

Newer Teaching Methods and the Library Program in the Junior High School

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There are so many changes in the schools, and they are coming so fast these days that one is likely to become confused if he tries to keep up and feels condemned if he does not. Any self-respecting librarian will feel that he must know what is going on and try to adjust procedures accordingly, because that is the nature of self-respecting librarians. If one knows what the changes are and why they are happening, he is not likely to feel so confused or condemned, and he is not so likely to be taken in by temporary expedient shifts that have little meaning. His choices will be more selective and his decisions wiser in proportion to his understanding of what he is trying to do and why he is trying to do it. One will derive more satisfaction from his work because he will feel he is functioning adequately in his role. So also will all the other people whose activities are to influence or to be influenced by a properly functioning library. Thus it seems that one of the best things to do is review and assess the pressures that are producing changes in education, examine the changes, and interpret the effects the changes bring. Then we can review and reorganize our basic understandings so that we can correct our directions where they need correction and adapt our procedures to them.

What are the pressures that are causing teaching methods and materials to change? Some changes are a result of the slow, evolutionary improvement that follows trial and error or trial and success. There are other more insistent pressures though, and it will help us to manage them if we put them into groups, the designation of which you will recognize as being borrowed—the outer-directed and the inner-directed pressures. This dichotomy is not distinct but, roughly speaking, one is a push and the other is a pull. The pull is from within, and we can respond to that with pride and hope. We can make good responses to bad pressures and bad responses to good pressures only in proportion to the quality of our understanding and thinking in the basic areas of learning.

One important pressure under which we operate but hear little about and even lose sight of at times is the continual and almost universal pressure caused by the steady rise in the educational level of the adults whose children we are teaching. These people have had

the experience of going through most, if not all, of the school grades, and, thus having been made experts, make evaluations of what we do. On the basis of these evaluations, they make demands. Because of their experience they have a feeling about what is taught and how it is taught, and they can act only in terms of those feelings. Any deviation from what they know cannot be assessed in terms of their experience but in terms of their feelings, and they are likely to feel doubtful of its value until it is shown to them. Many good plans have been held up or stopped in some places by the resistance of these people. Schools are very sensitive, almost allergic, to a little resistance. Recently a school started to up-grade the mathematics program. Parents could no longer do or help do the homework, and there was some resistance to the change. Fortunately, there was material from authoritative and respected sources explaining the need for the changes, and some of this was in the library for those who sought information. Not many used it, but the fact that it was there helped. The same school also tried, in a very limited way, to incorporate what seemed to be some advantages in the linguistics approach to grammar. It was new and different, and there was resistance. The school was not prepared to give the assurance of authoritative and respected persons. There was nothing in the library. The plan was dropped.

There are also some adults in this group who were wise enough to recognize in their schooling the vestigial remains of an older educational plan that was used to meet the needs of another day. They know their time was used in wasteful ways, and they wonder why we have not changed. Since we are too lethargic or indifferent to change, they wonder about our ability or interest in making other changes. They do not exert much pressure. Perhaps they think it is hopeless.

Technology and automation have changed and are changing job opportunities and requirements with increasing velocity. These changes are not geared to a plan but to the exigencies of politics, profits, and progress. There is considerable concern and anxiety about the ability of the schools to produce competency in quality and quantity as fast as it is needed. The demand was so urgent that it was given top priority and there was a considerable rush to meet it. Some people thought the shift to science and mathematics destroyed a desirable balance in education, and there arose counter pressure to insure that the schools did not produce pupils who could function well only in a specified, very limited field. First the schools were rocked one way and then the other. This has been the history of most of the responses to outer-directed pressures. The only way to keep from being pushed too far one way and then being pushed too far the other way is to base our responses on a firm commitment derived from a clear understanding.

