

## COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM

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DR. THOMAS H. BRIGGS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, read a paper on the use of scientific tests.

PROVISIONS FOR ABILITIES BY MEANS OF  
HOMOGENEOUS GROUPINGS

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I fancy that one of the most grimly humorous chapters in the future history of education will be that dealing with the struggle in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The historian will find in our periodicals masterly expositions of the values of the various subjects now in our curricula, and with them, unfortunately, diatribes that contain, not always in the polite diction supposedly peculiar to the academician, charges that stop short only at arson and murder. Why was it, he will ask, that the classicist could see no good in the program of the scientist? And why was it that a little later the classicist and the scientist joined hands to keep out of secondary schools the national program for industrial training?

The answer, I think, will from the point of view of the future be perfectly patent. The various advocates in their enthusiasm for their several subjects had never learned the simple fact pointed out by Josiah Royce a generation before, that it is inconceivable that the learning of the ancients, which has underlain the progress of our civilization, should suddenly become useless; it is ridiculous that the great corpus of scientific facts which has made possible modern life should not be worth further study; it is preposterous that the eighty-five per cent of boys and girls who are to earn their living in commercial and industrial occupations should not have training that will give them some degree of skill. But as no man can be "a philanthropist, statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a 'tone-poet' and saint," the necessity of election forces us to ask now, as we

shall inevitably ask in the future: for what is each type of training good? for whom? and at what time?

The science of education has taught us nothing so convincingly as the facts of individual differences. Whenever measurements have been made, we have learned that even in supposedly homogeneous groups there are astounding ranges of difference, in both innate and acquired traits. Some of these differences are easily superable, others superable at a greater cost than either the individual pupil or the public can afford to pay, and some are so implicated in the neural system that no efforts whatever can remove them. We very generally have come to profess that secondary education should be adapted to the abilities, aptitudes, and most probable needs of the individual, and that it no longer can be defended as a procrustean bed which everyone, even at the loss of one extremity or the other, must be made to fit.

Thus our profession. What is the practice? The answer is found in the varied curricula and regulated elective systems of our larger progressive high schools. They are blazing a trail that can not but be followed by the smaller schools under some modified form of consolidation, as in Vermont, when the public throws off the blinding pall of tradition and seeing the light is willing to pay the price. The differentiation of subject-matter in terms of probable future needs so well begun is not likely to be abandoned.

But what of differentiation in terms of abilities? The marvellous growth of our high schools in the past generation has brought into registration to-day approximately a million and a half boys and girls—an army that includes the dull as well as the especially gifted. The recommendation of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education that the high schools “admit, and provide suitable instruction for, all pupils who are in any respect so mature that they would derive more benefit from the secondary school than from the elementary school,” when more generally put into practice will introduce a still greater range of abilities, for all of which we have an obligation to provide.

In almost any high school class of normal size we find pupils who can read, memorize, and retain from two to four times as much as some of their fellows. When we attempt to teach them all the same facts—to say nothing of attitudes, skills, and habits—we must neglect and eliminate some and overteach or underteach those with whom we concern ourselves most. The range of abilities increases when there

are several sections of the same class, since the larger number of pupils is likely to include larger deviations from the central tendency; but instead of increasing the complexity and difficulty of the problem, the larger number simplifies it. The solution is clearly the segregation of the pupils into groups as highly homogeneous in ability as possible. There is no assumption here of sharply defined classes of dull, normal, and bright pupils; every measurement shows that high school pupils tend toward a normal distribution—the number decreasing as the ability is removed in either direction from the average.

With our increased knowledge of the facts of individual differences is coming a more conscious effort to provide for them—a tendency that has been given tremendous impetus and dignity by the work of the classification boards in the army. When education there became an obviously important matter, a matter of life or death not merely for the individual but also for his fellows, the need for selection and assignment according to abilities was regardless of all obstacles acknowledged, and the brilliant work of Thorndike, Scott, Yerkes, and their associates has set a pattern for the schools of the future.<sup>1</sup>

Our schools have for many years been fortuitously struggling with this problem. An extra subject is frequently assigned, though illogically about as often because of previous failure as of special ability; double promotions have been given to those judged able to make up the studies failed; minimum work has been assigned the class with additional work for the gifted or industrious; and more recently weighted credits have been used to reward the good students and to penalize the poor. But I am proposing the general adoption of a program that is the logical result of the facts and our professions of equal opportunity—the organization of classes into groups homogeneous with respect to ability, with the expectation that each shall progress at its optimum pace. Such a plan is already used in a number of schools: I have seen it in operation at Indianapolis, Rochester, Montclair, and New York, and it is doubtless used in many other places. Is it not a strange commentary on the induration of educational practice that while we have long since adopted this program for the defective and feeble-minded, we have made no widespread effort to extend it to the so-called normal pupils and to those who gifted by nature and favored by nurture are destined to be the leaders of men?

<sup>1</sup> See *The Psychological Bulletin*, 1918.

