

Iowa's Nutrition Classes for School Children

By GLADYS DODGE

IOWA has already partially awakened to the fact that malnourished children do exist in her prosperous territory and that only by helping them gain back their weight and by making them normal healthy youngsters can she ever hope to have normal citizens.

The awakening however, has been so recent and so slight that nutritional work in Iowa schools is still in its infancy, so to speak. Miss Margaret Baker, specialist in foods and nutrition, of the Agricultural Extension department at Iowa State College, sent out nutrition class questionnaires to the home demonstration agents and county agents in all counties in Iowa. Not all the replies have been received, but up to the present time thirty-seven or a little over one-third of those sent out have been answered. Of the thirty-seven replies received, sixteen counties were found to have started, although perhaps on only a small scale, the nutrition class work for malnourished children. Nineteen of the thirty-seven counties reported nothing done at all along nutrition class work, although many of them have started hot lunches. This may either be due to a lack of funds, disinterest of the communities or hostility to the work. Yet we are a state which prides itself on the fact that it raises prize hogs and corn. Why can we not have not only normal children but even prize ones?

The replies show that the following counties have nutrition classes of some sort: Buena Vista, Webster, Monona, Madison, Lucas, Wayne, Dallas, Cherokee, Montgomery, Marshall, Humboldt, Ida, Plymouth, Wapello, Mitchell, Page, Fort Dodge (as a city), Kossuth.

The following counties have reported no nutrition classes: Mills, Louisa, Sioux, Audubon, Decatur, Warren, Henry, Clinton, Carroll, Butler, Worth, Howard, Dickinson, Iowa, Ringgold, Hamilton, Taylor, Palo Alto, Grundy, Appanoose.

The number of nutrition classes in a county varied from one in most cases to nine in Buena Vista.

The number of children in these counties who were served milk without class work varied from four to four hundred and the length of the period was from six weeks to an entire school year in some cases.

The number served milk and weighed regularly varied from twelve to four hundred and some were weighed weekly while others were weighed every six weeks.

Of the number served milk and given instruction regularly the number ranged from as low as nine to as high as eight hundred. It was a pleasure to note that this group in most cases numbered one to three hundred. The length of the period ranged from six weeks to nine months and the percentage gain of weight was very marked.

The types of schools included city and country and of the

latter also the consolidated. The grades ranged from first grade to junior high school.

It was found that in most cases the Home Demonstration Agent and the Red Cross Nurse had started the work. Sometimes the principal or one of the teachers had seen the need and had started the work. In one case it was found that the cooperation of the home demonstration agent, the chairman of the farm bureau, the committee on dairying, the city federation and the school nurse had started the great movement in their community.

The work was financed in various ways:—

Sometimes by the school board or the parents of the children, often by the Red Cross and Junior Red Cross, and in some cases by different organizations as "Parent-Teachers' Associations," "Kings' Daughters," and in one school from the proceeds of an entertainment.

In the questionnaire the opinion of the greatest value of this work was asked for and they all agreed that the classes had created more interest in selecting foods for health and that more children drank milk than formerly. The answers disclosed that it had awakened the children to their own subnormality and that their eagerness for normal weight had caused their families to buy more milk. The nutrition work has been found to

have helped in the homes for many homes have begun to serve more vegetables and milk and fewer children have been found to come to school without breakfast.

The attitude in all cases where the classes had been organized was very favorable after the project was started, although in most cases the communities were skeptical at first. However, as soon as they saw the improvement which the nutrition work was making in their own and their neighbors' children everyone was willing to help.

The improvement in school work was noticed in many cases. One boy who was always slow in school work gained 7½ pounds in twenty weeks and improved in his school work. Many of the school teachers found that the undernourished children proved to be, not only the ones who were hard to discipline but also the ones who were below par in school work. A teacher in the fifth and sixth grade noticed improvement especially in two boys and one girl. During one ten weeks' period of milk feeding the undernourished in nutrition classes in Page county increased their average grades 8 percent, which certainly is an indication that nutrition classes are a decided help to the community.