There are vocal, vigorous, well-financed and sometimes angry groups that exert pressure on the schools far out of proportion to their numbers. Members of these groups have closed themselves to

change, and they are insistent that this characteristic be extended to everyone else. They assume they are wiser than anyone else and that they have a right, even a duty, to see that everyone conforms to their patterns. Any deviation cannot be tolerated. This is a definite negation of education, and we hope that there are too many who know too much to let such a situation prevail for long, for this pressure has an inhibiting and restrictive effect upon the schools. To withstand it, a librarian must be committed, almost to the point of dedication, to the clear and basic purposes of education and have a sure knowledge of the best ways to achieve them. If the effect of these groups is to push us to clearer definitions and more carefully determined methods, then our responses will be good.

Every few days someone thinks the schools should take some of their already limited time and energy to perform a special task. Speeches are delivered, editorials are written, and committees are formed to ask or even demand that the schools correct some condition that is culturally produced or permitted to develop. Never are we told to leave anything out or undone while we do this extra task. Most of the requests are for worthwhile purposes, are presented by prestige people, and are justified on the grounds that they are community projects or problems and that the schools are a part of the community. We have seen or heard recently that the schools ought to take a day a week to teach morality, time to teach respect for the law, time to teach the relation of smoking to cancer, time to reduce the incidence of venereal disease and delinquency, and so on. Opposition on the grounds that we are already doing these things or that we have other pressing things to do often is interpreted as refusing to cooperate or even that we are against them. These pressures are frequently sudden and emotion laden. It helps if the sponsors can be shown or if the parents can be kept informed that the library has available materials for them or the pupils to use in connection with these problems. It helps if the librarian is alert to these demands and assists the teachers to make the desirable, related materials available. Often the sponsors of these drives confuse telling with teaching, and reading with learning. It helps if the librarian can show them materials that they can recognize as good and that, if our understanding is clear and our methods are good, we are teaching morality, lawfulness, and health. What is more important is that we are teaching how to learn even more about them. If the librarian knows this, then the pressures for the special programs will not disturb him or divert him from the regular performance of his learning responsibility. The librarian knows more than anyone else when the school is not using the materials to discharge adequately the school's obligations in connection with these special problems, and he is a key person in helping to encourage more use made of them.

One of the pressures causing changes in the school that is most urgent in its demands for action and most damaging to self-esteem is the pressure on our conscience. This pressure is created by what

we know pupils are learning and what we know pupils could and should be learning if the schools were functioning as well as we think they could function. Underachievement is seriously obvious in thirty to forty per cent of pupils, and limiting in many others. The distance between the excellence achieved and the excellence achievable can be narrowed to the extent that we can free the urge to full self-realization that is in every individual; also to the extent that the rich and extensive environment that is necessary to the urge toward fulfillment is available. This is an inner-directed pressure, and concern with it and study of its solution have given us an exciting vision of what man might become. What the school would have to be like in order to realize that vision challenges our best thinking and efforts. The challenge already is enlisting more people and attention all the time. At first it was the psychologists, psychiatrists, and other students of human behavior and human nature who had this concept of what man might become and the importance of the process of becoming, and they are agreeing more and more about the achievement of it. Very recently this has begun to take hold of the imagination of people responsible for the schools, and its effect is already noticeable. The prospect of being in on the changes this is going to bring about is thrilling, especially to junior high school people. It is the pupils in junior high school who are most ready to grow and expand, because it is there that they are turning their attention to the future and raising their eyes to new distances. This is the last big opportunity to release that urge to be big. Reflection reveals that to be a contributor and not a deterrent in this new impulse toward full self-realization, one must go deeper into how and why people learn and what directions their learning should take.

There are other pressures working to change the schools, but the above pressure from within and the previously mentioned pressures from without make us feel an urgent necessity to do better what we are already giving our full time and energy to doing. It is doubtful that there is much to be gained through intensification of present practice, and it is also doubtful that such intensification would be the answer. In some instances, we know it would not. It is likely that more insight or a more general dissemination of the insight of the few to the many will reveal better methods and will cause the invention of more effective materials. Many believe this, and it seems likely that any great and lasting changes will come from that direction.