The objections to such segregation are well known, having been adduced, usually with more rhetoric than reason, whenever the plan is proposed. They are three: first, the dull need the stimulus of the bright; second, the gifted pupils will tend to overwork; third, there will result a stigma on those classified in the normal or slow moving sections. There is time for only a word of comment about each of these objections. It is true that everyone needs a pace maker; but inasmuch as no group can be entirely homogeneous and as few if any pupils work consistently at the level of their ability, there will always be some encouragement of superior achievement whatever the classification. Moreover, the stimulus of the pace maker, with rare exception, decreases in proportion to his distance from the one to be encouraged; not even a horse trainer would expect a green colt to do his utmost when placed by a Directum vanishing in a dust cloud far down the track. Furthermore and finally, I have no hesitation in maintaining that the gifted pupil has his rights no less than the dull or the lazy and that these rights are not rewarded when he is constantly held back and encouraged in habits of dilatoriness and half-effort for the sake of others.

The second objection, that gifted pupils when grouped together will tend to overwork, has little of fact to justify it. Some pupils unfortunately do overwork, but intellectual gout is not frequent in high schools. The break-down from study is never due to a pupil's moving with his fellows similarly equipped at their optimum pace, as is proposed, but rather to an attempt to keep up with requirements that are too difficult. A stigma from being judged less able than some others may result, though later I shall propose a plan to reduce its probability and its sharpness. But at its worst, is such a stigma worse than that resulting from the constant consciousness of inferiority in class and the consequent failure at the term's end? Experience with the plan of homogeneous grouping for several years has shown little bad effect on the pupils, who accept their classification in the spirit of the teachers; and, surprising, as it may seem, there has never been one objection from the parents, who from time to time were frankly informed of the plan.

Knowing that great ranges in ability exist in a group of incoming pupils, how can a principal make his groupings so as to save money to the public, prevent unnecessary strain on his teachers who would otherwise attempt the impossible task of carrying the entire class at the same pace to the same goal, and avoid discouragement to the inapt

and retardation to the fit? If one asks how he can do this with no mistakes, the answer is short and simple: he can't. But he can use any one of several methods which will probably be as accurate at the beginning of the semester as the marks assigned by his average teachers will be at the end. Lacking omniscience and infallibility, he must as the trustee of the public make his program for the good of the group and correct mistakes of judgment as rapidly as he can, and he must make serious and continued effort to discover them. First of all, he may classify his pupils on the basis of the marks that they have received in several years preceding; second, he may use these marks supplemented by the recommendation of the teacher or teachers who have last had the pupils; third, he may use several weeks or even a whole semester in trying out the pupils before classifying them; or, fourth, he may use a battery of standardized tests.

Any one of these methods will give results more or less satisfactory so far as the pupils at the extremes of each group are concerned; there will inevitably be uncertainty regarding the point at which the line of division shall be drawn between any two groups. For these borderline pupils it will make little difference whether they are placed in an upper or in a lower group. They will find close kindred in either one and certainly they will be no worse off than when classified as they now generally are, according to the seats that they chance to take or the letters with which their names begin. The advantages must be looked for in the groups as wholes and in those pupils who are unquestionably removed from those far different from them in ability and in industry.

The only criterion by which we can measure the success of such classification is the extremely inaccurate judgment by teachers of success in school work. Consequently no perfect correlation can be expected between prognosis and class marks. Other factors making against perfect correlation are varying degrees of industry that pupils manifest, home conditions, and absences for any causes whatever. Consequently, any pupil who is found to be in a group that is moving at a pace too fast or too slow for his good should be summarily transferred. This does not mean, of course, that we should relax our efforts to get from every pupil the best work of which he is capable. The tight trace hauls the biggest load.

In 1915, preparatory to the opening of the Speyer experimental junior high school, which is operated jointly by the City of New York and Teachers College, a study was made of the 275 boys who

entered from the upper sixth grades of five or more public elementary schools. Among the data concerning them were their marks in the elementary grades and their records in ten standardized educational and psychological tests. On the basis of these records the boys were ranked according to estimated ability and divided into groups of twenty five, the limit being set by the number of seats in the recitation rooms. In the first weekly conference the teachers were informed of this phase of the experiment and told that the grouping was tentative, to be modified whenever they could agree that any two boys should change places. (Since the rooms were full, no other pupil could be placed in a group until one had been removed from it.) They were told, too, that they were expected to carry each group forward at a speed that seemed best for its powers of learning.

At the beginning of four successive terms new groups of pupils who entered the school were similarly classified, each having been measured with new combinations of tests, the effort being to secure a battery that could be taken by a considerable number of pupils simultaneously and that could be scored with the most economy of time and effort. These later groups were all measured by the teachers of the school, none of whom had received any training in the use of tests other than that given for the occasion by the educational adviser of the school. Until schools are more generally supplied with bureaus of measurement, no such plan as is presented in this paper can be used unless the teachers themselves can easily be taught to administer and to score the tests necessary for classification. There is no question that an extended testing of each individual pupil by some such scale as the Terman revision of the Binet-Simon measures will yield more accurate results; but at present the expenditure of one or more hours by an expert on each pupil is practically out of the question for our public schools.

As the term progressed the teachers from time to time made transfers of pupils from one section to another, usually because it became apparent that they had been badly classified. In a number of cases, however, the transfer was reversed a few weeks later and the pupil found himself in the same group as before. It was not always easy to decide whether the tests were in error or not. One boy, for example, formed a friendship with two others whom we had judged more gifted than he, boys who proved to be students in the best sense of the word. As a result of the association, Norman worked even beyond his ability, at least so it seemed, to keep in the group of his

friends, where he maintained himself until graduation. Another boy was as a result of the tests placed in the lowest group, but moved by successive transfers upward one class at a time until he won recognition in the top half-score in the school. The teachers testified that he was correctly placed at the beginning and that their promotions, which it must be noted were class by class, were warranted by a steady development. Unfortunately Isadore was not studied by a psychologist during his translation; we should all like to capture the secret from which his growth resulted.

