

# Education for the Community of 1985

*New curricula  
are needed in a new  
and emerging world.*

IN MY files is a fat folder marked "The World of Tomorrow" into which, in recent years, I have dropped many articles. To glance through this folder and to contemplate the shape of things to come is both exciting and frightening.

One article reports on 2000-ton supersonic passenger planes traveling at more than 1000 miles per hour and carrying 300 to 400 passengers. The target date—1965.

Another describes the new superliners to Europe carrying 6000 passengers each, at a cost of \$50 per person each way. The probable date of launching—1962.

A third is the report of a speech by Dr. Bortz, a former president of the American Medical Association, in which he predicts a life span of 125 to 150 years.

An article by David Sarnoff of the Radio Corporation of America forecasts

atomic batteries "long before 1980" and a new form of light known as electronic light.

Other articles predict the use of solar and atomic power for homes, automation on farms, electronic air-conditioning, and large-scale climate control.

But there are also articles on the threat of overpopulation, on the explosive potentialities in the widening gap between "have" and "have-not" nations, on the likelihood of widespread racial conflicts, and on the terrifying possibilities of a super-scientific war with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

With changes coming so rapidly, one realizes how risky it is to hazard guesses on the state of the world even in the next few months and how ridiculous it is to write with certainty about the world 25 years hence. Who, for example, would have said a year ago that the Belgian Congo would be independent in 1960? Yet its freedom this year seems assured.

All one can judiciously do is to sketch in thin pencil lines the general trends in the foreseeable future, realizing that this

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**Leonard S. Kenworthy is professor of education, Brooklyn College, New York, and is author of several books on education for international understanding, the latest being *Leaders of New Nations*.**

may mean a period of only a few months or, at most, a few years. Here, then, are a few characteristics of the years ahead of which we can be reasonably certain:

The world of tomorrow will be a world of four or five billion persons.

The world of tomorrow will be a world of airplanes, jets, and space ships.

The world of tomorrow will be one of vastly different communication systems.

The world of tomorrow will be one of atomic power and automation.

The world of tomorrow will be one of increased leisure time.

The world of tomorrow will be one of new political alignments and new world powers.

The world of tomorrow will be marked by ideological competitions.

The world of tomorrow will be a world of tremendous mobility of populations.

Scarcely any of our schools in the United States have wrestled realistically with the curriculum changes which such trends suggest. Most schools are still satisfied with their existing curricula, which were designed for an 18th or 19th century rather than a 20th or 21st century world.

## Changes We Need To Make

There are many changes which need to be made in our curricula in order to prepare boys and girls to live in the next 25 years—and beyond. Some are merely changes in emphasis; others are of a more drastic nature. The writer would like to propose ten points on which all schools should concentrate in the next few months in order to develop curricula for the 20th and 21st centuries.

### 1. *More and better education in human relations.*

In the final address which Franklin Roosevelt wrote, he asserted that "Today

we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relations—the ability of all peoples of all kinds to live together in peace."

Today's children are going to have to live with three to four billion neighbors in a closely knit international community. They need to understand that there are many similarities among all these people. They need to understand, too, that there are many differences. And they need to learn to respect differences.

Education for living in the international community begins with self-understanding and self-respect. All we can do to help children to like themselves in order that they can like others is important. Our curricula need to be examined critically at all levels to see how effectively this basic job is being done.

### 2. *More and better education about all parts of the world.*

Most schools are still preparing pupils for a Europe-centered world. They offer European history or stress Europe in world history. They concentrate upon European art, European music, and European literature. They give only European languages.

Such an education was sufficient in the 19th century and even in the early part of the 20th century. It is woefully inadequate for boys and girls who are going to live in an international community in which Europe is but one important part.

We need now to examine critically our entire curricula from the primary grades through high school (or beyond) to see how existing courses can be changed to include the whole world. And we may need to introduce new courses which will expose children to the entire world of our day.



In order to avoid superficiality, our curricula will need to select important aspects of the world and concentrate upon them rather than trying to "cover" every part of the world and every phase of human activity.

*3. More and better education about the contributions of all peoples to the world.*

Much has been written in recent months about "Ugly Americans." Their basic fault is arrogance. They tend to think that other peoples are primitive, backward, uncivilized, and that the Americans have all the answers to the problems of the world.

Humility has never been an outstanding characteristic of our nation, but we must begin to develop this trait if we expect to live with others in an international community.

We need to help pupils see that every group of people, every country, and every culture is proud of its past and its present and that each has contributed to the richness of the world. Boys and girls need to learn that every group of human beings does some things well and some things poorly and that we can learn from each other.

This is a basic theme which should run throughout the curriculum and be stressed in science, literature, art, music, homemaking, mathematics, and social studies classes. Pupils should learn that variety and diversity are often good and that creativity exists in every human group.

*4. A more realistic treatment of world problems.*

At every grade level and in every subject field teachers need to keep in mind the fact that people everywhere and in every period of history have wrestled with certain basic problems.

Teachers need to examine their work to see how this aspect of teaching can be included in day to day discussions.

Similarly they need to stress the fact that all problems today are international in nature. What happens in Little Rock or in Johannesburg is known within a short time and affects people everywhere.

Pupils also need to learn that the problems of today's world include land reform, decent water at the village wells, primary education, and decent health standards as well as disarmament, colonialism and imperialism, atomic energy, and war. Too often our teaching concentrates on the latter group of problems to the exclusion of the former. Both sets of problems are important.

