

When it is noted that as early as 1912 twenty state superintendents of public instruction, when asked for a blanket opinion of free textbooks, replied without qualification in their favor, spread of the plan indicates a greater and more permanent success.

Solving Our Problem

The textbook situation in Virginia points directly to free texts as a solution of this one aspect of the problem of public education. Free textbooks mean at bottom less cost to the public and greater efficiency to the schools. No reputable authority has been found to gainsay either of these statements.

ALAN BURTON CLARKE

GUIDANCE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

I HAVE been asked to talk to you for a few minutes on the organization of a guidance program in the high school.

Some of the suggestions made may seem visionary, but an ideal is useful in helping to effect the best form of compromise to be made.

It should not be necessary to discuss the reasons why we should change our attitudes toward educational aims nor to list those objectives of education in a democracy that, by this time, are so well known that if I should mention one you could complete the list automatically.

If the mere act of gaining knowledge would insure results, there would be no reason for further effort on our part, but, unless approved theories are put into practice, they fall into the class of those things which are nice to know. It isn't what we know nor how we feel about things but

what we do with our knowledge that counts.

In the good old days it wasn't considered wise to permit a boy to make his own decision regarding his career, and consequently he was forced to accept that of his parents or some other well-meaning adviser.

The number of people who are occupying positions distasteful to them should be argument enough that something is wrong with this method.

In those cases where it has been abandoned, is it because we have come to recognize that interest and aptitude have something to do with the success and joy in work or because the boy or girl has rebelled against being forced into doing something distasteful to him?

If there is one thing that modern youth knows better than anything else, it is what he does not want to do. But, having made this discovery and being the possessor of a freedom hitherto unknown, is he in any better position to make a wise choice of his life work than were his parents? Unfortunately, freedom does not carry with it the guarantee that it will be wisely used. Knowing what we dislike to do doesn't necessarily mean that we have well defined ideas about what we want to do. Neither does the fact that certain types of work have a greater appeal than others indicate that a choice should be made on this basis alone.

How then shall a boy or girl go about it to select and plan his career, and what have we to do with it?

Are we going to continue to try to fool ourselves and our pupils into believing that what we offer is good for them? Do we really believe that if they follow a prescribed course in school they will somehow be prepared for anything that turns up in the way of work? Are we still advising children to take a subject because they never can tell when they may need that particular bit of knowledge?

This paper was read at a District G meeting of the Virginia Education Association, held at the Handley High School, Winchester, on March 13.

It is true that we have differentiated somewhat in the matter of courses, but have we gone far enough?

To pretend that children like our educational diet is just as absurd as to pretend that because spinach is good for us we prefer it to other more palatable foods.

What teacher who has had difficulty in having the necessary assignments prepared has failed to note that there is something wrong with pupil attitudes toward school?

The reasons why school work isn't exciting to many children are numerous, and a discussion of these would fill more than one volume. Most of us charge it to indifference and laziness, and let it go at that.

It is obvious that there is much indifference toward the school and its requirements, but can we call a boy lazy, who will spend hours of labor on some task of his own choice, just because he will not spend a minute on a school assignment?

If we face all of the facts, can we fail to see that there is something wrong with a product that, in too many cases, can't even be given away?

It is useless to pretend that guidance is a cure-all and that, once it becomes a part of school work, all our troubles will be over.

But, without it the time spent in high school is much like being "all dressed up with no place to go," and just about as interesting.

We take it for granted that when a pupil enters high school he knows exactly where he is going and how to get there. He signs up for courses about which he knows nothing except that this one leads to college and that one doesn't. Often he chooses one course because there is a tradition that it is easy or avoids another because of a personality defect in a teacher. All of this may be true, but to a person who has a purpose they become minor details.

In order to decrease the number of haz-

ards entailed by this type of procedure, it has been suggested that sometime before he has to make a choice the pupil, at least, be given an opportunity to find out what it is all about. This cannot be accomplished by a talk by the principal.

It should be in the form of a course, the length and content of which depend upon the type of organization in the high school.

If it is a six-year high school, no decisions should be made before entrance, and the guidance class should come either in the seventh or eighth grade.

It should have a content that will aim to enlighten the pupil regarding the purpose of the junior high school, to teach him the necessary skills, knowledge and wisdom involved in getting an education and to give him some idea of various types of occupations.

