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IMPROVEMENTS IN HEALTH CONDITIONS IN GALVESTON
SCHOOL SYSTEM FROM 1934 - 1936

By

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Vivian O. Wallace

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The author wishes to make grateful acknowledgment to Mrs. J. S. Newton, for her helpfulness in supervising the writing of this discourse.

Dedicated to
My Mother and companion,

M. R. Wallace


J. S. Newton

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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IMPROVEMENTS IN HEALTH CONDITIONS IN GALVESTON
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Necessity of Having Health Education Programs
In Schools.

Since health supervision is now recognized as a most important part of the school and community health program, we cannot well separate public health in a school system from public health in the community. There are fundamental reasons why a community should be responsible for the conservation of the health of the children in its schools. Doctor Hiscock, in his book entitled "Public Health Organizations", argues thus:

"Children required to attend school must be protected against neglect, ignorance or indifference on the part of parents of some children who are permitted to attend school while in the communicable stages of disease. When a community makes education compulsory, it must assume responsibility for providing healthful environment for the children. It is important to educate the child in the principles of healthful living, so that he may himself have sound health and thus safeguard the community in the future. Furthermore, it is essential to find out and endeavor to have corrected physical and mental defects in the child before they affect his ability to learn and interfere with his school career".

Dr. Hiscock suggests five primary purposes of school health supervision:

1. "To detect and prevent the spread of communicable disease.

2. To insure sanitary conditions at the school plant.
3. To discover early and guide the child to appreciate the care for correction of physical and mental defects.
4. To promote sound physical development.
5. To educate the child in matters of community and personal hygiene and in the principles of healthy living".¹

Functions of a School Health Program.

The major functions of a school health program are to carry out the purposes as outlined. They may well be divided into four groups:

1. Sanitation; 2. Medical and Nursing Service; 3. Health Education; and 4. Physical Education. Every school situation, however casual or minor it may be, is an opportunity for health education. And every adult member of the school staff has some responsibility.

School Activities.

The main business of a school health program is to help each child in this great group to participate in those worth while activities through which he will gain the knowledge and form the habits leading to desirable attitudes toward health ideals.

Three main types of activity - Physical, mental, and social must be included in a well rounded school health program. There is a constant overlapping and inter-

¹ The American Association of School Physicians. School Physicians Bulletin. Pages 3 - 4. Volume VI. January, 1936.

weaving of these three types of activity. The contribution made to education by activities which are predominantly physical is commonly known as physical education. Combinations of physical, mental and social activities which favorably affect the habits, attitudes, and knowledge of the individual in regard to personal, community, and racial health are included in that section of our program known as health teaching.

Since many of the habits and all of the attitudes and appreciations which foster health should be concomitants of primary learnings, the curricula of both the elementary and secondary schools must be rich in opportunity for diversified experiences through which such learnings can be acquired. In the elementary schools, the activities of an integrated curriculum appeal to the differing interests and abilities of boys and girls and attract participation in wholesome, cultural, and healthful pursuits. In the secondary schools, opportunities for varied experience are offered in a program which includes athletics, dramatics, public speaking, instrumental and vocal music, assembly programs, student organizations, and a wide choice of clubs. Purposeful participation is stimulated, particularly in the elementary schools, by permitting children to share in planning units of work or individual, class, and school projects, and by encouraging them, after having carried their plans through to evaluate their achievement.

Medical and Nursing Services.

A comprehensive medical and nursing service should include (a) communicable disease control in schools; (b) Health examinations; (c) Follow-up work to secure correction of defects; (d) Nursing service; (e) Dental service; (f) Nutritional service, and (g) Mental hygiene activities.

During the medical examination the school physician should interest the child in his health. He should explain to the child unsatisfactory conditions found and impress him with the importance of having them properly attended to.

He should also tell the child of his good physical condition, when found, congratulate him on his possession of such, and stimulate him to maintain it. By thus giving individual health instruction during the medical examination the school physician can do much for the restoration and maintenance of good health.

