

Project "Boys"

DURING the past year the Sarah Webb Pyle Intermediate School in Wilmington, Delaware, engaged in a fascinating project called "Boys." The project grew out of a special need to raise the aspirational level of the boys in the school.

A disproportionate number of the boys apparently were poorly motivated for school and for life in general. Their school grades were low, their behavior in the class was poor. The appearance of the boys as far as grooming was concerned was not good, and the boys cared little about the impressions they made on others.

Our girls, on the other hand, presented minimal problems by comparison. They were interested and enthusiastic about school. Their grades reflected a wide range of achievement. The girls were assuming all the positions of leadership; and were handling them well. Student Council, Safety Patrol, Office Messengers and other leadership positions were won by girls.

As we looked the situation over we decided that a concerted effort would have to be made to remove the boys

from their doldrums. Something had to be done to rescue these potential drop-outs—for such they would be if their work in school continued to evidence decline. Many of these boys had capacity for doing better but they lacked the interest and drive.

Early in the school year we called in outstanding men in our school system and community to help us assess the problem. A probation officer from the court, a Y.M.C.A. staff member, a supervisor of health and physical education, a psychologist, the school social worker and a settlement house worker were brought into faculty meetings to explore the problem with us.

An Action Program

After three days of concentrated exploration our faculty came up with several generalizations and recommendations that we could incorporate into an action program. Among these points were the following:

In looking over our community we realized that the setting itself was not conducive to fostering inspiration among boys. Six or eight missions were within a six block radius of the school. The city's social rejects were housed here.

Kathryn Y. Hazeur is Principal, Drew-Pyle Schools, Public Schools, Wilmington, Delaware.

This area was high in unemployment. Unemployed men could be seen clustered around every corner saloon or restaurant. Year in and year out our boys passed these discouraged looking groups. This pattern loomed heavily before the boys as a way of life and as their future. Things did not look good. The future was not encouraging.

Our community was essentially matriarchal. The women tended to be the stable wage earners. In many instances the fathers were unemployed, ill, absent or generally ineffective. The male image in this neighborhood ranked as one of lesser importance.

Our school perpetuated the matriarchal pattern. All of the classroom teachers were women. The only men interacting with these pupils were two part-time teachers of special subjects and two custodians. This was too small a number to be able to remove the damaging effects of the world outside the school.

Assembly Programs

Our need was great. We needed to help the boys come in contact with many more self-respecting men of our community. How to accomplish this, though, was a problem. Our solution, the only one we could decide upon at the time, was to use as many men as possible in the school program. One of the means we sought for doing this was through a weekly assembly for the boys.

We spoke about our problem all over the community and secured a great deal of cooperation. Each week we presented a man in our area who was doing a good job or service for his family and his community. We selected men who were successful but who had not gone to college, for college was not a realistic

goal for most of the boys in this community.

A florist, a sign painter, a caterer, a photographer and a custodian were included among the visitors. These men came and talked with the boys about their work. They gave them insight into the kinds of skill they needed to maintain their jobs and businesses. They stressed the need for their acquisition of basic skills like those emphasized in the elementary school in reading, spelling and arithmetic. They stressed the need for developing habits and attitudes that would not only help one secure a job, but would help one keep a job, such as the ability to take orders, to follow directions, and to get along with other people.

The boys were encouraged to question the guests. A great deal of thought went into their questions. For example, one little boy asked a florist, "If I came to work for you at a salary of seven dollars a week, and if on pay day I opened my envelope and found only six dollars, would you give me the additional dollar you owe me?" The florist responded, "Yes." The florist then asked the boy for permission to ask a question. He said, "If I promised to pay you seven dollars a week, but in error placed eight dollars in your envelope, would you return my dollar?" The boy paused and, with thought, then replied affirmatively.

The Industrial Department of the Y.M.C.A. developed a phono-visual presentation of 50 recent skilled and semi-skilled job openings for young Negroes in our city. These types of job openings had come within the past five years. This presentation was included in one of the assemblies.

The settlement house nearby reinforced our program in many ways. Men

(Continued on page 284)

"Boys"—Hazeur

(Continued from page 243)

we could not secure during the day were presented in settlement house programs in the evening. On the days that we had released time for reporting to parents, the settlement house arranged bus trips to industrial centers for the boys. Every opportunity to give the boys a broad perspective of the world of work was given. The program had appeal; our boys, our parents and the greater community responded enthusiastically to the project. Our boys generated a new sense of importance.

Our success stories include the rehabilitation of one of last year's greater disciplinary problems. He was a bright boy, but disgruntled with everything. He has, however, cooperated wholeheartedly this year. I understand also that he made a voluntary declaration to cooperate with the school to a group worker at the Peoples Settlement House prior to the opening of school.

Our project continues. This year the program has been extended to the girls. Our assembly participants will include a large number of non-college graduates, though we plan to include college trained workers in some of our programs. We do not want to put a ceiling on the aspirations of our children.

Our excursion through the "boys project" has carried us far. The children now are far better acquainted with people in the mainstream of the work-a-day world. They are also having opportunities to learn a great deal more about successful adults. We hope this experience and insight will help the children in sloughing off some of the debilitating influences which surround them in the community where they now live.

Who knows—some of our children may go to college.

Occupational—Ogilvie

(Continued from page 246)

Technical Education in the Junior College: New Programs for New Jobs (4), was backed by a grant from the Sloan Foundation. This publication developed out of a project of the Curriculum Commission of the American Association of Junior Colleges, and was written by Norman C. Harris of the University of Michigan. Another example of foundation support was the recent grant of \$112,493.00 to the Chicago City Junior Colleges for the development of a nursing education program. It was only one of many grants made by the Kellogg Foundation in an effort to encourage community college growth.

At present, community colleges enroll approximately three college-parallel or transfer students for every student enrolled in occupational programs. This ratio will have to be altered if these colleges are going to function as truly comprehensive two year institutions whose philosophy, curriculum and guidance services are oriented in the direction of upgrading their occupational and technical manpower training programs to the level of their offerings in the college-parallel area.

Bibliography

1. Gail Shannon. "Terminal Programs in the Public Junior College." *Educational Research Bulletin*, Ohio University, Vol. 32, No. 1; January 14, 1963. p. 7-10.
2. Thomas B. Merson. "Directions in Community College Occupational and Technical Education." *Proceedings Annual Community College Conference*, Northern Illinois University, 1964. p. 1-7.
3. John P. Walsh. "Manpower Development: A Junior College Responsibility." *Junior College Journal*, Vol. 34; May 1964. p. 8-12.
4. Norman C. Harris. *Technical Education in the Junior College: New Programs for New Jobs*. American Association of Junior Colleges, 1964. p. 102.

Copyright © 1965 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.