*5. More and better teaching about the fun and beauty in the world.*

As adults we are rightly concerned with the problems of the world. We know that we must find solutions to some of these situations if we are to survive.

But we should not always introduce boys and girls, especially in the early grades, to a threatening world. Our curricula should help them to experience some of the beauty and fun of the world.

This can be done in many fields and in all grade levels. Physical education teachers can help children and youth to enjoy the dances of many peoples. Art teachers can help children and youth to appreciate the creativity of people everywhere. Literature teachers can help boys and girls to enjoy the varied forms in which people have expressed themselves over the ages and in all parts of the globe. Teachers in other fields can examine their courses of study to see where they can stress this aspect of education.

All of us can be enriched if we bear in mind this basic aim of education for international understanding.



6. *More and better understanding of the potentialities of science in our world.*

Today's world accents science and tomorrow's world will probably accent it even more. Consequently, pupils need to begin early to understand the scientific world around them and to adjust to it.

But we need to place far more attention on the social responsibility of science than we have in the past. We need to develop scientists who are also socially sensitive. Otherwise science will become a curse rather than a blessing.

Some progress has been made in recent years in improving science in the elementary grades. Much more needs to be done, however, to make it an effective and integral part of the experience of every child in elementary and in secondary schools. We all need to examine our curricula to see whether a good balance is being maintained between the training of experts and the training of the general body of pupils. We need both types of education for pupils who are going to live in the next twenty five to fifty years.

7. *More and better education in communication.*

One of the areas in which Americans are still woefully weak is that of modern languages. In a closely knit world we are going to have to learn other languages and to look upon them as "other" means of communication rather than "foreign."

The closeness of our modern world will help to provide us with the motivation which has been lacking. But the popularity of English as an international language may, unless we are very alert, make us insensitive to the need for learning Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Arabic, or other languages spoken by large groups of our world neighbors.

We need to bear in mind, too, that language is only one means of communication. We need to continue our support of pen pal programs, the work of the Junior Red Cross, UNESCO, CARE, and similar programs.

But I hope that in the next few years schools will begin to develop "affiliations" with schools in other parts of the world so that every child will have had some continuing experience in his 12 or more years of education with pupils in at least three or four parts of the world. Personally I view such affiliations as the most promising practice in international-intercultural education because they include parents and teachers as well as pupils, because they continue over a period of years, because they are primarily exchanges rather than one-way giving programs, and because they bring vitality to many parts of the curriculum.

8. *More and better education about the relation of the United States to the world.*

Most Americans are oversensitive about criticisms of our nation by the people of other countries. They feel that if others knew more about us, they would certainly like us better.

Certainly we need to interpret our way of life better in other parts of the world. But we also need to help pupils as well as adults to understand that our society is far from perfect and only as we improve certain aspects of it will we win more respect around the world.

Pupils need to know that improving democracy at home is as essential as trying to spread it abroad. They need to realize that the two are inextricably interwoven. This should mean more and more concentration on improving our attitudes and actions on race relations, civil liberties, family life, and other as-



pects of our society in every community in the U.S.A.

9. *More and better experiences for pupils and teachers abroad.*

Margaret Mead has pointed out that, "You can have education about international understanding but not education in international understanding without close contact with people from other parts of the world."

In the years ahead we need to develop far more and far better use of the thousands of students from abroad who are in our colleges and universities than we are doing at present, getting them off the lecture platform and into classrooms and homes.

Every teacher in the years ahead should have a fairly long experience in two countries outside the United States as a part of his or her teacher education program.

And school systems should begin to plan for the use of airplanes and boats for school trips, just as they began to use busses for school journeys not too many years ago. With increased facilities and with reduced costs this is a real possibility rather than a crazy dream.

10. *More and better education about the world in all grades and in all subjects.*

Preparing boys and girls to live in the rapidly changing world of the present and future cannot be done in one grade or even in a group of grades. It cannot be done by any one subject. This task demands a cumulative and comprehensive program throughout the school years—and beyond.

It is high time that schools and school systems begin to examine their total programs with respect to educating boys and girls to live effectively in the international community which is painfully

and slowly emerging. They need to select some basic goals which can be stressed at all grade levels and in all subjects and to spend several months examining ways in which to implement such goals.<sup>1</sup>

It is highly possible that in the next few years many school systems will decide to develop two two-year sequences in secondary schools. The first would be in grades nine and ten and would concentrate upon the world; the second would be in grades 11 and 12 and would concentrate upon the United States, including its relationships with the world.

In such a two-year sequence, teams of teachers representing the social studies, literature, and art and music would work together in integrated or correlated programs studying as many phases as possible of the different cultural areas of the world, with strong emphasis upon geography and history. But this is only one pattern of curriculum which is possible.

In conclusion, stress in the past has been upon the child-centered school and upon the community-centered school. Neither of these emphases needs to be discarded. But our schools in the years ahead need to add a new dimension—the world-centered school. Actually this is merely an extension of the community school, for the community of the future will be the world.

<sup>1</sup> For an attempt to develop ten basic themes about the world see Leonard S. Kenworthy, *Introducing Children to the World: In Elementary and Junior High Schools*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956, 268 p. For suggestions on the world dimension in various subject fields see Leonard S. Kenworthy, editor, *International Understanding Through the Secondary School Curriculum*, Washington, D.C.: National Association of Secondary-School Principals, 1956, 303 p. A few copies are still available for \$1 each from World Affairs Materials, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, N.Y.

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