

Salt for Education

through a learning resources center.

A VARIATION of an old adage goes like this, "You can lead a horse to water, and while you can't make him drink, you can sure give him some salt so he will want to drink." This idea can well apply to teaching and learning. While learning in the final analysis must be an individual matter, there is much that can be done to facilitate and encourage it. The appropriate facilities can do wonders in whetting a student's appetite for the learning experience.

Much of what we have learned about techniques and processes of mastering information suggests that there may be altogether too much emphasis placed upon the teacher as a "bearer" of knowledge. Such emphasis implies that the teacher is a person whom the child depends upon to tell him what he needs to know. Valid research findings show us, however, that as practicing teachers we should concentrate more on creating conditions whereby the child can develop and pursue his own purposes in addition to, or as a part of fulfilling, any required

curriculum content. Children should be encouraged more to enter into a process of independent study.

Objectives for the Center

The staff of the Peabody Laboratory School of The Woman's College of Georgia recently embarked on a broad program designed to assist in achieving such an end. Recognizing the need for more opportunities to permit a child-centered type of learning, the staff planned a program and a facility which would expedite independent study. The facility would be designated as the Learning Resources Center.

The center would incorporate the existing library books along with some of the newest and more effective communications devices. The staff believed that such a center should become:

1. An aid to independent learning, which, though often guided by a teacher, helps the pupil to develop self-confidence and independence as a person responsible for his own learning.
2. A laboratory where the individual pupil, small groups of pupils, or an entire class, could work toward the fulfillment

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of their individual or commonly identified goals.

3. A consultative and demonstration resource center for other schools planning program improvements.

4. A means of providing learning center experiences for the future teachers enrolled at the Woman's College.

5. A focal point for creative innovation, research, and the production of materials to improve both teacher preparation and teaching effectiveness in the field.

Facilities and Resources

A knowledge of this particular facility and how it came to be may be helpful in stimulating comparable plans elsewhere. Two years ago the space which the Learning Center now occupies consisted of a series of storage rooms and closets, dead-end hallways, and one large room area which was being used as a kindergarten. This area was poorly lighted, had acoustics like the Grand Canyon, featured numerous pipes and cement posts, and was enclosed by walls of unplastered tile blocks. Only its size commended it—3500 square feet.

The kindergarten has been moved to a more appropriate room in the laboratory school building. The large room was given a thorough face-lifting, the ceiling was lowered and covered with acoustical tile, fluorescent lights were installed, and the walls were plastered and painted. New custom-made adjustable bookshelves were constructed and installed, a small room was partitioned to house the classical record library and listening room, and new furniture was installed. The physical change alone is striking.

The Peabody Laboratory School Learning Resources Center now contains the following:

1. *An open stack library and depository:* The development of newer modes of organizing and presenting material does not make existing ways obsolete. Books will continue to be one of the most fundamental means of making the accumulated knowledge of man available. The center, therefore, seeks to incorporate in an integrated whole both old and new materials.

The open stack library contains 8,000 books for a pupil population of 280 and serves as the nucleus of the Learning Resources Center. The collection is being expanded to 15,000 volumes.

Pamphlets, picture files, record and transcription collections, science and arithmetic equipment, 16mm films, slides, filmstrips, tape collections, museum type materials, professional publications, and bulletin board material are included in this cataloged collection. Files of classified community resources are also available.

Presently some programmed material in various forms is available nationally for use in education although there is a dearth of such programmed material suitable for the elementary school. Individual programmed material has been used thus far by the Peabody Staff primarily as a means for individual learning by capable students.

2. *Audio-visual devices:* The use of a variety of machines and devices is increasing in modern education. Where such devices can improve learning and/or make possible a better use of teacher time they should be utilized. The center houses an ample supply of audio-visual devices such as: A language laboratory (permanently installed tape recorders), micro-projectors, filmstrip viewers, movie projectors, controlled readers, and opaque projectors. More of such aids will be ob-

tained as the need becomes more acute and funds become available.

3. *The science center:* Recognizing that reading textbooks is not necessarily the most effective way of learning about science in our space age, a special science facility was developed as a part of the Learning Resources Center. The Peabody Science Center emphasizes the activity approach to science learning. It stimulates the discovery of facts through the use of chemicals, laboratory apparatus, and the application of scientific methods. The College's specialist in science education serves as director of the center. Under his direction, Woman's College students and the Peabody supervising teachers work directly with the Peabody children in experiments, demonstrations and various types of individual, partnership or committee activities in science. Such experiences are offered throughout the school year, and total classes of pupils, an individual child, or small groups from each room may work in the center. Science interests stimulated by the center are often carried back to the classroom, into the home, or into the community. Field trips to nature-study areas, industrial or technological establishments, are arranged for through the center.

The Peabody Science Center was made possible by vigorous PTA support, by help from the Woman's College Administration, by NDEA funds, and by private citizens. The fundamental purpose of the center is to assure that science will include more than reading. It will be a "doing and discovery" experience. The center's resources include literally thousands of ideas, suggestions, and plans from which to draw in arranging opportunities for the pupils. Equipment includes such items as a planetarium, microscopes and other optical equipment,

charts, models, science kits of various types, a rock and mineral collection of approximately 1200 specimens, and a number of animals used for dissection and study of internal anatomy.

Part-time clerical help is available to aid in operation of the science section of the Learning Resources Center.

4. *Individual study areas, seminar rooms, preview areas, and related furniture facilities:* In addition to conventional reading tables and chairs, the Learning Resources Center includes a variety of facilities to accommodate the array of teaching-learning activities which are conducted in the center. A small soundproof listening or seminar room, individual study areas equipped for foreign language instruction, for listening to tapes or records, or for film-strip previewing, and a darkened room for showing films are also available.

Some of the significant outcomes of the program are: (a) an increase in pupils' interest in reading with an accompanying growth of book circulation; (b) more direct involvement of pupils in both experimentation and library research activities; (c) generally higher scores on achievement tests; (d) more cooperation of staff members; and (e) increased parent and community interest and support.

The enthusiasm and cooperation displayed in bringing this dream into reality, its effectiveness as presently operating, and the vision of possibilities yet unexplored augur well for the future. The standard elementary school library is simply an inadequate facility for capitalizing on the independent learning potential of today's children. The experience at Peabody has shown that a comprehensive elementary school learning resources center, salt-like, can lead pupils to learn more on their own.

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