The increasing realization outside the schools of the enormity and importance of education is attracting the attention of many, and they are giving thought to how this newly found importance and newly realized size can be used to personal or financial advantage. The school, and especially the person responsible for deciding, has a difficult job to know which of the suggestions are good and which just look good. The commercial purveyors of the things required by some of the new methods are persistent and have more money to promote

their wares than the schools have to study them. Such, it seems, has been the case of the teaching machines. The soundest basis for making decisions in relation to new materials is again a good understanding of how people learn, and the schools should try to help them learn.

The questions of how people learn and what they should learn are very old problems. We would like to think that the answers have already been found. It would be easy and comfortable if we could assume that the commission that formulated the Seven Cardinal Principles had given us a permanent answer to the question of purpose, but, even though the question is old, the answer must be forever new and must be an answer each finds for himself. We would like to think and often act as if we believed that the people who taught us knew the answer to the question of how people learn. Frequently we teach and choose materials as if we believed that to be so. There has been so much discovered about behavior and learning in the past few years that it is almost a repudiation of responsibility not to try to learn and incorporate the new discoveries in our educational practice.

We have not always recognized the reasons why we want to change education. There is always a dissatisfaction pushing us or a hope pulling us that results in some kind of action. Sometimes in a hurry to alleviate the pain or eliminate the irritation, we have treated the symptom or dissatisfaction rather than the cause, and the cause has worsened. Sometimes in order to reach the promised land of our hopes we have been diverted, led up interesting bypaths. Because our bearings were not clear and fixed, we got lost and confused. Almost always the distance between performance and potential has been an irritation, and sometimes our thinking has led us to hope we could find a way to correct the disparity. Sometimes we have acted as though anything is better than what we are doing at present, and we change. An example of this is the constant revision and reorganization of content and the addition of content to patch a weakness when the weakness is not always in the content. One example is the busyness of curriculum departments in every hamlet, village, and town. The thought occurs that this may be an admission that past efforts have not been satisfactory, but on the other hand, it may be that we have an idea that will prove to unleash the tremendous learning power we feel people have but which has not yet been realized. We should know what we are doing and why we are doing it and not just be changing models--rearranging chrome and designing new headlight assemblies.

One prominent reorganization of content that has many proponents is the core program. It is generally known or known generally what core is. Some of its sponsors feel definitely that it has many more advantages than disadvantages. They believe this so firmly that some of them are intolerant of anyone who thinks otherwise. There are some people who seem to think that in some situations and with some people it is not so good. To them the core is the same as trying to find one needle in a big haystack when what they are doing is

trying to find several needles in smaller haystacks. The core is a vertical organization of the pupils content-day or unit of work, and it does offer enough advantages that some adaptation of it is likely to be with us. It emphasizes purpose more than most traditional content organizations; in fact, it is based on purposes, and it requires more material than conventional organization of content. If core works as planned, the library can meet the needs only if it has a wealth of material, including much of recent production dates. The librarian needs to find some way to help the teacher use the material for learning and not just for being poorly reproduced in notebooks, reports, or projects.

The core teachers are really a team, a vertical team, but there has come into being a horizontal organization of content teachers that has been given the distinction of being called "Team Teachers." Teaming to teach has been done for a long time, and some of us have hoped that the teacher and pupils could team more often for team learning. This wish grew out of the responses some of our parents and pupils have made regarding their team-teaching classes. The concept of team teaching is being more narrowly defined so that now team teaching almost must meet certain specifications to be allowed to use the term. Form rather than purpose is emphasized, and the concept has possibilities that should be explored. Whatever form team teaching may take, it most certainly will call for more material and more pupil help from the librarian in the use of the material. If this approach to teaching fulfills its possibilities, the increase in quantity and quality that will be needed has hardly entered our imagination, and it will require an accessibility that will make most libraries out of date. The thoughts of it are staggering.

