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NEW CITIZENSHIP MAY BE DEVELOPED THROUGH  
THE COURSE OF  
P R E F A C E

The idea of training citizens in school is not a new one. Time and again, the author has felt the urge to help his pupils in their effort to become good citizens. The outcome of his study and plan to accomplish this aim is set forth in this pamphlet. The preparation of this subject has been inspired by Professor Perry, Prairie View College, my teacher in education, summer 1932. The few suggestions found herein, in most cases, have been tried out in schools where the author has taught and attended. Mention may also be made of the several authors, whose books on education have furnished me with inspiration as well as bits of information in my endeavor to write on the subject.

M. K. Barlow



## How Citizenship May Be Developed Through the Course of Study in Our Secondary Schools.

In our secondary schools the courses of study are varied, interesting, realistic, and in most cases the embodiments of experiences. Comparing the courses offered in high schools today with those offered yesterday or a half century ago, we find little or no room to complain of retrogression; because on every hand we discern signs of improvement. The schools provided for our youths by the taxpayers of the state and nation are unexcelled, and the teachers that are employed to teach in them are unequaled in any past era. Having in mind these valid possessions, the program is set for the complete development of the traits, skills, attitudes, habits, and the inborn innate capacities belonging to every individual. But our curriculum must be planned, not only to meet the exigencies as they arrive, but to attain certain definite goals. One goal that is broad in scope and is no doubt the immediate aim of all school activities is that of making good citizens.

What is a citizen? is the question often asked. According to Webster, "a citizen is a member of a state or nation who enjoys political rights and privileges and gives in return his allegiance to the government." In the light of this description, how necessary it is



for our public schools to play their part in helping to prepare for citizenship.

A pupil entering high school has some idea of individual rights and privileges, but his knowledge of them is not clear, and it is obligatory upon the teacher that they be made clear. Pupils of high school age are selfish and demand their rights in strong terms and utterly disregard the rights of others. When these attitudes and tendencies are discovered, the teacher should discourage them as being poor qualities of citizenship. The good citizen is unselfish and has the highest regards for the rights of his associates. In some instances the good citizenship appeal may be made to the group instead of the individual, because it is such a thing as group responsibility. In school, many questions may arise to make the group responsible for a single violation of a code. But pupils should never be held responsible for individual crimes, where the commission was the act of a single party. To do this would create disrespect for the rules of the school and would result in lasting hate for authority. This kind of training does not advance citizenship.

Since each citizen is held responsible for the performance of certain duties and tasks, the schools should set the precedent by requiring them of the pupils each day. When-ever, pupils fail to bring in assignments



or otherwise discharge duties they know to be theirs, some form of punishment should be administered, unless a reasonable cause may be shown for such non-performance.

Pupils should be taught to maintain order on the school grounds and in the classrooms; they should be taught to obey and respect orders promptly, for it may be shown that in adult life the citizen is expected to follow the rule; and it may also be shown at this junction that the majority of young man and women who commit crimes and are imprisoned in early life come from that group of youths who had little regard for rules in school.

One author stresses play as being a good vehicle through which citizenship may be taught. Play may be styled as the safety valve that opens up and lets some steam pass off to keep the boiler from blowing up. True enough, play does make work cheerful, and does away with much drudgery. Play, occupying the space in the school day when the mind is fullled with emotion and ecstasy, serves as a medium through which many important lessons may be taught. The idea of give and take should be instilled through play; it should teach the value of team work and the dangers of disunion. Play should develop comradeship and discourage the fighting and pugnacious instincts.

Organizing pupils into groups makes them conscious of their relation to the group. Pupils become aware of



their duties and rights and obligations and privileges by actually accepting and performing them. In every organized club, programs should be given and the pupils should be held responsible for the outcome. Teach them that if the program fails the class fails. Inasmuch as citizens are called upon at various times to exercise their choice in elections, too much time cannot be devoted to the study of the ballot when the time comes for the election of officers for the club. The teacher should endeavor to impress upon the minds of the pupils the idea of selecting officers on merit rather than love or friendship. Very often our friends and loved ones seek office which we know their incapacity to hold, and doing away with our selfishness, we are compelled to refrain our support. After all, it is the mass that must be preserved, not the individual.

We have in some high schools organizations called the "Student Council" in which the entire school may participate. The constitution of the council is framed on the order of a state or federal government. The constitution provides for a staff of officers who are made responsible for the order and conduct of their school-mates on the play grounds, in the hallways and in corridors. The official staff tries law violators and mete out the punishment accordingly. In the Student Council, all officers are elected by a written ballot similar to the one used in our National Elections. Even though this kind of work may appear at first to be effortless



and haphazard, yet it is training the youths to become the future citizens.