Before entering senior high school he should know what it has to offer that will help him to pursue the types of work interesting to him and to increase his chances for successful living.

Although it is far too soon to make a choice, he should have investigated a number of occupations and should have in mind several that might appeal to him as his life work. Knowing the educational requirements for their successful pursuit, he will be better fitted to select courses and, if he has a serious interest in a career, he may even consent to do the required work of the subject chosen.

Brewer calls this phase of guidance the vestibule plan, and likens the present method of selecting courses to road signs which are placed so that they cannot be read until after the road has been entered.

The inconvenience of making the wrong turn is slight compared to that of a high-school boy who finds out at mid-term that he has traveled miles on the wrong road and that there are no cross-roads to help him out of his dilemma.

These are days of high powered sales-

manship, and the schools will do well to adopt some modern methods of advertising in order to increase the number of willing consumers.

But, before we do too much talking, we should look over our stock to find out whether all that we have is worth selling, whether it is usable in its present form, or if it should be revamped to suit present needs; and let us get some new slogans, too.

Is it true that an education is an assurance of increased earning power? If so, why are there so many so-called educated people receiving low compensations?

If it doesn't pay to go to school, what is the purpose of an education?

Mathematics was at one time considered invaluable as a means of training the powers of reasoning, truth-telling and what not, and the study of Latin helped us to remember—but what did it help us to remember? Since the explosion of the theory of faculty psychology, the old reasons for curriculum content have become impaired.

Why do we teach these subjects now?

There are good reasons for teaching the old stand-bys, but, if they are to remain in the curriculum, it must be because they serve a newer and better purpose.

The junior high school, fostering the idea of exploration, lends itself admirably to the guidance plan.

The curriculum should be rich and varied, and the aim should be to help children find out their interests and abilities. In order to accomplish this purpose it has been suggested that they be given an opportunity to sample various subjects and activities by means of series of short try-out courses. Thus, we have general mathematics, general languages, general science, and short units of various shop activities to serve as vocational samplings.

Some school people object to try-out courses on the grounds that they are a waste of time or that they haven't produced the desired results. They haven't always

been given a fair trial. They may prove time-savers in the end. Why commit a pupil to a subject for a year when a few weeks will determine whether he has the interest or ability to do the work?

The greatest difficulty is that encountered in small systems with limited shop facilities, but this can be offset somewhat by the organization of clubs and by encouraging pupils to develop their hobbies. Perhaps some enthusiastic teachers will consent to ride their hobbies to school some day for the purpose of arousing interest in vocational and avocational pursuits.

We mustn't overlook the fact that it is becoming more and more important to teach children how to play. The increased use of machinery and the decrease in the number of working hours give the worker more leisure time than he knows what to do with. If he hasn't learned something of the art of wholesome playing, he is apt to spend it thinking about his troubles, talking about the neighbors or in some way more harmful to the community. A leisure time activity often becomes a permanent means of earning a living.

It is said that a man who kept a small shop in a town in the middle west spent his spare time wandering through the woods and in making bows and arrows. In time he became so skillful at this art that archers in European countries placed their orders for supplies with him, and he gave up the shop in order to have more time to devote to this work.

While we are putting some life into the curriculum, let us examine our teaching methods. Do they inspire interest or do they kill it? Some teachers think that if their pupils are having a good time they aren't earning their salaries.

The junior high school period is a critical one in a child's life. The work can not be made too interesting.

It isn't necessary to create the impression that without a certain amount of

agonizing the result of effort can not be dignified by the title of work.

One of the purposes of the guidance movement was to eliminate those factors which tend to cause dissatisfaction with work and to increase the possibilities for enjoying it.

No guidance program is complete without providing an opportunity for individual conferences. The courses on vocations are general and without counseling may tend to increase the difficulties of the pupil. He needs information and help that he cannot obtain in the class discussion period.

The counselor should have access to school records, test results, and every possible kind of information about the pupils with whom he works. He needs to know about occupational opportunities and, in fact, should be especially trained for the work. Counseling takes time, and where possible it should be handled by a person who can give his full time to this and to group guidance.

In schools where a full time counselor can not be employed, the work is sometimes given to a group of teachers who are interested and will fit themselves for doing it. They are given a lighter teaching schedule and the extra periods are given to counseling and classes in vocations.

