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The Value of a Program of Health Habits in the Rockdale High School Milam County, Rockdale, Texas

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DEDICATED

to

my dear father and mother,

Deem Ledbetter

and

Lucy Ledbetter

THE VALUE OF A PROGRAM
OF HEALTH HABITS
IN ... SCHOOL,
MILAN COUNTY, ROCKDALE, TEXAS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
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Rockdale

II. Relationship of Occupations and Geographical Location to the Health Habits

A. Sources of Little River

1. Coal mining

B. Farming and Truck Gardening

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III. General Health Habits Practiced in the Community

A. Food

THE VALUE OF A PROGRAM
OF HEALTH HABITS
IN THE ROCKDALE HIGH SCHOOL,
MILAM COUNTY, ROCKDALE, TEXAS

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

1. To check the results of recent health activities in the school
2. To determine the bearing of health on the scholarship of pupils

B. Sources of Data

1. Negro health records of the city
2. Observation of writer
3. Statements from doctors and nurses of Rockdale

II. Relationship of Occupations and Geographical Location to the Health Habits

A. Nearness of Little River

1. Coal mining

B. Farming and Truck Gardening

III. General Health Habits Practiced in the Community

A. Food

B. Sleep and rest

C. Exercises

D. Shelter

IV. Specific Health Programs Carried Out in the Seventh and Eighth Grades

A. Playlets

B. Songs and dances

C. Daily morning check up

D. Observance of special health days

V. Factors Influencing the Health of the Pupils

A. School Cafeteria

B. Playground supervision

C. Parks and recreational centers

D. Medical attention

VI. Recent Improvements

A. Fewer cases of illness causing absence from school

B. Health habits carried over in the home from school

C. Better athletic teams

VII. Summary and Conclusions

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The concern and interest which school officials show in the health of the child are comparatively new things. It was once thought that schools were for the purpose of giving the child mental training. Health was regarded as a function of the home only.¹

Modern trends in school practice are toward the development of the child in all its aspects. This of course includes the health habits of the child as well as his mental, moral and social dealings.

The modern school is similar to a laboratory and everything done in this laboratory is done for the benefit of the children. New additions which once would have been considered non-essentials are now added to the school as a matter of course.² Most of the additions are to serve in some way the development of the child's health. Among the new additions mentioned are swimming pools, skating rinks, gymnasiums, tennis courts, cafeterias, swings, rings and various other health building facilities.

¹Emma Smedley, *The School Lunch*, Innes and Son, Philadelphia, Pa., 1930. p. 8.

²Ibid

The Rockdale, Texas High School has a faculty membership of seven persons and an enrollment of two hundred eighty-six pupils. It is the policy of this school to keep abreast of modern trends. Success along this line is shown in equipment and routines followed by a teacher in the system. During the last five years special emphasis has been placed on health. The essential effort has been to develop correct health habits in the children.

It is the purpose of this discussion to check and measure the results of the activities in the health program. Efforts will also be made to show that there is definite relationship existing between good health and good scholarship.

Health Records of the city of Rockdale were examined in order to secure a part of the information needed. Interviews were held with doctors and nurses relative to health conditions of the community. From the City Health Record it was found that the most commonly occurring diseases among Negroes are:¹

Malaria	Pallegra
Typhoid fever	Pneumonia
Tuberculosis	Hay fever
Diphtheria	Hook-worm

Statements as to general causes of these diseases were secured from the doctors and nurses.

¹Rockdale City Health Record, 1936. Issue #2.

The one statement from the doctor which occurred most frequently was that low body resistance or unsanitary surrounding caused many cases of illness. These two statements served as a basis for working out the health program of the school.

It is the plan of the school to keep permanent health records of each child. These will aid in checking the most common diseases, their frequency of occurrence and noting their effect upon the scholarship of the child in some cases. The same record might be used in later life to check physical conditions, to satisfy requirements for special employment or to satisfy requirements of insurance institutions.

on grows luxuriantly during the spring months. Pollen from some of the plants and coal dust are responsible for the frequency of hay fever occurrence.¹ Three aspects of the geographical location of Rockdale which favor good health habits and conditions are: first, comparative freedom from dust storms; second, swimming in Little River, Gabriel Creek and Brushy Creek for exercise; third, great amount of vegetation and milk included in the diet.

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The occupations common to the town are mining of soft coal, truck gardening and farming.

¹Rockdale City Health Record, 1936, Issue #3.

Chapter II

RELATIONSHIP OF OCCUPATIONS

And

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

TO THE HEALTH HABITS

The geography of a section always influences the health of the people and this is especially true of a town like Rockdale which is not a seaport town.

