Cross-Cultural Components in the Curriculum

are part of a total program.

It is no simple task to introduce boys and girls to this vast, complicated, changing world community. It cannot be done by adding another subject to the already overburdened curriculum; it must be done by having the world dimension added to all phases of existing subjects. It cannot be done by the social studies field alone; it must be done by the work in all fields. It cannot be done by the memorization of isolated facts about the world; it must be done by emphasis upon the formation and change of attitudes, the acquisition of skills, and the development of some big concepts.¹

THIS, I believe, is the viewpoint of most teachers, curriculum workers, supervisors and administrators who are actively interested in including “Cross-Cultural Components in the Curriculum.” As we talk about our work, as we read, as we conduct discussion groups, as we plan workshops, as we develop new methods and materials, as we experiment, we return continually to this, “It must be done by the work in all fields.”

An article such as this can but share a few generalities, a few concrete experiences. The field is so enormous that selections must be made. However, we know that one incident may always stimulate another and this in turn another.

It is a sobering experience to face a roomful of boys and girls today and to think that they will be living and working in the year 2000 A.D. What will be the world of the twenty-first century? What shall we weave into the curriculum to prepare them for that world?

We know we shall try to give them concepts of an air age, of automation, of atomic power, of scientific advancement. Our pupils must also be introduced to many countries and cultures, to the peoples of the world with their similarities and their differences. They must know that each culture does some things especially well. They must learn of the values observed by different groups, of their diverse cultures, and of some of the problems brought about by these various values and cultures. They must learn that basically many of the large concepts held by different peoples are actually the same.

Our early science units on the story of the earth prepare the stage for the important idea that this earth is the home

of people, billions of people. As we help children to discover this world we begin the account of man, how the earth affects man and how man has affected the earth, how the various cultures have developed. Many of the concepts of the peoples of the world developed in the early grades are later reinforced with new materials and new experiences. We do not feel that an early, simple introduction to a culture will destroy the enthusiasm for later study. Older pupils can go deeper into the opinions, beliefs, values and feelings rather than the language, color, customs and dress of another people. Differences can be better handled in the upper grades. A greater attempt can be made there to understand and respect the variety of people and why they live and think and act as they do.

Many Resources

Our schools have children whose parents came from many countries. We discuss and learn about the birthplaces of our foreign born and of their way of life. Sometimes the parents and grandparents born abroad come to school and we learn to know them.

There has been a great change in the attitude of our boys and girls toward their old world background. Pride, understanding and appreciation have replaced the feelings of embarrassment and shame which often were evident 25 years ago. There is now much less tendency to laugh at and make fun of differences.

We find we are not confronted with the stereotypes of former years. "Wops," "Polacks," "Hunkies." Rather, we must contend with antiquated notions of countries such as the concept that Africa is only a land of flashing spears, shields of savages, roaming elephant herds, and witch doctors, or the misconception that all people in a country are like their leaders.

A recent unit on Japan was excellent in illustrating how our feelings towards others fluctuate with changing circumstances. Books written prior to World War II told of the charm and artistry of the Japanese. During the war years the Japanese were pictured as monsters. By 1961 most of the virtues of the Japanese have reentered the textbooks. The class practiced Japanese courtesy, extolled Japanese honesty, studied Japanese flower arrangements assisted by members of one of the local garden clubs. Much interest was shown in a Survey of the Research Bureau of the Premier's office on the ideals of Japanese youth ages 16 to 19 which revealed that the young people have turned their backs on old patterns and on Emperor worship. Their ideals were not riches, or fame, or prestige but simply to have one day an unostentatious and peaceful life. Their ambition seems to be to achieve full membership in the middle class. This study gave opportunity to check the authenticity of source material, or reports and headlines.

There are so many ways and such a wealth of material to develop understanding of the peoples of the world and their culture; each classroom must do its own selection and emphasis. All effective programs begin early, experiences are simple and much of the teaching is incidental. In the zoo unit we can discuss people of the faraway countries from which these animals come. Even small children can be introduced to the idea that there are many, many people on the earth and that these people are different, different in color, in the type of hair, in their height. They eat in different ways. They play different games, live in different kinds of houses, go to different places.
of worship. Their idea of what is right and what is wrong is different. But they also have much in common.

The fact that children appreciate these differences is noted over and over. In a youngster's mind, “If people from India came to America and saw women in shorts, they would think we were crazy for dressing that way, because they dress in long silk saris.” “If the men of India came to America and saw some men shooting animals they would think we were cruel because they never kill any kind of animal.”

Each country can learn from another, every nation is underdeveloped in some respects. In most instances the term “underdeveloped” should be changed to “technologically underdeveloped.” Just as the United States can contribute technological skills and know-how, we too are in debt to many nations. We do not believe that intercultural relationships can supplant education for participation in and loyalty to our own country. Rather we add these intercultural components to the existing emphasis upon knowledge and loyalty to the family, to the community and to our country.