Another reorganization of subject matter that is thought by some to be millenium producing is the organization into programs. Sometimes it is presented as programmed learning, but all learning is to a great extent programmed. We learn in terms of what we already know, and when we have achieved a new stage of learning, we are then ready to learn something new and move on to another new stage. Most teaching material is programmed. Hardly anyone would write or publish a book, prepare a syllabus, or even make a teaching outline without going by developmental and sequential steps from what a pupil knows to a new level of learning. The new programmed material is almost a straight line from a known point to a new point in our plan for the goal which we have selected for the pupil. It is almost as if we had put the pupil in blinders to keep him from seeing the interesting diversions that may fill out important meanings or see the opportunities for creativity which are such a necessary part of learning how to learn. There is a pressure in using programs to go ahead and finish the learning while the memory of the last answer is still fresh in the mind. Sometimes pupils seem to be hurrying to get through with a program so that they can get on with the open-ended learning that is so satisfying and so necessary in learning how

to learn. One wonders what a person educated wholly on or with programmed materials will do when he is confronted with a learning situation that has not been programmed. But programmed teaching as recently defined has values that will affect organization and presentation of subject matter. It suggests and offers a method to the teacher with a limited concept of teaching that will eliminate some of the mistakes he would make if left to his own devices. For schools there remains the task of making available the stimulating and extensive learning environment essential to full self-realization. This is going to call for some organization to be used in connection with programmed materials that is as yet unknown as far as I know. The production and packaging of programmed material is so expensive that it is possible that the library will get even a smaller portion of the school dollar for the growth that seems imminent. Programmed material, in the instances I have observed, has about the same attraction and satisfaction as a game of solitaire, which indeed it is. It has its own uses and values and let us use it those ways and keep in mind the full purpose of education.

There are other innovations, inventions, and gimmicks that pressure of one kind or another have produced. Some of the pressures that produced them are not a compliment to the profession, but many of them are the result of someone's best attempt to find a better way of teaching or a better way of providing improved learning opportunities. Good devices properly used will make a poor teacher better and a good teacher great. Books are still the best device and, if used as they should be, the other devices will surely lead to a demand for more books, better books, and more opportunities to use books. Some people are already aware of this and have tried to rearrange the use of time so that pupils could have more of it for the very personal business of learning. Flexible and block programs and ungraded classes and special groupings attempt to do this.

The greatest change and improvement in the schools is going to come as more people generally realize that everyone has within him a deep and persistent drive toward full-realization of his purpose and potential. Really, we have known about this and called it the will to survive, but only recently have the educational implications been pointed out. To approach more closely one's full potential, it is necessary that a facilitating environment conducive to healthy growth in that direction be maintained. That environment must be rich, extensive, and accessible almost to the point of being in the way. Even a pupil whose growth toward full self-realization has been diverted or blocked, may be led, because of his basic urge, by facilitating circumstances, to redirect his growth in the direction it should go. It is within the special province of the librarian and library to provide the facilitating environment, but the responsibility is not theirs alone. This is why libraries are changing to learning materials centers and why the concept of a librarian as just a caretaker of books is no longer acceptable.

The multiplicity of forces from a diversity of directions is changing the schools and will continue to change them. Some of the changes will provide opportunities for libraries to perform more nearly the functions that are the dreams of the best librarians. Some of the changes will present obstacles which will require the best thinking and planning of librarians. The concept of teaching for learning as a continuing open-end process will require many, many more books; the concept of teaching as facilitating healthy growth toward the unique self-realization of each individual will require more books; the demand for vocational competence and high degree of excellence in specialized areas will demand more highly specialized books; the gaps in healthy growth and the dearth of creative experiences caused by two-dimensional content organization will necessitate wider use of books, especially books with a personal appeal; the reorganization of time so that more is given to study and learning on an individual basis will require more books and diversified learning materials; and as teachers become more capable in releasing the urge toward full self-realization, there will be released a force to grow which will require more books. As what is already known about junior high school pupils is incorporated into teaching practice, more books of broader scope and more diversified learning materials will be needed. Anyway one looks at the situation, a library adequate to the demands of the newer ways of teaching will require more books than most of us have imagined.

