

# THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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## EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

### THE WINCHESTER SCHOOL SITUATION

YOUR letter of May 26th at hand, and I am very grateful for your suggestion that I prepare "a write-up about the Winchester situation" for publication in *THE VIRGINIA TEACHER*, and I agree with you "that the day has been saved more or less by the newer relations between the City Council and the School Board."

The fact is that the so-called "Women's and Children's Crusade" for the Handley Schools of Winchester "was a most interesting demonstration of certain fundamental laws of psychology when applied to the minds of the public and ought to teach us some very useful lessons which should never be forgotten."

To assemble the data within the space allotted for this publication will be difficult and the brevity will necessitate some degree of crudeness. Briefly stated the facts are as follows:

The City of Winchester received many years ago from Judge Handley the donation of the Handley Foundation "for erection of schools for the poor," the funds not to be expended until the termination of a twenty-year period for the accumulation of compound interest. The town council of the city of Winchester, at that time existing, for various reasons refused the donation, and a Board known as the "Handley Board of Trustees" was created with authority to act under the liberal interpretation of the judge and expend

the funds at their discretion for the erection and maintenance of schools.

Result—public school system under the control of School Board, supported by funds under the control of the Handley Board and fifteen thousand dollars appropriated by the town council and certain State funds.

Corollary—ultimate confusion, unless absolute agreement and harmony and complete understanding should always exist between Boards, Council, and public.

When the funds became available the School Board employed as superintendent one of the most distinguished educators in the country, Mr. F. E. Clerk, and the Handley Board paid his salary. Mr. Clerk accepted the position in spite of the advice of his friends who thought that the proposition was too big a mouthful to be digested by the public of so small a community, and that his success, if he should succeed, would guarantee his failure, as it was impossible for the public to be quickly educated to absorb the ideas essential to the maintenance of superior public schools on such a scale.

Anticipations were completely justified, and a few weeks ago, when Mr. Clerk's work had achieved success and the schools had developed past the possibility of support by a fixed sum, which was sixty thousand dollars from the Handley Fund for maintenance, fifteen thousand dollars from the town council and eight thousand from the state, a request was made by the School Board to the town council for an additional fifteen thousand dollars to keep in the curriculum the following essentials—the kindergarten, the departments of art, music, physical education, manual training and agriculture, the school nurse department, the primary supervisor, the Junior High School supervisor, and to prevent the elimination of free text-books. The School Committee of the town council investigated the whole situation, and, with a divided report, suggested the appropriation of three thousand dollars—this resolution was lost on the floor of the council by a vote of six to four.

When this became publicly known, certain friends of the Handley Schools who were on the inside, so far as possessing a personal friendship of all parties involved is concerned—namely, the superintendent of schools, Mr. Clerk, the principal of the high school,



Mr. Duffey, the members of the town council, and the members of the Handley Board and the School Board, and believers in the Handley system—secured the attendance of the officers of the various women's organizations in the community at a meeting of the School Board when it was anticipated that the relations between the School Board and the Handley Board would come up for discussion. These ladies were present in spite of the uncertainty in the minds of certain distinguished members of both boards as to the advisability of their presence, this uncertainty being so great as really to amount to opposition. This opposition was due, in my opinion, to the fact that though theoretically the public was always invited to the meetings of the two boards as well as the town council, practically they never attended. The boards were therefore left high and dry without public support or co-operation.

At that meeting it developed that there was a profound difference of opinion between the financial management and the educational ideas within the board itself, but as a result of that meeting absolute unanimity of opinion and harmony of action was secured. This statement is made because it illustrates one of the profound difficulties innate in the problem of public education throughout the whole country—the natural tendency on the part of financiers to dictate to educators and, vice-versa, the natural tendency of educators to dictate to financiers, the writer believing that the financiers should control the financial policy and the educators keep their mouths shut on that subject, the educators to control the educational policy and the financiers keep their mouths shut on that subject.