At the end of each term, the teachers were requested to rank in the order of ability all of the pupils in their classes. (Because of the organization a few of the teachers came in contact with every pupil, and others with not more than half of them.) From these rankings, which were entirely separate from the marks given for class achievement, was made a composite ranking to represent the best judgment of the entire corps as to each pupil's relative ability, whether he exercised it consistently on his lessons or not. That even this composite ranking was inaccurate goes without saying. When, as not infrequently happened, one teacher after close association with a boy from five to fifteen months ranked him forty or even seventy places from the average given by three or four other teachers, one must look further than specific inaptitude for mathematics or Latin or any other subject of the curriculum. Of course, on the whole the teachers agreed very well among themselves in their estimates of pupils' general ability, but a study of their reports leads to the conclusion that a group of representative public school teachers, all interested in their work and with their attention constantly directed toward the pupils as individuals, are after months of instruction in classes of ideal size unable to judge with anything like accuracy the relative ability of their pupils.

In the absence of anything better, we must use this composite ranking as a norm with which to compare the prognoses made from a study of earlier marks and from the standard tests. Incidentally it may be remarked that the classification of the boys by the approximately thirty teachers who had them in the sixth grade proved to have no positive correlation with any other estimates that we were able to get of their ability or effort; the subjective standards of these teachers were too widely different for the "good," "fair," or "excellent" of one to be compared with similar terms from the others. Both the prognosis made from earlier school marks and that from the

standard tests proved highly significant of what the pupils would do in their subsequent work. In the order of their merit we found a composite of all sixth grade marks least indicative of what the boys would do, a composite of all marks in grades I-VI inclusive somewhat better, and the ranking by the tests easily best of all. In fact, if I had to rely on the rank given a boy after two hours of testing or on the judgment of the average teacher who had had him in class for five months, I should with little hesitation choose the results of the tests. But even previous school record, especially when supplemented by the grade teachers' judgment, will assuredly afford a classification better than that based on the alphabet, the neighborhood, or chance selection. Let me repeat again that any such classification as has been proposed should be only tentative, to be modified whenever it appears that a pupil can work to better advantage in another group.

If the plan of homogeneous grouping is to prove successful, the teachers must be closely supervised, especially in the first few months. Being accustomed to attempt the same amount with each section of a class, the average teacher finds it difficult to break sharply from the practice. But if after several weeks a group of dull pupils (D) have advanced over the same matter as a group of bright ones (B), than either D have been under-taught or B have done less than they could. If quality of learning  $x$  is satisfactory for D, it should be satisfactory for B; and if quality of learning  $y$  is desirable for B, then surely it is desirable for D also. The teachers must be led to find what the optimum pace for each group is and supervised until they learn to maintain it. In conference the teachers and principal should at the beginning of the term estimate approximately what each class may be expected to do, and then, as under the plan now in general use, progress should be roughly regulated by the program.

It is notorious that we have very indefinite standards as to what constitutes success in any of our high school classes. In almost any school one can find pupils among the freshmen who can sing better, compose English better, work algebra better, and surpass in anything else that they have studied, other pupils who are classified one, two, or even three years beyond them. Consequently, lacking definite objective standards, a teacher is likely to make one according to the abilities of the particular pupils he is instructing. Just about so many will pass with an "A" mark and so many fail, whatever the method of classification. (I remember hearing a friend speak of a pupil in a home for the feeble-minded as "the brightest little fellow you ever



saw," and I have more than once heard university professors characterize a candidate for the doctor's degree as "a man without brains.") Consequently, the principal in his capacity as supervisor must endeavor to keep before each teacher of supposedly homogeneous groups some standards by which the progress of the pupils may be compared with that of others who are more or less gifted than they. If possible under this plan each teacher should have sections that are not continuous in estimated ability, for the differences between two groups that inevitably overlap will not always impress a teacher as significant at all. If in a large high school there are six sections of a class, assign to teacher A sections 1 and 4, to teacher B sections 2 and 5, and to teacher C sections 3 and 6. Then even the wayfaring man can detect differences worthy of any teacher's attention.

From homogeneous grouping, as from any other proposed for organization, one must not expect too much. There has unfortunately sprung up a slogan of "two terms work in one" or "three years work in two." Gifted pupils have accomplished this amount of acceleration time and time again, but it is not reasonable to expect to find in any group of boys and girls one half of them who have two hundred per cent as much, or one hundred fifty per cent as much, ability and energy as the other half have. It is unfortunate that our two-semester year makes us think in terms of two in one. The ideal is to segregate pupils as homogeneously as possible and then to advance each group at its optimum pace, whether that be half normal or three-fourth normal or one and one-fifteenth normal. Any difference that results in substantial progress of the group without the unnecessary retardation of some and the discouraging failure of others equally earnest is surely worth seeking.