The nurse should do much to assist the doctor to establish and maintain such an interested and participating relationship between the home, the family-physician, dentist, and the school, in its program of medical inspection and health service.

Doctor Smillie, of Harvard, reminds us that one fundamental mistake has been made in some schools in the development of physical education. In his recent book on "Public Health Administration", he says:

"School authorities have assumed that physical education is the keystone of a school health program. This fallacy has at times led to the defect of the whole purpose of health promotion in the schools. Often physical education is the only portion of the school health structure that is given any consideration. In some instances the director of physical education is placed in charge of all school health work. It should be noted that this misconception has not been limited to the public school but in its most gross inconsistencies in large universities. The physical education activities should be an integral part of a well planned and well coordinated school health service. Otherwise results will not only be highly ineffective, but may result in disaster. All too often the boy or girl with a poor heart, with lungs affected with tuberculosis, or with some other serious defect, has been urged to take part in some strenuous competitive athletics, to the permanent injury of his or her health".

The contention is that the physical education directors can lend their effort most effectively toward establishing a coordinated and unified school health program, and through the services of the school physician secure the added safeguards to those in their special division of school activities.

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CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE HEALTH PROGRAM IN GALVESTON

Before the Negro School Nurse.

Since about 1913 Galveston has had some sort of health program. A doctor and nurse were appointed by the school board for all of the schools. Owing to the large number of schools the Negro schools were only visited once during the scholastic year. The doctor would examine each pupil's throat for defected tonsils and teeth, while the nurse tested the child's eyes by placing a card over one eye and having the child read a group of letters from a chart a short distance away. She would also examine each child's scalp for lice or skin diseases. If there were defects these were written on a card and given to the child to take home to his parents. There was no follow-up work, so very few of these defects were corrected. This same routine was carried out each scholastic year. In 1915 the school board sent out a notice that no child could enter school without being vaccinated. This was to keep down epidemics. During 1918 when the influenza was raging in our city, so many teachers and pupils were ill that it became necessary to close school for two weeks and fumigate everything. Still, no further health work was given and only the classes in physiology studied health.

The Work of the Nurse.

Eleven years ago (1926) the school board finally

appointed a Negro nurse, after having discussed the necessity of one. The doctor then divided his time between the white and Negro schools. This made conditions a little better. The former nurse who was white did not have to attend the Negro schools, yet it was still too much work for one doctor, consequently the schools always closed before the work was completed. The next year they would begin where they left off.

The nurse spends five days a week at school, her time being divided between the Negro Public Schools. She also assists the doctor on his visits. She looks after the pupils when sick, gives first aid for minor illnesses and injuries, sees that sick children are sent home, many times she takes them herself, calls the doctor if necessary, weighs all pupils twice a year, keeps accurate accounts of all weights, sees after underweights, inspects lunches, assists the teachers with room inspections, gives individual health instruction to children, and confers with teachers and parents.

X The Doctor.

Only since 1934 have the schools been able to boast of a Negro school doctor. Since his appointment the health program has made rapid growth.

The doctor gives health lectures, examines all children, attends to defects and gives all football boys examinations before and after each game, attends each game and treats those injured while playing. He sees to the

sanitation of the plant, inspects the cafeteria of each school, and makes reports with recommendations for changes. The doctor and nurse cooperate with the physical education instructors.

Only the high school has physical education instructors. At first a man taught all of these students, boys and girls, including the football team. Since 1934 we have a woman physical education instructor. They teach basketball, building pyramids and calisthenics .

Almost immediately these boys and girls began to develop. This has been a large factor in keeping many children in school. Their exhibition given during the school term of 1935 - 1936 created city wide interest. The school board has especially become interested in this improvement. The football team of Central High School has won state wide recognition. Many boys who had dropped out of school returned to play on the football team. One boy, who graduated from the school is now earning his way through college by teaching athletics.