The summers are long, hot and dry followed by foggy weather in autumn. In winter the weather is cold and wet for most of the year comes in the winter and remains on the ground for long periods.

Vegetation grows luxuriantly during the spring months. Pollen from some of the plants and coal dust are responsible for the frequency of hay fever occurrence.¹ Three aspects of the geographical location of Rockdale which favor good health habits and conditions are: first, comparative freedom from dust storms; second, swimming in Little River, Gabriel Creek and Brushy Creek for exercise; third, great amount of vegetation and milk included in the diet.

The occupations common to the town are mining of soft coal, truck gardening and farming.

¹Rockdale City Health Record, 1936. Issue #2.

Men working in the coal mines are often given to self abuse in that they work long hours over time for extra pay. Fatigue incurred during these extra hours of work is so great that body resistance is lowered. A repeated occurrence of this often results in general broken health and susceptibility to various diseases.¹ This does not apply to men only for this situation is closely connected with the school. Because of the high wages paid at the coal mines school boys are often tempted to work after and before school. The labor itself is rather strenuous for the younger high school boys, and it is destructive to both older and younger boys because of the long hours digging under ground.

A full day spent at school, then an addition of from four to six hours spent in heavy labor makes poor health noticeable on youngsters. To counter-act this situation the school placed special emphasis on rest and recreation.

The large farms or plantations near the town have practically the same effect on the health of the workers and school pupils that the coal mines do. A larger number of boys actually leave school to work permanently on the farms than in the coal mines. Workers in both places for the most part perform types of tasks which do not call for mental

¹Statement from Dr. W. A. Allen, Physician, Rockdale, Texas.

activity.

After the day is done the workers seek some form of diversion which allows for physical relaxation and often mental activity. To satisfy the need a club has been formed and numerous other activities.¹ These within themselves could be used as good health measures, but too often too much time is spent in this form of recreation and there is not enough time left for sleep. This practice is especially detrimental to the young men.

Another occupation which markedly influences the health habits of the school children of Rockdale is farming. Cotton and corn are the chief products raised; from August to December the harvesting is being done and excess laborers are needed. To supply this demand many people from town, especially men, go to the rural area to remain until the harvest season is over.

The mode of living while engaged in this type of work is not conducive to health. In the first place, the laborers usually camp out. Their food is often prepared out of doors with no regard for well planned diets and little regard for sanitation.² Sometimes baths are taken only once and the beds

¹Dr. W. H. Johnson, "The Tired Child", Hygeia, Vol. 14. No. 3. March, 1936, p. 217.

²Edward B. Reuter and Jessie R. Runner, The Family, McGraw Hill Co., New York, N.Y., 1931. p. 384.

provided are not the type to give restful sleep. This occupation itself is not destructive to health but rather it will help to develop good health if workers use common sense measures. Some go about this out door labor very sanely and are rewarded with strong muscles and regular body processes as well as a physical resistance which serves to off set the in roads on health which are prevalent during the fall and winter months.

The writer has learned through a survey of the homes that most families eat wholesome food. The meals are fairly well balanced. Mothers who have had no special training in meal planning often serve very good meals because of contact in better homes where proper meals are given. Such a plan compares very favorably with a plan given by Williams in his book on Hygiene and Sanitation.¹

During the last three years the food habits of many families were modified because of local economic conditions. The relief officials counteracted this situation by operating relief cafeterias in various parts of the city. The Home Economic teacher and the of Home Industry classes made special efforts to train their pupils along the line of economical preparation of food. Further training was given

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¹H. Williams, Hygiene and Sanitation, M. E. Sanders Co., Philadelphia Pa., 1927, p. 23.

Chapter III

GENERAL HEALTH HABITS

PRACTICED IN THE COMMUNITY

The general health habits of Rockdale are good. In the first place, Rockdale has pride as will be noticed in passing through the town. Then, most of the population exhibits personal as well as civic pride and very often pride is the basis for habits which result in good health. The writer has learned through a survey of the homes that most families eat wholesome food. The meals are fairly well balanced. Mothers who have had no special training in meal planning often serve very good meals because of contact in better homes where proper meals are given. Such a plan compares very favorably with a plan given by Williams in his book on Hygiene and Sanitation.¹

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¹E. Williams, Hygiene and Sanitation, M. B. Sanders Co., Philadelphia, Pa., 1927. p.72.

along the line of planning nutritive meals on small income.