As a result of experience, may I suggest that every effort must be expended to prevent the more gifted pupils from being puffed up with pride and the less fortunate from ridicule or raillery. The first step, of course, is to insure on the part of all teachers a full understanding, not only of the plan but also of the psychology of individual differences, and to seek from them full sympathy for each pupil whatever his classification. It is wise to make the groupings with no advertisement whatever and to indicate the groups by some non-descriptive names, as "Mr. A's class" or "Room 327." If, as is inevitable, the pupils learn later the plan of organization, the information will come gradually and after each one has become accustomed to the place assigned him. I suggest further that the pupils should be

thrown together in the gymnasium, music classes, assembly, etc.—in short, whenever the types of abilities used for segregation are not important. The assumption is that we can as yet secure only a rough estimate of something called “general ability” and not a workable prognosis of special ability for each subject in the curriculum.

As a rule, teachers prefer the bright classes, though there are those painstaking saints who with a missionary sympathy and zeal elect the dull. This preference for the bright is of course due to the fact that they are thought to be easier to teach, or to the subconscious realization that they are not so likely to bring discredit whatever neglect they may receive. It is easy to get the bright pupils over an amount of work that taxes the normal and is impossible for the dull; but to teach the gifted to the extent of their ability, to keep them consistently expending the amount of energy that we demand of others is no mean task. Here is a demand again for *similia similibus*: only the gifted can adequately lead others with gifts; almost any teacher with patience and perseverance can get from the dull the best work of which they are capable.

The results of our two and a half years of experience with the plan of homogeneous grouping will be published later, when the boys have gone further on their courses in higher schools. Here it is sufficient to say that in no single instance have we felt that a pupil lost anything material by his classification; in the great majority of cases, the pupils were happier in their work and made better progress than they otherwise could have done. Some saved a year in their secondary school education, some a half-year, and some nothing at all; but none who remained a full two years (the elimination was very small) failed to be certified by their teachers as satisfactorily doing a full two years' work. Gratifying results have been manifest in the teachers themselves: their work has been more interesting, they have had less strain, and they have felt better satisfied with the results than under the usual organization. All of them have testified that they never wish to return to a plan whereby the classification is fortuitous and the expected progress uniform.

#### *FOURTH SESSION*

The fourth session was held at 2:00 P.M. in the Pine Room of the Stratford Hotel on Tuesday, February 25, 1919.

MR. STERLING A. LEONARD, TEACHER OF ENGLISH, LINCOLN SCHOOL OF TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, read a paper on the socialized recitation.

### THE SOCIAL RECITATION

STERLING ANDRUS LEONARD, THE LINCOLN SCHOOL OF  
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The term social or socialized recitation has been used to describe a great array of conflicting and often contradictory practices. Most often it has meant merely some sort of visible change in the way classes happen—sometimes a parliamentary organization with “a cumbersome secretary” and points of order; or again, children scurrying here and there draped in portieres or cased in pasteboard armor, or dispersed at such diverse jobs as “washing winders” and writing free verse. I do not want to venture an analysis of such methods and managements. It seems rather more profitable, if less diverting, to try digging under the whole affair and coming up into it from the bottom. If we can discover what the recitation structure should rest on we need not be greatly troubled by the diversity of occupations going on in it; we can assess them at our leisure in view of what they are all about.

### THE CENTER OF PURPOSING

I want, then, to define a social recitation for the term of this discussion: first, as one in which the center of purposing is in the child; and second, as one in which his purposes are in considerable number and degree broad and social, not immediate and individual and egotistic only. That is to say, it includes any school activity in which a pupil knows what he is doing and what for—has a real purpose of his own and not a suppositional one—and that, a recognizably whole-hearted and socially valid purpose. I have not limited myself to the formal meaning of recitations only, since in really directed study or other significant activities there are usually, I believe, all the values of good recitation, and vice versa.

Why define a social recitation thus in terms of purposes? Simply because nobody can do anything, except make purely unconscious habitual or reflex movements, without his own control and intention. One can of course be put through movements as a monkey's leg is made to kick by a tap below the knee. But certainly no activity worth

considering here, none significant educationally, happens outside the conscious willing and choice of the actor. "You can lade a man to the univarsity," said Mr. Dooley, "but you can't make him think." Real thinking is, of all things, exclusively purposive, though of course the results of one's thoughts are by no means always recognizable as akin to the purposes that animated them.

There are, however, as many distinct kinds of purposes as of thoughts and actions—and results. To define clearly the one that makes recitations truly social, may I indicate four types which are to be observed in any school? Here is the first: At the very lowest and worst, one does a thing because he prefers doing it—to being kicked. A pupil punctuates sentences or writes themes or recites—by his own volition—because even these things seem to him preferable to shame, disgrace, failure, sharp violence of diatribe—much as men do abhorred daily tasks to fend off starvation or ruin. But all the time a large part of the pupil's force is being spent in hatred, kicking, and unsatisfied repression of incessant counter-impulses. Altogether there is an enormous dissipation of energy upon keeping at work, rather than its hearty direction on doing the job well and workmanly.