Children learn of and admire our national heroes, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Marian Anderson. They also learn of Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, Ralph Bunche, Dag Hammarskjold, Simon Bolivar, Ghandi, Nehru and the contributions of men of all times and all countries. Interest in international culture grows out of interest in our own national culture and loyalty to this country. We study the many kinds of people who have helped us grow; we learn to respect their contributions. The fabric of geography helps us to appreciate the cultures of all our racial and national groups.

“I'm proud to be me but I also see You're just as proud to be you.”

Literature lends itself continually to a study of other cultures. Units such as “The Heritage of Diverse Cultures” do much to develop the concept that America's strength is in its people who have come from all parts of the world and contributed their traditions to our common culture. Many units have the specific purpose to emphasize the likenesses, the hopes common to people everywhere. Reading and literature present continually interesting people in all sorts of circumstances, from all parts of the world. Old prejudices and fancies can be destroyed as our pupils learn to know the ordinary people of the world.

The rejection of the Nobel Prize by Boris Pasternak led naturally to a study of mass media in the USSR and the effect of their use on the press; on artists and writers; on music, theatre and radio.

Foreign language classes learn of the government, history, literature, customs and sports of the country studied.

Programs and Contacts

Although it is impossible here to give outlines, we have developed many units on food, houses, work, clothing, transportation, schools, arts and crafts, festivals and religions around the world. Holidays and festivals mean much to children. We have many which develop intercultural ideas, United Nations Day or Week, Human Rights Day, Brotherhood Week, the Unicef “Trick or Treat,” Christmas and the Festival of Lights. A class keenly interested in Africa wrote an original Thanksgiving play which showed the ancient Egyptians offering their thanks for the overflow of the Nile. The class learned a song about the Nile geography helps us to appreciate the cultures of all our racial and national groups.
and a Nile chant for choral reading. Another scene showed the Hebrew Feast of Booths or Sukkoth. The class traced the holiday from Biblical times to the present. They linked the Christian and Jewish religions by singing the hundredth psalm which is known, by Christian and Jew alike, as a psalm of Thanksgiving.

Christmas is one manifestation of a universal festival; the Jewish Hanukkah or Feast of Lights celebrated about the same time illustrates that children in different parts of the world receive their gifts in different ways. Much interest was recently aroused in the Moslem religious holidays as a result of a visit by a Cairo teacher. The life of Dalai Lama reveals the principles of Tibetan theology and the close relationship of religion and the state in that land.

Many of these special days give us an opportunity for cooperation with groups within our community. In our schools, the League of Women Voters sponsors United Nations Week, furnishing printed material, posters, films and assembly speakers; and our participation in the Unicef "Trick or Treat" is planned by a joint committee of teachers and representatives of the Steubenville Women's Club. Observance of Brotherhood Week is sponsored by the Steubenville Ministerial Association, the Steubenville Council of Churches and the Steubenville Community Council. The program "Dolls of Democracy" furnished each year by the Women of B'nai B'rith has as its purpose to promote intercultural understanding and to counteract attitudes of prejudice. Other materials are furnished us by the local branch of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Any program developing concepts of countries and their cultures must note that there are many religions. Boys and girls are bound to read of Moslem mosques, Mormon temples, Buddhist shrines. They will pick up ideas about such seemingly strange customs as the veneration of cows in India. The unusual fascinates them. In one room it was mentioned time and again that the Buddhist priests carry strainers with them so they will not kill any insects when drinking water. Introduction to such ideas should have as a goal a better understanding of why people act and believe as they do. They begin to appreciate early how much a person's own culture and religion mean to him.

The importance of personal contact with individuals from other countries cannot be overemphasized. Each year we have a limited number of visitors from other countries with whom we can share experiences. We have welcomed into our schools, teachers who have been here on various fellowships or study grants. Because of the interest of our state and national professional organizations in this exchange our boys and girls have had opportunities to meet and know teachers from England, Scotland, Norway, Germany, The Netherlands, Greece, Iran, Austria, Ceylon, Egypt, Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Chile. These came into our rooms, visited, shared experiences rather than appearing as assembly speakers. They sang simple songs, showed objects from abroad, spoke brief phrases in their own languages. Distant lands and customs become very real to children when they are able to question people who are actually on the scene. In a community such as ours our young people met these visitors as they attended our churches, games or went shopping. They found them warm and friendly. In turn we believe our guests returned home seeing America in a different light.
Books could be written about the many and varied resources which make the cultures of the world real to our pupils. Among these are pictures, charts, exhibits, models, films, filmstrips, slides, TV and radio programs, maps, globes, textbooks, reading materials of all kinds.