The habit of sleep and rest in this community taken in general might be seriously criticized. Whereas the younger children get sufficient sleep because of maternal demand, the older children, especially those of high school age do suffer from the lack of sleep. This is due to work as has been mentioned and the social life in which all popular young people indulge. Rest to most people in the Rockdale area does not mean complete muscular and mental relaxation. It simply means a diversion. The coal mine worker chooses his club, the church, or a visit to a ball game as forms of recreation. The housewife often chooses the same. The teachers and other professional people choose such activities as tennis, hiking, picnics, soft ball and clubs.

The efforts were made without great publicity but certain routines were permanently established. One routine which was established was that of the daily morning check up. This effective little activity was carried out in this interesting manner. The school room was considered a city with the aisles for streets. The streets were named Health Mayors and a doctor and nurse

was appointed for each street. It is the duty of the doctor and nurse to check up on the health of the children in each street. Edward B. Reuter and James R. Hunter, The Family, McGraw Hill Co., New York, N.Y., 1931, p. 333.

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Chapter IV

SPECIFIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

CARRIED OUT IN THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES

The Rockdale High School is endeavoring to develop good health habits in the pupils and these pupils are to carry these practices into the home, not temporarily but permanently, that they may establish habits throughout life.

The efforts of the school were more or less centralized in the elementary grades. This was done because most of the high school pupils had to establish some very definite forms of health habits. The primary children are influenced in their health practices by the parents more than the elementary pupils.¹

To develop the interest of the pupils in correct health habits the teachers had to be understanding and tactful. The efforts were made without great publicity but certain routines were permanently established. One routine which was established was that of the daily morning check up. This effective little activity was carried out in this interesting manner: The school room was considered a city with the aisles for streets. The streets were named Health Mayors and a doctor and nurse was appointed for each aisle. It is the duty of the doctor and

¹Edward B. Reuter and Jessie R. Runner, The Family, McGraw Hill Co., New York, N.Y., 1931. p. 363.

the nurse to examine all pupils on his (street) aisle. He makes his report (with the nurse) to the Mayor who makes public announcements to the other pupils giving the highest scoring boy, girl street.

Officers are changed periodically so that other students may have an opportunity to inspect. Each child has in his possession a Health Score Card which he uses as a standard in carrying out his health habits. This score card carries such items as:

1. Clean clothing
2. Neat clothing
3. Clean face
4. Clean hands
5. Clean teeth
6. Brushed and combed hair
7. Clean shoes
8. A clean handkerchief
9. Clean nails
10. Polished shoes

Tapping classes have served as a medium of teaching physical education.¹ Folk dances and drills are always enjoyed by the pupils and they at the same time serve as health measures. Health songs are sung regularly and these are often dramatized.

To get the parents in a receptive mood so that the pupils will encounter little difficulty in their health practices at home, health exhibitions are often sponsored. These

¹Frank C. Murphy, "Poise, Pose and Posture", *Hygeia*, American Medical Association, Vol. 14. No. 6, June, 1936.

exhibitions include, for example, demonstrations on correct habits of eating, stories, dances, songs, playlets, lectures and posters. These exhibitions also serve to educate the parents and their own health habits are often improved.

Negro Health Week is always observed. It is during this time that special effort is made to contact every citizen of the town.

But during this period an intensive health campaign of its own. All Chapel exercises are centered around health. Health stunts are presented; health exhibits are made; health contests of various sorts are conducted during Health Week. Rockdale is fortunate in that other instructions or units work for the health development of the children. This only serves to strengthen the efforts of the school and is a measure insure the success of the school.

The Rockdale School maintains a school cafeteria which is operated by a well-trained person. Meals are served daily. Entire meals or parts of meals may be secured at prices ranging from \$0.31 for some vegetables or cookies to \$0.36 per meal. The fact that all teachers take their noon meals at the cafeteria has served as a stimulus to the children to patronize the cafeteria. It is a custom of many children, especially those in the high school, to return home every day

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Chapter V

FACTORS INFLUENCING

The

HEALTH OF THE PUPILS

The school works in cooperation with the civic clubs and other welfare units in putting over city programs. The school carries out during this period an intensive health campaign of its own. All Chapel exercises are centered around health. Health stunts are presented; health exhibits are made; health contests of various sorts are conducted during Health Week. Rockdale is fortunate in that other instructions or units work for the health development of the children. This only serves to strengthen the efforts of the school and in a measure insure the success of the school.