Now, precisely this struggle, I am aware, seems to be meant by many writers who insist on the valuable moral discipline of doing tasks as a stern duty. But we all know quite well the kind of moral effect that such conditions really do generate. In my own case, arithmetic and algebra, often stupidly mistaught—in former times—aroused in me no sense of worth and purpose. I hated the subjects, and gave them just enough effort to avoid trouble. But only recently I found the mathematics of statistics—series and correlations and the like—essential for making clear to myself and others precisely what I was accomplishing. So I turned to and ground thru a pretty solid course in this. It was no less difficult and painful than my high school courses had been—more so, I think. But the habits of work developed, the results I got, and, in particular, my spirit in reaction were altogether different—were like what one does get from any work no matter how hard or uninteresting, that is clearly significant and real. Every one of you, no doubt, can similarly contrast in your own remembrance a case of angry revolt and advance under protest—you will have to look back some distance to discover one, I imagine—with some period of intense application to a piece of downright unpleasant and grinding work that you carried through because you saw its bearings, knew that it was of value and of what

value. You recognized what you were doing as drudgery and disliked that; but you pounded away at it in good spirit because your recognition of value in the thing itself or in its issues, and not any arbitrary and outside compulsion, held your attention. There is no question, is there, which work brought the more salutary discipline, let alone which of the two was the better job?

There are inescapably bred, with any activity, states of mind, moods, attitudes; and in educational matters these are often more significant than the particular habit in spelling or grammar which we are for the moment dinning at. A part of this result in feeling and attitude—the strengthening and wholesome part, where there is any—is what we mean by the discipline of the activity. But is the state of mind generated by hated compulsions of shame or fear—compulsions in the sense that they set up alternatives that are worse than the activity from which they represent the sole escape—is this state of mind an invigorating and moral one? Does strength of will ever actually develop out of weak or out of angry submission? For by strength of will, by discipline, we can mean only *one's own* strong purpose and determination to carry through hard things—one's own "systematic and persistent effort that proceeds irrespective of immediate desire." And what reason has ever been given us for believing that dictation and mastery by someone else, whether ardently resisted or weakly yielded to, ever grow into real inner force and power? We speak at times as though there were something mysterious and incalculable about the will. Is it not a name merely for such strength and continuity of interested purpose as heeds no obstacle, no distraction? It is likely that many things contribute to this desirable growth, but extremely unlikely that a regime of the sort of Hobson's choices I have described, sometimes known as a disciplinary training, has anything to do with aiding them. Back of the contention that those school activities are best worth while in which pupils "purpose whole-heartedly" because they are doing real things and recognize their significant reality, true discipline turns out to be the fundamental ideal.

Naturally one should not overlook the converse of this position. In talking to pupils, one emphasizes it: that no reasonably intelligent person can work hard at any decent job or study without becoming interested in it. This, however, is of course conditioned on the job being "decent"; it must have some sense and meaning; and it must be, if just beyond the pupil's grasp, certainly within his reach if he

reaches hard. *These conditions are what we have constantly to emphasize and reiterate to ourselves.* And in the measure that we thus question them, to see to it that the jobs we assign are decent, we shall encounter the less need of compulsions.

As a last resort, in bankruptcy of more worthy sanctions to be discussed later, we must doubtless use the compulsions of fear of failure, and shame, and the like punishments. Either by his fault or our own we sometimes fail to make real to a pupil enough significance in essential things, to waken enough power of his own choice, to ensure his mastery of them. That there are then better possibilities than arbitrary force, you will have recognized. But where we find we must rely on such compulsions as I have described—compulsions that are wholly arbitrary and dominant from above—it is right and honest to recognize these as a tactical necessity; don't let us continue persuading ourselves that we are following a desirable and intentional régime looking toward fundamentals of morality. When soldiers are taught instant and implicit obedience, the intelligent officer's aim is not to strengthen their moral fiber; it is to get instant and implicit obedience. The strengthening discipline of soldiering, the morale of a regiment, where it is secured, rises from quite another source; it is a matter of another kind of sanctions of which there is a very different account to give.

If it be contended that the compulsions I have referred to are merely the unintelligent ones, it must be pointed out that the pupil's conception in this matter—doubtless often mistaken—must nevertheless determine the effect upon him. If they seem to him merely arbitrary, captious, senseless, then the unfortunate attitudes of rebellion quite certainly arise, provided he has spirit enough to resent the real or supposed tyranny. So far as discipline is concerned, it is this effect on the child's moral nature that must largely determine our definition. If, however, we reserve these methods as a sort of stone wall against which to back up only those pupils who prove capable of no better, continuant purpose, we shall at least be sure of using them mainly on the inferior sort of individual who is, in fact, capable of little bruising.

#### ALLUREMENTS OF FALSE AND IMMEDIATE MOTIVES

We may, indeed, do well to prefer forthright and resolute demands to any or a second group of so-called purposes, secured through allure-

ments or sugarcoating of insincere dazzlements of personal influence. We must certainly examine with care these thin and clearly temporary expedients—the stimulus of struggle for grades, the mere satisfaction of the “strutting instinct” in exhibitions and the like, together with less worthy, meretricious appeals. We must be sure before trusting much weight upon them that we can actually shift to some more firm support for activities that must be kept going throughout the school years and after if they are to prove of real validity. Devices and expedients are easily available. One sets his sail to any slight breeze in the regions of doldrums. But they certainly must not be made a constant, or too frequent, substitute for real power-drives such as it is our business to discover and utilize. Their place of prominence, if anywhere, certainly is not in the high school. Another appeal of the forceful or attractive teacher is to his magnetic personality or—oftenest her—deployed charm. One finds the brilliant coaching teacher inspiring boys to “get into the game” of mastering futilities of Latin or English grammar, getting them to struggle with much verve and abandon. Good so far as it goes. But how enduring is it—how far, except for the naturally studious boy, who would go on anyhow, does this press of effort continue beyond the teacher’s immediate influence? How bad the use of “charm” can be is illustrated in a chapter of Mr. Charles Norris’s unpleasant and disquieting story, “Salt, or the Education of Griffith Adams.” The point and summation of the matter is simply that all these bids for motive are outside the thing itself that the pupil is doing or studying—quite as much outside it as are mere blind compulsions. Some of them—allurements of personality, or of hot competition for prizes and standings, or of small and unrelated snatches of subject matter artfully tricked out—are of at least doubtful effect. None of them seem to offer assurance of growth in power of attention and application—let alone any social ideals and interests—unless by a rather precarious prestidigitation into purposes of a more enduring sort.