CHAPTER III

THE DENTAL CLINIC

After two years of follow-up work there were still many pupils with bad teeth and many disinterested parents, so the nurse conceived the idea of a dental clinic in the school. There was little interest in the schools but finally the largest school came to the rescue and gave a very successful entertainment and with a few outside donations a dental chair was purchased. The superintendent selected a small room at the centrally located school and for several years the Negro dentists of the city assisted by the nurse extracted many temporary teeth, a few permanent teeth and filled quite a few. For a while the clinic was closed, due to lack of cooperation. After the Negro physician was appointed, he aided in the re-opening of the clinic.

What is being done for the economically underprivileged children.

For the economically underprivileged children a great work is being done. All dental work rendered by the dentists is free of charge. As yet no school dentist has been appointed.

There is now in the schools, since 1934, an organization known as The Student Aid Association organized to provide for needy children. More concerning this organization will be given in Chapter IV.

During the Christmas season the Elite Social Club made a check up of the most needy families, through the schools, and presented them with large baskets of food.

Many interested persons donated clothes that were in turn given to needy children. At one time the nurse with a few teachers gave a program and with the funds raised started a milk class for the underweights. Many times hungry children are fed from the school cafeteria. The doctor treats many defects of these poor children without cost. One football boy in need was given a complete outfit by one of our merchants so he could attend school regularly.

The doctor introduced for the first time, 1934 - 1935, in the system the tuberculin test. After the pupils had taken the test the result was checked and the parents notified. If the result was negative, parents were asked to contact the physician.

Last scholastic year 1935 - 1936 the students were given hearing tests for the first time. All pupils making a low percentage in hearing were called into a lecture room with their papers and lectured to by the physician, told why they could not hear better and what could be done.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT THE SCHOOL IS DOING AS A WHOLE

Text Books and Health Activities.

Materials for pupils in the health teaching program consist largely of the results of the childrens' own creative activities, supplementary readers, and, in grades below the sixth, textbooks for pupils' use. The textbooks are simple and interesting and devoted to practical health problems with only such reference to physiology and anatomy as is necessary to understand the hygiene. Other interests that are associated with health are the desire to be strong, athletic, beautiful and to grow. The teachers send for free printed matter on health to give the children.

In each class are monitors, changed each week, who must see that each child in the class has a clean handkerchief, clean teeth, clean hands and nails, hair combed and ears clean. The monitor checks up and then makes a report to the teacher who in turn wants to know why so and so hasn't clean hands or nails. Dirty children in the class are either cleaned up by the nurse or by the pupil. Special attention is given pupils with speech defects by the teachers.

Activities of the pupils also include fly campaigns in which a desire is created to screen up and swat flies with the swatters (fly) made by the pupils. Train-

ing in ventilating, oiling pools or puddles against mosquitoes, the learning of health creeds, school exercises on health day or for special health purposes, games and gymnastic exercises, paper drinking cups made, posters and scrap books and keeping health records.

Surveys.

Each year surveys are made by different classes. They visit such places as the laundry, health department, waterworks, the incinerator, ice factory, model dairy and packing-house. The lower grades are always accompanied by their teacher but the upper grades are sometimes sent in groups to report to the class what was seen.

Five Point Health Certificates.

In order to stimulate more interest among the students this year 1936, they were given 5 Point Health Certificates. Those qualifying must have all defects corrected by a certain time. Each certificate has a gold star on it with each point pointing to the following: weight, vision, hearing, throat and teeth. On the certificate is the name of the doctor and nurse and a place for the principal to sign. Six hundred and fifty-three pupils in all three schools were given certificates.

Student Aid Association.

The Student Aid Association is composed of the doctor, nurse and several teachers of the different schools. They give programs to raise funds. The pupils are encouraged to sell the tickets and each school is given

two sweaters, one for the boy and one for the girl selling the highest number of tickets. This money provides crutches for needy children, also eye glasses. During the scholastic year 1935 - 1936, ten pairs of glasses were purchased and several pairs were mended. Clothes too, are bought for those who are unable to attend school because they cannot buy the proper clothing. Only Christmas 1936, two little girls, sisters, whose parents are on the relief were each given a sweater, a pair of shoes, hose, two dresses, underwear and a cap. Their sad little faces lighted when they were given these things. One little girl who seemed very backward in school, was given a pair of glasses. She changed almost immediately and made a much higher scholastic record and proved to be very intelligent.