Traditionally, we depended upon the four basic high school courses to prepare our pupils for citizenship, and these play a significant part today.

Mathematics is still used as a disciplinary subject, but it is the best tool that the teacher can use for teaching the truth. The teacher, who can get his pupils in the attitude of looking upon mathematics as an exact science, has done a great part in preparing good citizens. Figures never lie without a false companion. One teacher of my acquaintance emphasized this by manipulating figures thus:  $13 \times 13$  equals 169 and not 147. Given  $X$  in the algebraic equation equals 5,  $13X$  equals 65 and not 61 as one pupil wanted to have it. The teacher in the field of mathematics has an opportunity to do away with much swindling, cheating and stealing by showing the truthfulness of figures. All our relations in business is conducted by means of figures, and they have been a means of preserving and maintaining many of our social standards. Figures have played their part in our local, state and national development. They have saved the humble homes of peasants, kept banks from failing, preserved status, and served as barriers against cheating and embezzling. On the other hand, by using figures falsely, social institutions have been undermined, banks have failed, stock markets have been inflated,



and countless numbers of men and women have been sent to the penitentiaries.

The scientific courses also give the teachers opportunities to teach citizenship as, it like mathematics, condemns the false and extols the truth. Lessons in civics may fail to make pupils realize the duties of citizens if they don't know how to appreciate the truth. Science courses give pupils clear conceptions, acquaint them with the forces of nature, give them ideas about creation, and tell them the whole truth about their own being. These facts may be brought home to the pupils each day in classrooms or laboratories.

On the other hand we have many examples of characters who have devoted most of their lives to advance science, and who, in many instances, made sacrifices that led to untimely graves, in order to establish a truth which the world needed. Men of the type just mentioned have always proved themselves to be our best citizens, most loyal patriots, and most praised here in time of danger and disaster.

With the age crying for high minded men, truthful men, and men who are ideal citizens, how can the resourceful, energetic teacher refrain from holding out Priestly, the discoverer of Oxygen, Pasteur, the man who made the serum to prevent small pox, Franklin, who proved that electricity and lightning were identical, and Edison, the inventor of the incandescent lamp, and thousands of



other inventions that have lifted the burdens of man. Get pupils to imitate and idolize these characters; make them worship them as heroes and respect them as good citizens.

I believe that teaching citizenship through subject matter should be incidental and that merely mentioning an ideal rather than moralizing serves the best purpose.

Another approach toward developing citizenship through subject matter is through language. Language and citizenship are apparent synonymous terms. We sometime think of people who belong to the same nation as having the same tongue. Citizens of Greece and Rome spoke Greek and Roman languages. The pre-requisite for citizenship in most nations is the ability to speak the common language of that nation. The prevalent idea is that the ideals, aspirations, love and patriotism of a nation is encouched in its language.

Since it is through language that the citizen learns of his rights and privileges, it would be wise for the teacher of English to have her pupils to read the "Constitution of the United States," "The Declaration of Independence," Patrick Henry's "Liberty or Death," and Lincoln's "Gettysburg Speech." Besides these, the teacher may have them to read and interpret, and as well as appreciate these poems: "Columbus," "Your Flag and Mine," "Old Iron Side," and "The Star Spangled Banner." These selections give excellent lessons in courage, reverence,



and loyalty, and also enthuse and inspire high emotions of idealism.

Leaving the language field partly scratched, let us see what might be found in the field of history or social science that can help us to make our pupils good citizens. Experience has taught us that no people can hope to achieve greatness without having individuals of great minds, and that the greatest minds have always been possessed by those who have proved themselves to be the best citizens. But, after all, when we think of citizenship in terms of history, we have in mind the deeds that have been wrought and the good that has been accomplished. Suppose we go to Lexington and Bunkerhill and put the heroes Paul Revere and Washington on the screen, and assemble around them the embattled farmers that once fired the shot heard around the world to prevent the invasion of the British, and see what a lesson of bravery, patriotism, loyalty and love of country these men of history teach.

Down through the memorable pages of the histories we may now and then get a glimpse of the light that has done so much to give this nation its place in the sun today. Teachers should keep in mind that pupils of high school ages are passing through an age of imitation and that the most ambitions, the most truthful and worthwhile ideals should be kept before them, in order that they may become worthy citizens.



## C O N C L U S I O N

Every individual having rights, privileges, and responsibilities, should be trained in citizenship. The schools owe it to the taxpayers of the nation, who provided the finance to support the schools, that they give in return for what they have received good citizens. Good citizenship may be developed through classroom discipline, through school clubs and organizations, through play, and through the basic high school subjects. Most of the teaching to prepare for citizenship in the public schools should be incidental and informal, and the pupils should be given freedom to develop the abilities of sound judgment and reasoning.



\* B I B L I O G R A P H Y \*

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