#### INTEREST IN THE JOB

A third, and quite different, type of purposes grows out of pupils’ genuine interest in the job itself. Obviously these jobs may—in primary grades, clearly, they must—be very small and immediately graspable, like the tiny child’s absorption in tracing letters or sawing

boards or teasing-out puzzles. Larger units—interests in relations and interrelations and constantly farther effects—are aided to grow by skilful help in discovering ever larger and more complex problems of activity and expression. The little child's keen zest in the mechanics of writing becomes wider and more significant when it is directed to the possibilities of typewriting, typesetting, and the whole mechanics of journalism. His merely vain-glorious personal pride at appearing before the school to tell a small adventure may be transformed into quite another thing—a real delight in making his experiences and ideas vivid and real for his friends. His rather mean desire to beat a classmate in marks may be reconstructed by his comprehension of his record as an impersonal sort of score in standardized tests, which he can raise, as he raises his own record in pole-vaulting, in unjealous rivalry among the group. He can be set vigorously to work excelling himself. There is a notably increased joy in communication that reaches its aim of interchange of ideas, in degree as one raises the level of his ideas and of the sort of minds he can communicate with. Shop work is irradiated sometimes in much the same way. Spelling for the chronic misspeller, sentence recognition with all its agile protean bafflement, the fixing of his vague ideas for the fluent child, and the painstaking organization of what one knows to fit it to less clear understandings—all these and many more difficulties may bring about, not discouragement, but the hard glitter of battle in the eyes, the steady and resistless advance of determined attack. So, in place of compulsions and irrelevant motives, we can learn more and more to rely on attention securely riveted upon the main job in hand, and realization of relations and effects, of growth and mastery, can be introduced into the subject matter and the activities of our schools.

All this, however, sounds much smoother than it proves in actual practice. No matter how keen a child's interest in a really hard or tedious job that he begins, there are sure to be long flinty stretches that will try his mettle and blunt or break his purpose. A five-year-old who told me confidently that he could make a chicken house—"Oh yes, I could; all I'd need'd be a few boards and some nails. It'd take just a little while"—was in for sorrows and blisters if he tried his plan. Sometimes, clearly, a teacher's duty is to see to it that children's plans are reduced to a practicable size or even given up. The attempt at too large a task—at writing too much or talking around amid too big a subject, for instance—is of course a blight upon



promising ability to purpose and to do, just as excruciating soreness of muscle after his first overhard day ends the track season for many a candidate. On the other hand, we may expect pupils' power to grow, with growing size and complexity of the problems we can encourage them to attack, into constantly greater power of mastery. And pride in the mere difficulty of a thing—the affectionate look back over the drudgery itself once one has the thing done—is one of your most prized recollections and mine.

But in tasks perfectly right and necessary the weary hours tempt to abandon the whole enterprise. In this they are like all the worth while things of life. Then, when a pupil's limited imagination of his goal leaves him with on remaining glamor of interest in his job, is it necessary that the teacher come in always with petty allurements, or with stern taskmaster face, and see it through? Is the contribution of educational theory to stop, with a throwing up of hands, on the more than doubtful expedient of hard, meaningless compulsions to task work? If so, shame and fear and diatribe must continue their large and dishonorable share in our practice, and grow even more popular as countervails to that flabbiness of moral muscle that the War has set us all to speculating upon. It is, then, our business to find if we can something with power of surer growth to self-discipline than the black godmothers of fear and dictatorial authority and the indulgent aunts of pseudo-interest.

#### THE DISCIPLINE OF SELF-MASTERY

Unquestionably, as we have been told so frequently of late, democratic societies—and all other societies as well—tend to weaken and drift unless there is developed in their citizens hardness of moral fiber and effective ideals of citizenship and duty, as well as sharpness of thought. Highest and best of all the purposes we have so far discussed is the strong and resolute compulsion of the child himself over his own vacillating and errant desires. And no other achievement of our education is more significant in its implications for the future of the individual, for the future of democracy. Nor shall we find great difficulty in agreeing upon the ideals which we should like to see govern our pupils in their search for mastery and discipline and good social living. The development of ideals that really have force in people's lives is the highest need and opportunity of education. We know that such ideals can become effective forces, once they are set working properly.