As we choose the pictures to accompany our study we will not always choose the unusual, the “odd.” Where these are used, we emphasize the “then” and the “now”, with pictures and articles from current magazines. Specialists are developed on certain topics or areas of the world by having certain children follow one area or one phase for a period of several weeks. A child takes great pride in being referred to as our specialist on climate, or foods, or Africa, or Hawaii. At times it would seem that studying in depth any culture, other than one’s own, rather than many cultures superficially, gives pupils greater empathy with other ethnic groups.

Classes which pay particular attention to the intercultural aspects of the curriculum are always making collections, scrapbooks, pictures. Among favorites with our pupils are dolls dressed according to the country they represent, puppets, fabrics, weaving, jewelry, types of writing. During a year one class collected items: cloth, glass, jewelry, cutlery, carvings, etc.—in all about 70 small collections representing 18 different countries. Symbols, such as flags, can play a vital part in developing attitudes toward other peoples, particularly when these flags have been carefully studied and painted by the children themselves. Children learn that people eat everything. They learn these facts from an Alaskan child’s recipe book, a United Nations Cook Book or a unit on Foods Around the World. And they invite their classmates, their parents, to an Hawaiian Luau, a Mediterranean Tea, a Norwegian Smorgasbord. They know people live in everything from caves, igloos, tents to palaces and skyscrapers. And so they build models of these and discuss why people live as they do. Such construction can help children to understand far better than a description or a picture. Children like programs of action, at times it is a CARE package, a Junior Red Cross Box, a collection of books for Greece or Germany, or correspondence with pupils in Germany, England, Norway. Our Journalism class exchanges school papers with students in seven different countries.

Boys and girls are interested in everything about a country and its people. An expert teacher helps them find their answers in the climate, the location, the resources, the influence of religion, the economic status. She helps them see that cultures may be different without being inferior; cultures are appropriate for the people who use them even though we may not wish to copy them.

Children of all intellectual abilities can participate in the study of other cultures. A pupil on a waiting list for a special class may be one of the most highly regarded members of the class because he has been a big help in making the flags of the other countries. A young girl newly arrived from Greece won immediate status because she could wish her new classmates Merry Christmas in her native language. She then helped her friends as they secured Christmas greetings in more than 20 languages.

In dealing with the intercultural components of the curriculum, music will come first to many of us. We often hear music referred to as the universal language, implying that this is a motivation for good only. The mere playing or sing-
ing of music of other countries does not necessarily contribute to international understanding and intercultural development. The people of France and Germany carried on the exchange of music for centuries; they also carried on bitter wars.

Successful teaching of international understanding through music includes more than the music itself; it includes also discussion and talking about the music. The good teacher teaches not only the music, he teaches something of its origin, he gives the background for the music. Here is an excellent field in which intercultural means both international and national. A study of the music of the United States, composed, folk, jazz, popular, gives an insight into the history, the occupations, the customs of our own country. Recently there has been an increase in the use of South American music. The making of maracas out of things in the home grew out of a discussion of how maracas originated with Latin American peoples, probably by accidentally shaking a dried gourd with the seeds making a natural rattle. A study of the characteristic rhythm of Latin American, Mexican, and Spanish music which is particularly adapted to rattles of this kind followed.

Respect for other languages is developed as we point out that many musical terms we use are either in a foreign language or derived from other languages. Nowhere have I quoted specific sources of material. There is a wealth of material in the professional literature of our day. One excellent volume is, Introducing Children to the World, by Leonard S. Kenworthy. This has an appendix of more than 50 pages listing resource material. This book gives basic themes which should run through the curriculum from kindergarten through the ninth grade. It also includes programs in many areas and descriptions of promising practices in this country and abroad. This book has proved valuable to our teachers, particularly to those on our curriculum committees.

Finally the inclusion in the curriculum of these intercultural aspects, to be effective, must be made by classroom teachers. Fine bulletins, excellent courses of study, in-service experiences, are important but nothing happens unless teachers are enthusiastic. The teacher always remains the vital person.

These teachers must be people who have a great interest in and a great knowledge of the world. They must have a genuine liking for people, all sorts of people. They must be persons of vision, of perspective, who believe that living in today's world is exciting. They will be teachers who grow even as their pupils grow. As they guide their boys and girls in and around the world, whether through books or pictures or travel, they too will feel the fascination of knowing many peoples, many kinds of occupations, many cultures, many religions. No matter where the teacher teaches, or what the course of study, he can weave these intercultural components into his curriculum.

As teachers work continually through study, through reading, through workshops, through discussions, their objectives become clearer, their classroom experiences become more appropriate, the resources they use become more varied and more selective. Teaching, for these persons, becomes more exciting; and the eagerness of their pupils to learn all they can about this challenging world, with its interesting peoples, cannot be dimmed.