings of the newcomers, he is eager to turn their knowledge of other places and their fresh point of view to good account academically. Manuel's know-how and experience add considerable impetus to the Farming unit and make the learnings seem vital. Pierre's knowledge of customs and language in France lends greater reality to the unit on People of Other Lands. With David's contributions on city life, the unit on Communities results in less limited understandings.

All contributions are invaluable, of course, but have special merit because of the social learnings implicit in them. A newcomer not only calls for social reshuffling but is often a good excuse for it. Perhaps the teacher sees in the new arrival a potential friend for her only isolate. Perhaps she sees the newcomer as a means of breaking up an unconstructive twosome. He may be just what is needed to inspire one of the social studies groups that has had no ideas of its own. Certainly he can be the inspiration for more pupil-teacher planning in preparation for new arrivals and for

further pupil evaluation of ways to help people live and work together.

The newcomer is an ideal addition to the classroom in which flexibility in planning is the keynote. Where a pre-set schedule of activities, rigidly maintained, is the pattern, a newcomer merely upsets the sacred routine. But for the relaxed teacher for whom lessons often grow out of vital new situations that call for immediate exploration, a new class member is another delightful opportunity for a needed change of pace, for greater motivation for both social and academic learnings.

Because children tend to build walls of security around themselves, they are in danger of provincialism within any set social structure. Unless they are occasionally called upon to project themselves into the feelings of others, to find in their hearts acceptance for other children who represent a different place, race or culture, they may well decide that the small world of people they will be called upon to deal with is exemplified in their classrooms. When children have the opportunity to learn outgoingness at firsthand and thus develop concern for and faith in others, they have acquired a learning vital to adjustment in our dynamic society.

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