But so little has been told us of how to get this essential thing done! We are often led to conclude that those same arbitrary compulsions to which we have already paid our respects are to be our reliance. But we may well hesitate here. Our confidence in developing power through the subjection of ideas and of wills which many of us observed in the Prussian schools has been, fortunately, weakened of late. Good, honest hours of drudgery and the pupil's finding his work "downright disagreeable" may be symptoms of the very best sort of conditions, or they may mean the most wrong and dangerous kind. If they represent the coercion of simply a worse alternative, rebellion, half attention—just enough to get by—nothing probably can be more subversive of strength of character. But if the drudgery truly is wholesome, if the strong sense of disagreeableness is ridden flat in the masterful advance of a youngster's own sense of high purpose, there is nowhere a finer triumph of right education. What is this right education? If the blind compulsions are to be recognized as not our main weapon, but a last resort only, when a habit or a particular scrap of essential knowledge can be mastered in no other fashion, then we must look for a solution to those purposes which center upon the job itself, and to such higher development of social ideals and of power as life in our schools can generate in our pupils' understanding. At any rate, we all know that we cannot dispense much light by preaching to our pupils, badly as most of us preach. And no matter how brilliantly and convincingly we gave utterance to our ideas of social morality and of discipline, we should get nowhere without providing constantly the essential conditions for "doing something about it."

#### THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SITUATIONS

That, I believe, is why we are talking about social recitations, and do well to talk about them. All live children readily set to work, in smaller or larger groups, at originating and planning school or class journals, or informal dramatizings, or co-operative effort to better the school discipline—rather than to parody taking it over in a lump. Because they are communal, jointly purposed and executed, these activities take on immense vitality. They bring pupils together for suggesting, planning, and revising their schemes. All the group may be helped to look about for good ideas in one another's plans. A fifth grade, for instance, were working recently at writing a small play. Their teacher assured me that they were, like Mr. Wells'

Joan and Peter in the nursery, incapable of co-operative work. In hearing them read their rough drafts of scenes, I merely suggested that the pupils chosen as committee members for writing the final play would naturally be those who showed that they could make the best use of all manuscripts submitted, getting good points wherever they appeared. They eagerly took notes on such points, and their notes were comprehensive and amusing; they showed avidity in discovering useful suggestions. Such experiences as this may be aided to grow into intelligent co-operation on more serious and mature problems in high school and after. They make advancement possible. Good criticism without personality and intrusiveness, ability to take criticism well, hearty sharing in working and reworking are essential to society, and we have done small things toward developing them in our schools. Indeed, the immense advances that might be made in education if we all adopted such an attitude in our educational committees and discussions are not possible to compute.

And it is not alone in the so-called outside activities that social situations can arise. In the regular class work itself, provided it is not, by contrast, made up wholly of "passivities," the same sort of thing is possible. Good teaching of literature makes use of each child's preferences and interests and experiences in and outside of books to develop concrete reports for directing others' reading and for aiding and insuring their understanding of what they read. Composition teaching need not be always a private affair between pupil and teacher, but the class can be aided in becoming a kindly and helpful, but also a critical and discriminating audience for oral themes or themes read, giving commendation and suggestion upon matters of content, organization and statement, and form of presentation. In particular, where a piece of work—a speech or letter or report or a school-paper contribution—is to go beyond the room limits and represent our class to someone else, pupils become most keenly critical of all these things—need, in fact, to be helped constantly to avoid mere finicking and heckling. The entire reconstruction of attitude toward composition mechanics in young people's thought when they submit copy to a printer and know the cost of making corrections is really amazing. The subject has been lifted from the condition of an irregular, baffling, and stupidly futile series of puzzles to a tool for mastering difficulties actually met, and the editorial committee needs no urging to set up and enforce standards for manuscript handed in.

So much for the essential ideas of co-operation and recognition of one another's views which may be developed in social classes. But what is the possible contribution of such enterprises to development of discipline and volition? It is clear that nothing makes so real the worth of one's job as its immediate usefulness for living and communal ends. We have considered possibilities of growth, through such purposes, of sustained power to overcome drudgery and ignore side-issues. But beside all this, solidly backing it up, is the power of opinion represented by the group and its leaders, quietly assuming the doing of his share by every member, holding the flightily and the vacillating to the business in hand, and rewarding with praise and with opportunities for further service the capable and productive workers. In one class planning an assembly program of talks on conservation, three boys were unprepared at the tryouts. At the teacher's question, "What shall we do about it?" it was suggested and determined to bar them from the assembly exercise unless they prepared their part. They rose to the occasion with reasonable success, and did not again fail in meeting expectations that term. This true and proper social compulsion is based on the common understanding that the school audience, like any other, does not care to listen to slipshod presentation. It is not possible to make clear how fundamentally different is such an enforcement and recognition of right social demands from a master's autocratic posing of disagreeable alternatives.

Under intelligent and sympathetic direction, large gains are possible in arousing a sense of the common necessity for perseverant industry; of one's responsibility for his own full share for the group and enterprise as a whole; and of such greater goods as the necessity—the privilege as well as the duty—of being educated for the most intelligent usefulness. The common expectation of these things, however, should not and need not appear as recurrent demand or threat. It needs to be self-understood. And in direct proportion as it is intelligent, and intelligible to every sensible and fair-minded child, it will have the less need of flourishing its club. The chief usefulness of the draft provision during the late war was its explicit formulation of the common demand, for those men who without it were uncertain of their proper course of action. Its element of compulsion was not in most cases needed, and then chiefly where such resort is inevitable, in dealing with the poorer sort of human stuff.