CHAPTER V

THE COMMUNITY

Health Week.

Galveston has celebrated National Negro Health Week since its beginning. The citizens are quite interested and attend the programs each year and assist by cleaning their residences. Last year the community won a health placard.

Health Week Program.

Health week program consists of posters made by pupils, health plays, health songs and health talks made by the doctor on exercise, cleanliness, sleep and proper foods. Special hearing tests were given the students by the school doctors.

A new feature of Annual Health Week 1936, was the picnic. The admission was free to students who had clean yards. The campaign was sponsored to create interest in the appearance of the yards of the city. All yards were inspected by the teachers of the various schools and the Boy Scouts of the city. Transportation was furnished free to these children by the Cotton Concentration Company to the city Party Camp- a beautiful spot several miles from the city.

Health Parade.

The concluding event of National Negro Health Week was the Health Parade composed of the three Negro

Bands, the Boy Scouts, Merchant trucks, representatives of the four schools and decorated family cars. The parade ended at the city auditorium where the principle Health Rally address was delivered with health songs being sung.

Negro Lectures on Tuberculosis.

Each year Dr. F. Rivers Barnwell visits Galveston and lectures to the school and community members on tuberculosis. Since we celebrate Negro Health Week, he now comes during this time, which is usually the latter part of March or the first part of April of each year. He gives valuable information and material on tuberculosis. Mr. John Clouser has also interested the upper classes, especially those that are under him in the causes and prevention of the disease. He also has valuable posters and materials on this disease.

The Medical Department of the Negro Schools made the following report of its activities in the schools during Negro Health Week - 1936.

- A. Hearing test were given to 1372 pupils in the three Negro schools, the 4 A audiometer being used which makes the test of 40 pupils at one time.
- B. Five Point Health Certificates were given to 653 pupils in these schools.
- C. Through the active cooperation of Doctors Browning and Hunter, the Dental Clinic was in full operation at the West District School. Four hundred and forty-six teeth extracted, 122 filled of these three schools.

Dr. Browning rendered some very valuable services to the pupils of the local Catholic School. Here he extracted 40 teeth and filled 20 for the 30 pupils examined by him.

- D. The school physician, Dr. E. M. Stanton and nurse, Mrs. M. R. Wallace made health talks at the three public schools.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the preceding sections, the writer has attempted to relate the great work that is being done for the Negro children in the Galveston Schools. This work has grown out of the experiences of these workers in dealing with our people. They are working to preserve the health of the unfortunate child so as to allow him to develop to the extent of his capacity, both physically and mentally. The greatest interest is given those whose parents are unable to pay for medical care.

This study shows that the health program, in the schools has grown so rapidly since the appointment of a school doctor in 1934 that the writer has very little criticism to offer only that which they need is classes in health education for parents so that young parents and ignorant parents will not refuse the aid offered their children. Improvement in cafeteria service so that all of the hungry children may have hot meals instead of the chosen few, and physical education services for the elementary schools. Too, new developments should include gymnasiums in the elementary schools, classes for the crippled and malnutrition, courses in sex education and parenthood. Supervised play is also essential for these children. The creditable work done by these dentists is to

be mentioned. How often do we find medical people offering their time and aid gratis?

Again, in behalf of the Galveston health program may the writer conclude by saying that the school health program is not a "one man" job. Without the proper cooperation from interested parents, teachers and others, this program would never have grown. Also without the creditable work done by the physical education directors and the football boys the school board would never have shown the interest that they have recently.

The place in the school health program of such service is, we think, established from three points of view. First, the individual child is granted his right to the greatest possible opportunity for growth, development, and social efficiency; second, the correction of physical defects, improvement of general health, and disease prevention make for a higher percentage of school attendance and greatly increase the ability of any group to accomplish desired results, thus lowering the percentage of non promotion and expensive repetition; third, the entire school system benefits when the problem of the physically handicapped child, with resultant problems of instruction and citizenship, is reduced to its lowest terms.

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