Buena Vista county with nine nutrition classes has the highest record for any county, and Fort Dodge with four classes which includes an enrollment of 300 to 400 children heads the list as a "live wire" city.

A report sent in by the Fort Dodge city demonstration agent, Mildred L. Wood, says that nutritional work has been carried on in four grade schools in that city. She further states that one hundred and eighty-three underweight children in these four schools were served one cup of milk in the middle of the morning for a three month period and a careful record was made of the gain in weight of each child. One hundred thirty-three out of the one hundred eighty-three children who were served milk gained in weight. The average gain for the total number of children was 2.85 pounds, or 208% of the expected gain. In a letter to Miss Margaret Baker at the agricultural extension office, Miss Wood says, "Our nutrition classes are being well received by the school authorities but I realize that we are going to need a more comprehensive program if we are to reach, with some type of health instruction, all the children in all the schools who are 7% or more underweight."

In the Fort Dodge classes one boy was found to make very erratic gains. His chief trouble, they found, lay in his over activity and failure to take time for his meals. His mother did her part and after entering the class he made 137% of his expected gain.

One little boy had an invalid mother and it was hard to secure her consent to allow the

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MILK IS THE FOOD FOR UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN

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little boy to enter the class. She did allow him to carry out the program outlines, however, and he made 362% of his expected gain. His most rapid gain came after he was put into the milk line at school. In 20 weeks he almost reached his normal weight. One of the outstanding things about his case was the improvement in his class work after he was admitted to the nutrition class.

The following is the report on the milk feeding in the four grade schools at Fort Dodge:

Report includes 71 children.
 Number children failed to gain.....15
 Average gain per child2.6 lbs.
 Approximate expected gain1.5 lbs.
 Percent of expected gain.....173%

Wahkousa

Report includes 38 children.
 Six children failed to gain.
 Average gain per child4.4 lbs.
 Approximate expected gain1.5 lbs.
 Percent of expected gain300%

Butler

Report includes 29 children.
 Ten children failed to gain.
 Average gain per child3 lbs.
 Approximate expected gain1.5 lbs.
 Percent of expected gain200%

Arey

Report includes 45 children.
 Nineteen children failed to gain.
 Average gain per child.....2.5 lbs.
 Approximate expected gain1.5 lbs.
 Percent of expected gain.....160%

This report given an idea of what has been done in nutrition class work in Fort Dodge and suggests what might be accomplished in all Iowa schools were school boards, families and organizations all over the state to take an interest in the work and promote it.

The nutrition specialist in the Agricultural Extension Department at Ames, has promoted this work both personally and by aiding others interested in this work.

In Franklin county twenty-three farm women from twelve townships came to an all-day school to get whatever material they could which would help them to improve health conditions in the schools. Next year they are planning a regular campaign in their county and in each township and are going to choose one rural school and make it a demonstration of what can be done in health.

You who are leaders or have the breadth of vision, don't stand back and wait for someone else to start the ball rolling in your city, township or county. Remember it is going to help rich and poor alike in promoting the health of the future citizens of Iowa. "As you do it unto the least of these, my brethren, you do it unto me!"

FURNITURE FIXING CAMPAIGN

The extension department of Iowa State College is planning a "furniture fixing" campaign which is to be intensive during the summer months and will probably be continued as a general project thruout the year

The campaign will aim to promote the fixing up of old furniture in homes where the increase in the prices of house furnishings has prevented the purchase of new furniture.

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The Seventh Question

1. Do you buy groceries?
2. Do you carry life insurance
3. Do you pay telephone rent?
4. Do you buy fuel
5. Do you buy shoes?
6. Do you rent your home
- 7. Have you a bank account?**

Nearly everyone would answer "yes" to at least four of the above.

Isn't it just as logical to pay the obligation you own **yourself** regularly as to pay your obligations to others?

Think it over.



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