The Rockdale School maintains a school cafeteria which is operated by a well trained person. Meals are served daily. Entire meals or parts of meals may be secured at prices ranging from \$0.01 for some vegetables or cookies to \$0.35 per meal. The fact that all teachers take their noon meals at the cafeteria has served as a stimulus to the children to patronize the cafeteria. It is a custom of many children, especially those in the high school, to return home every day

for lunch. The cafeteria is of importance in serving elementary and primary students. An example of the menus for one week served in the Rockdale School is as follows:

Monday

Tomato Soup
Beef roast and gravy Creamed spinach
Mashed potatoes String beans
Rice pudding
Corn muffins
Milk

Tuesday

Meat loaf
Creamed peas Candied yams
Scalloped asparagus
Boiled custard
White and brown bread

Wednesday

Stuffed peppers
Mustard greens Stewed corn
Buttered okra
Apple pie
Corn muffins
Milk

Thursday

Tomato pie
Baked squash Lima beans
Choice of bread
Milk

Friday

Stuffed Steak
Turnip greens Blackeyed peas
Stewed tomatoes Berry cobbler
Corn bread Milk

Fresh cool water every day.

The cafeteria has been a place of convenience for the Rockdale group. The meals are planned and prepared with the needs of the children in mind and the management reserves the right to refuse certain food at times, for example, a candy bar between meals. Because of the proximity to stores this refusal is not always effective.

Physical education has come greatly into prominence in the Rockdale School during the last few years. It is regarded as important by the school board, faculty, and patrons. Very definite aims of physical education are entertained. The end so far as the body alone is concerned is health, strength and skill, but it seeks also to draw out and develop those qualities of intelligence and character that are required for effective and successful cooperative and competitive practical action. Merely knowing the demands made upon healthy, strong and clean bodies does not under any circumstances insure health. One must show how to meet these demands if a functioning mind and body are to be maintained.

All of the teaching of physical education is not done through stiff formalized courses but games play a great part in this training. For physical exercises to be very effective

W. S. Welton, Physical Education, Warwick and York, Inc., Baltimore, Md., 1928. p. 178.

a play field and play ground large enough to reasonably carry out the physical education practice is needed. A full time play ground teacher is employed. This takes play and physical education out of the category of extra-curricular activities and makes it very definitely a part of the curriculum. Some form of out door physical exercise should occupy a part of every school day even if the school day for the older pupils has to be lengthened for that purpose. All authorities agree that the present class room day for young pupils is too long.

Parks and play grounds of the city supplement the physical education facilities of the school. These are very important because they provide for training and physical fitness after school.

In his book on Physical Education W. P. Welpton has the following to say regarding physical training among older boys: "Though much can be done by including **games**, contests, physical exercise and other practical pursuits in the life of the school, there remains much to be done during the later years of school life. Unfortunately too many pupils leave school at an early age before very much permanent good can be done in establishing interest, habits and moral stamina."¹

¹W. P. Welpton, Physical Education, Warwick and York, Inc., Baltimore, Md., 1908. p. 178.

Many children leave school between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. They are often allowed to drift as their inclination may lead them without any attempt to encourage and stimulate them to continue the development of interests and habits formed during school life. Lounging and loafing are thereby encouraged or at least not discouraged.

It seems not only desirable, but necessary to establish some system whereby the older pupils can continue after school to reap the benefits of health and character that come from the playing of games. Clubs for the larger pupils should be established in connection with each school and teachers should show interest in them and give every encouragement to them. School patriotism will by such means be greatly strengthened and a more powerful tradition maintained than the existing at present.

For the over-age children the team game should be organized to make the school a more popular institution. The various religious bodies would do well to strengthen the games and sports programs of their social clubs for young men. The authorities in charge of public affairs of large towns should provide recreation grounds which can be placed at the disposal of all children and all working people. These grounds could

be used during the week days by the pupils of the day school. It is in such ways as these by encouraging educational and social activity that youths from fourteen years onward may be retained under organized discipline greatly to the benefit of their physique and character.

Recreational centers are of benefit to elementary pupils. All grades are participating in sports more now than ever before, and greater emphasis is being placed on excelling in the field of sports. With interest running along this line, it is expected that more spacious play grounds will be in demand and a greater variety of play equipment will be necessary in the very near future. To meet these demands new country clubs, play grounds and parks are rapidly coming into existence. Plans are already being made to develop a new track for athletic practice for the pupils of Rockdale School.

The High School group of Rockdale is becoming more health minded. Health resorts are often visited by pupils whose parents can afford the same. At the end of the school year 1937-1938 three teachers were given trips for their health. These trips were financed by the school board and were given to one Negro and two White teachers whose health wanted such measures.

Relief agencies have done much to secure medical attention for those whose families were on relief. Milam County provides a county physician and county nurse who are responsible for medical treatment of persons who may or may not be on relief, but who are not financially able to pay for medical service.