The leadership of the teacher in social classes need not, in most cases it should not, be either abrogated or concealed. He has all the power of a real leader just so far as he is capable of being one, not only in initiating and forwarding activities, but in seeing that all do the best they are capable of. But if he is a wise leader, he will watch always to find out whether the best sentiment of the class recognizes his powers as justly used. And in particular he will see to it that as much initiative as possible is left to his pupils. His brilliant suggestions must not constantly dazzle them. He will whenever possible throw them on their own resources in discovering and solving problems. They must learn to get on without him. He will wisely conserve his leadership for places where the class is baffled, or where their solutions are wrong or their plans lead nowhere—aimlessly going over old paths. Of two plans almost equally valid, the pupil's is far preferable, for his use, to the teacher's, and a usually timid or unwilling child's offering to the group enterprise is best of all.

Not only must class activities not lack leadership; they must be checked by standard tests to determine what formal processes have been stressed and what ones overlooked; to lay out the direction that should be given problems in order that fundamentals be achieved. We must, however, have standards of supervision that desire and demand, not adult perfection—"the ideal of the finished product"—but the best effort the group or the child can put forth with a real minimum of dictation and direction. What is much more important, there must be constant questioning of the ideals that govern and that grow out of school activities. Teachers and supervisory officers are in responsible direction over these matters particularly, charged with seeing to it that powers of socially intelligent and disciplined volition arise out of the diverse happenings of classroom and laboratory. It is just in this difficult region that school principals are most needed; and here, so far as I have observed, they have been most completely inconspicuous. Ideals are of course more difficult to secure than mechanical skills; and because they have not as yet been submissible to specific testing, they have lain at the mercy of authorities without educational principles that provide adequately for them. Yet they are more hopefully possible of realization under a regime of social purposes, chaotic and anarchic as this may at the worst be, than under the iron rule of compulsions from outside and above the pupil.

It is the duty and privilege of administrative officers to see that our educational practices make for strong will and responsibility and for social and wholesome desires. Nothing save the development of strongly continuing and healthful purposes can save our young people from the flaccidity of futile, weak living or the misery of working at ends they do not see or value, under the compulsion of systems and circumstances. With shallow "interests" and "motivations," or with a plague of arbitrary force pretended to harden and temper the will, we shall only deaden and stamp out potentialities of ideals and determination in our children. The faith of democracy is not in the blind obedience of Prussianism or in the uncontrolled individualism of England and America, which have wasted much of the youth and hope of the world, but in high and wholehearted social perceptions and in relentless power of dogged fighting to follow these to the end. For achieving these things, socially constituted school activities, directed to the realization and practical daily following of democratic ideals, are, I suggest, the best possible course.

I have proposed, then, that our best school practice must make use of the social recitation, in which power derives from a pupil's own discovery of the worth of doing hard but intelligible and socially significant things, and of the duty, which is also the privilege, of hard work to master them and where a spirit of communal achievement helps children in co-operative planning and work and in critical evaluation of what they have done. A social recitation such as I have in mind might seem to the visiting supervisor merely a good old-fashioned grind in spelling or sentence mastery, or it might on its surface appear aimless and centerless; the criteria to be applied here are not essentially palpable and immediate—must not be confused with mere bustle or parody of adult society, nor cramped altogether within the reach of as yet standardized tests. It required time to show forth their fruits: power to attack more complex difficulties with unshrinking determination; self-reliance shown in going after and getting information and materials and in gaining specific necessary powers for the task; growing happiness in one's own and in others' work well done, and in worthy art and literature; willingness to criticize definitely and helpfully, but without intrusiveness; and to take and use criticism; and recognition always of the rights of others and of the salutary authority of expertness and experience. Such a regime, in fine, may be helped to produce the discipline or power of will which most men have had to gain independently of recitations in

school, or with merely occasional and incidental help, by applying themselves to tasks they supposed worth while—unaided, certainly, by a really social spirit in the schoolroom. If we can direct educational thought upon these problems, and not altogether upon specific skills and bits of information fed out as preparatory, in a sort of larval state, for a future life of usefulness and culture, we can properly rate or discount sporadic appearances of socialization or of anarchy or of drudgery in schoolrooms, and have some basis for determining what is a sum total of contribution from any given teacher or teaching procedure.

PRINCIPAL M. R. MCDANIEL OF OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL, OAK PARK, ILLINOIS, read the following paper:

### SCHOOL MORALE

M. R. MCDANIEL, PRINCIPAL, OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST  
TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL, OAK PARK, ILLINOIS

It has been said that the spirit of the school is the determining factor in its efficiency. If this statement is true, and I believe that it is, surely the "determining factor" should receive the active attention of every secondary school administrator. We school men as a rule have been too busy with the details of our jobs to give to school morale its proper attention. We have just left it to grow up in its own way, uncultivated. When the spirit of the school is right, many of the details of our work disappear. Matters of discipline seldom arise and when they do arise they are taken care of without friction. When the spirit is right, the pupil feels that he is *of* the school, not merely *in* it, and is ready to assist the faculty in any constructive work undertaken.

To obtain the proper spirit, co-operation is the key note. Co-operation of principal and teachers and co-operation of all the pupils with the faculty. In order to gain this co-operation the principal must take the school, both teachers and pupils, into his confidence. The school cannot co-operate unless it knows what the school is trying to do. It not only must know what it is trying to do, but also must help do it. Co-operation in *doing* is the most essential thing. By this I do not mean that the pupils should run the school, that we should necessarily have so-called student government. Pupils, without the co-operation of the faculty, will probably be as apt to fail