All teachers do not make good counselors and care should be exercised in their selection. The counselor should not make decisions; and suggestions are safer if they are of the negative sort. A child should not be forced into choosing an occupation and one should be sure of his grounds before steering him away from one.

If it is impossible to carry out any of the features of guidance that have been mentioned, there are many opportunities for guidance in the classroom.

The following skills should be taught by every teacher in connection with her particular subject; how to study, how to prepare oral topics and to talk distinctly before

the class, how to take notes, how to keep a careful record of assignments, how to work with others, how to listen attentively, how to apply the knowledge gained so that it will function in life.

This isn't anything like a complete list but these are some of the things that we take it for granted that children know how to do. They should occupy a prominent place in our planning and should be taught under careful supervision, not just talked about.

Teachers of shop, music, cooking, sewing, and art should know and discuss with their pupils the vocational opportunities in the fields of their work.

The makers of modern arithmetics have responded to the guidance idea by including material that is more practical and by eliminating those types that formerly provided only mental gymnastics.

If you will glance through the table of contents of the arithmetic that has been recently adopted for use in this state, you will find hardly a topic that does not have some bearing upon vocations. Here are some of them. Earning, spending, and saving money; buying and selling on commission; borrowing money; doing business with the bank; general nature of corporations; geometric forms in art; transportation; building industries.

Of course, some of these were found in the old arithmetic, but they have been humanized, and they needed to be.

How can the social studies be utilized to create an interest in vocational problems? Here, too, we find a rich field of material including such topics as the industrial revolution, transportation and communication, immigration, commerce, tariff, and agriculture.

The mere inclusion of these in the course of study does not by any means indicate that they function in the field of guidance. Unless the emphasis is placed upon their effect upon the worker, their significance as such may be easily overlooked.

As for English, there is no subject in the curriculum that lends itself better to the purpose of vocational guidance. The following merely indicate how the guidance idea may be used to motivate the work:

1. Oral and written reports on occupations in which children are interested.
2. Group discussions or debates bringing out the relative advantages of various occupations.
3. Dramatizations of working situations, such as, an interview with an employer.
4. Letters of application.
5. Parallel reading having vocational content, especially biography.
6. Placing less emphasis on literary style and more on the lives of the characters for the purpose of determining the reasons for success or the lack of it.

The traditional high school and college instructors have been accused of being too blindly devoted to their subjects to be able to see pupil needs.

Where this is true, can we blame the children for refusing to worship our gods when they fail them so miserably?

The Y. M. C. A. boys' clubs, scouts, and other like organizations have the advantage of the public schools in that they are younger and less bound by tradition and it is rather significant that more interest is shown in the activities that they sponsor.

The success of any attempt to establish a plan for guidance is conditioned by the extent to which the curriculum is vocationalized. If it is not possible at the start to affect a complete reorganization of the curriculum, we can compromise by shifting the spot light so that it will illuminate those features of our work which point the way to successful and happy living.

BESSIE L. CORKEY.

A STUDY OF THE STARS

A Fifth Grade Unit of Study

AT THE beginning of the term, the children listed the things which might be studied in Nature. They mentioned birds, trees, flowers, animals, and insects, all of which they had studied in other grades. Finally, the subject of stars was suggested by some one. But the suggestion did not meet with much enthusiasm, so the matter was left over for a few days. During those few days several questions arose which gave occasion to refer to the subject of stars, and what might be learned from the study of them. When the time came to select the unit to be studied, the majority voted for stars.

A good introduction into the study increased the interest of the class; this interest continued throughout the entire unit. Some of the children were so keenly interested as to hunt out other constellations than those studied in class. One child copied and enlarged a chart of the skies showing the various constellations and their locations for that time of year. A number of clippings and pictures were brought in for the bulletin board. The children's minds were active with questions which they wished to have answered. The result was the evolution of this unit on astronomy, called "A Study of the Stars."

I. *Experiences*

A. General:

1. Facts which were already known were suggested by the children.
2. Facts which they would like to know were suggested by the children.
3. Facts were organized under topics for study.

NOTE: We have adjusted our discussion to an outline, because of the length required for a diary form. Consequently the work appears as formal when written down, but it was worked with the children in an integrated program of work. Most of the problems, questions, and leads were direct suggestions by the children.

Three student teachers assisted in the preparation of this unit: Misses Louise Cave, Ruth Holt, and Mary Wine.