No doubt certain policies of the school board are responsible for some health measures which are observed. No child is legally enrolled in school unless he presents satisfactory proof that he has been vaccinated, and this vaccination must be effective at the time of enrollment. This policy has had an obvious effect upon non-school people. Many parents have continued this periodic vaccination for their children. Most adults who are not vaccinated periodically readily submit themselves in time of epidemics.

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Chapter VI

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS

There has been very definite improvement along health lines in the last five years. During the school year 1935-1936 the percentage of absentees in Room No. 3 of Rockdale School was 16% for the year. The same room showed a decrease in 1936-1937 of 2%; in the year 1937-1938 a decrease of 1%.¹ In 1936-1937 85% of all cases of absence were due to illness. These figures show better school attendance because of better health.

Mothers report many instances in which children practice at home health habits formed at school. The cleaning of the teeth with a brush is common even in the primary grades. One mother reported her son asking permission to be put to bed by 9:00 PM o'clock that he might have ten hours sleep before arising at 6:00 AM the next day. The same child asks that his window might be raised that he might have the benefit of the fresh air.

There has been definite progress in the foot ball and basket ball teams during the recent years. The percentage of games won have not been steadily increasing each year, but the type of playing done has been better and the Coach

¹Teacher's Daily Registers, 1935-1936, 1936-1937, 1937-1938.
Rockdale School, Rockdale, Texas

attributes this to better physical fitness of the members of the teams. This physical fitness may be the results of better general health habits.

The officials of Rockdale School do not feel perfectly satisfied with the result of the health programs which have been instituted. All persons interested in better health in this section are seeking ways and means to make the general health program more practical and to make it include a larger number of people in its scope.

The school is interested in the health of all Rockdale generally and in the health of school folk primarily. The school is in need of a resident physician and the time until such can be had is not in the distant future. There should also be a school nurse. These two officials could act in preventive capacities as well as in certain other capacities and there is no denying that such service would prove helpful for many pupils who suffer from disease over long periods before the disease manifests itself to the casual observer.

These diseases which conceal themselves often result in poor scholarship and retentions hence the lack of such service is sometimes more expensive to the state than the service itself.¹

¹Elizabeth Hester, "The Backward Child", Hygeia, Vol. 14, No. 3. March, 1936. p.212.

The Rockdale school needs a new gymnasium large enough for all athletic games which are played on the inside and at the same time provide room for spectators. This gymnasium should have accomodation for men and women, casual spectators.

It is almost impossible to actually divide a community into a healthful district and a corresponding unhealthful district for invariably the section which would otherwise be healthful is contaminated with the influence of the unhealthful area.

Since the situation is one which affects every individual in the community, problems growing out of health conditions should be the concern of all citizens. Every individual should be health conscious and should be so trained as to ever be on the guard to protect and promote their own health and the health of others.

Realizing that the health situation of Rockdale needed improving the school decided to build a health program through which the school's contribution toward public health could be made. It was the policy of the school to enlist the cooperation of every individual and agency possible and to work in conjunction with agencies already functioning for health improvements.

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Chapter VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The health situation in any community is an important phase of community life for it is one phase shared by all alike, the male, the female, the ignorant, the learned, the rich and poor. It is almost impossible to actually divide a community into a healthful district and a corresponding unhealthful district for invariably the section which would otherwise be healthful is contaminated with the influence of the unhealthful areas.

Inasmuch as the situation is one which affects every individual in the community, problems growing out of health conditions should be the concern of all citizens. Even children should be health conscious and should be so trained as to ever be on the guard to protect and promote their own health and the health of others.

Realizing that the health situation of Rockdale needed improving the school decided to build a health program through which the school's contribution toward public health could be made. It was the policy of the school to enlist the cooperation of every individual and agency possible and to work in conjunction with agencies already functioning for health improvements.

Rockdale, the same as every area, has its own peculiar problem relating to health. One geographical factor influencing health is the nearness of the coal mines while occupational factors are farming and mining work. General health aspects of the city showed no particular abnormal situation, however, the prevailing diseases were typhoid fever, malaria fever, hay fever and pneumonia.

In its attempt to teach health, the school followed courses of interest to children rather than formal routine of merely reciting. Some activities used to teach health were play, songs, games and dance. To further the health program a cafeteria has been installed from which both students and faculty members may take their meals. A field is provided for athletics and plans for a new gymnasium are under way.

Recent check up shows improvement in school attendance and athletic achievements and fewer cases of illness among students. Even adults are becoming more concerned over health matters and physicians are being used more frequently. The health program is still in progress and it is becoming gradually not a school health program but a health program of Rockdale, Texas.

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