In this new, vital, and efficient school, by conservative estimate, materials from the learning resources center will be in use by one third or more of the pupils at any time during the day. A comparison with present practice indicates the expansion that seems a certainty. Few or none have faced up to the realities of the implications of what is happening. The financial and housing problems already facing those who must provide libraries for these times have had limited solutions. Most libraries of recent planning are already outmoded and obsolete; many were before they were built. The solutions of the other problems which the newer schools will face if they are to be adequate will be contingent upon the way this financial problem is solved.

To care for the increased quantity of materials of increasing diversity and at the same time provide services to the pupils and teachers will require larger staffs. Larger library staffs have been urged for several years, but the response has been limited. Not only will library staffs have to be larger but their training will have to be adapted to the new requirements of their assignments. There is already a demand for library clerks and no one, as far as I know, is training people especially for that assignment. That, it seems, is a serious and immediate problem that needs the study and attention of those in a position to do something about it. Much of what has to be done in the coming library can be done by persons with less training and at less salary than the certified librarian, but they need some

training and concept of the library program. Any clerk now brought into library work must be trained on the job by the librarian in spare time, and that training is slow and limited. No doubt study will reveal other staff and mechanical organizations or adaptations which will improve and expand the library service.

No library budget that I know is adequate. Direct efforts to change this situation are indicated and attempted in most places. The good library, which is the result of the efforts of a good librarian, will, by indirect methods, effect some improvement in library support. Plans need to be drawn up and put into operation now to show pupils already in the junior high schools the wonderful and satisfying experiences of books properly used. The influence of the library on them should be so powerful and lasting that they will think of learning, problem solving, and discovery in terms of library materials, especially books. As they feel about libraries so will they act, and they have not felt good. That is one reason libraries have such limited support now. More definite and immediate plans to develop library appreciation can be found with a little looking.

The idea that one should go to the library to use library materials is already impossible to implement and will become increasingly so. More and more will library materials have to be taken to the pupils, and the library space, what little there is, will have to be reserved to do those things that can be done only in a library. Only in a library can one practice to individual efficiency the skills of using a library, but more preparation for practice of library skills can be done now with the library—skills teaching aids are already available. Only in a library can one get the feeling of the scope of all the helpful, interesting, and answering materials to be found in books. The wide variety of material challenges one to read and to seek, but the limited variety in a classroom does not have the same impact. The diversity of information in a library provokes discrimination, requires evaluative judgments, and delays hasty conclusions, but a textbook will not do this. The feeling of the creativeness that has gone into the production of every book, revealed by contents, may inspire in one the desire to create. These feelings cannot be achieved in any other place in the school to the extent that they can in the library, and everyone needs the experiences that provoke them.

That the use of library materials must far exceed that which can go on in the library is plainly obvious, and the need of the library for more specialized purposes is also obvious. The faint attempts to broaden the use of the library so that it extends to other parts of a school and to bring into use the assistance of other persons, especially teachers, must grow into a full scale drive, enlisting the ingenuity of everyone who sees the possibilities if we meet the challenge and the consequences if we do not. Extended use of the library means coordination of plans so that requests for the same materials at the same time do not stack. It means a new method of instruction for many teachers so that more of the classroom time is diverted to

learning and less to telling and listening. It means more pupil co-operation because the teacher simply does not have the time for it; pupil responsibility for learning is needed anyway. It specifically means choosing books, pulling them, and conveying them to the classroom, and back. Doing this is really quite simple and will improve with practice.

The special characteristics and needs of junior high school pupils are known by most and knowledge of them is readily available to those who need the information. A library with dimensions, staff, and operational policies adequate for junior high school pupils would be almost adequate for any level of the schools. The level of materials may need to be different but only slightly so because the interests and curiosities of junior high school pupils have no limits. As we more nearly release the full energy of the pupils to learn and to approach more closely their full capacity, and this is being done a little more every day, any dimensions will be too small for some of the pupils. That will be the day!

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