At any rate the School Board eventually, after most harmonious conferences of the financiers and educators, requested from the town council an immediate appropriation of five thousand dollars as the last minimum which would keep the schools efficient, together with a school tax levy, beginning with the new fiscal year, at a fair rate of per cent providing for the future needs of the school, and asked the members of the women's organizations in the community to secure petitions to the council to grant the money.

Resumé of situation up to that time—Handley Board controls funds twenty-five

years without losing one red cent, School Board supremely efficient in administration, Handley Schools supremely successful, public ignorant of facts, School Board and Handley Board harmonious, town council unwilling to grant funds, some of them being personally opposed to same, others believing public opposed to same.

History of action leading to successful conclusion of "Women's and Children's Crusade"—secret meeting of the student executive council of the Handley Schools, being the governing body of the children themselves, called in the Handley Library, without authority or encouragement of teacher or principal, superintendent or School Board. Public mass meeting following Sunday afternoon conducted by children themselves. Spectacular, whirlwind campaign for education on the part of the women and children to sell Handley Schools to the citizens of Winchester, securing in ten days education on the part of the public as to the Handley Schools which should have been the result of systematic effort during many preceding years.

Method used—four-minute talks on the part of the children themselves at moving picture theatres. Interviews on the part of the women with the members of the town council. Letters from women's committee to parents of children distributed by children themselves throughout the town. Telephone calls on the part of all friends of the schools to business men throughout the town asking their help. Columns of Winchester "Star" turned over to committee by editor, Mr. Byrd, for wholesale publication of reports of boards, letters from members of town council, public-spirited citizens, and editorials on the part of the owner of the paper. Town in furore, wild rumors of all sorts, great excitement, children making life miserable for parents on behalf of school system, bankers wishing the noise would stop, merchants wishing the 'phone would stop, preachers excited, life of town council unbearable. Meeting of town council for consideration of appropriation, women present. Meeting lasted until quarter past one o'clock in the morning—appropriation granted, vote ten to two in favor of same—only two being incorrigible. The impossible had been accomplished by the women and children of the community and the Handley Schools had been sold to the community for all time,



the Handley Board and the School Board approved, Mr. Clerk's reputation as an educator and Mr. Duffey's success as a principal publicly endorsed, efficiency of women as organizers demonstrated, success of Handley School System in training for character and citizenship demonstrated beyond peradventure, justification of theories of education introduced by Mr. Clerk into the Handley System of character education. This system of character education is summarized in a resolution passed by the Federation of Women's Clubs reported later in this article.

Now, my dear sir, I have attempted to condense into this short statement a development lasting over a period of twenty-five years, the most important contribution to the experiment in public school education with which I am familiar, and I am convinced, and I trust your readers are also convinced, of this fact—that School Boards and Handley Boards and town councils and county commissioners and legislatures and all other public organizations are public servants, and they cannot progress faster than public sentiment, and that the most important thing in the problem of public education is for the educators themselves, by efficient methods of educational salesmanship through the women and children—yes, and the fathers too, for they are as interested in the children as the mothers are—to sell the public schools to the State of Virginia for such sum as will support them without starving the teachers to death and jamming the children in unsanitary buildings and using archaic methods and making Virginia, from an educational standpoint, ridiculous in the eyes of the world.

The prospects, both local and statewide, of achieving this desirable end of educational salesmanship are very bright, the whole community now being united in a sentiment to support the Handley Schools under the present management, guaranteeing public support for the continuance of the system established by Mr. Clerk.

The continuance of this system is doubly assured by the fact that though Mr. Clerk himself has accepted the position as Superintendent of the New Trier Township High School near Chicago, a field of much wider usefulness, he is to be succeeded as Superintendent of the Handley Schools by Mr. Hugh S. Duf-

fey, whose previous preparation and special training as principal of the Handley Schools eminently fit him to carry out these far-reaching plans.

Another hopeful sign of the local situation is the fact that Hon. H. F. Byrd, editor of the Winchester "Star" issued the following editorial when Mr. Duffey's appointment was announced in the "Star", and, as this editorial is not only of local importance but has a deep significance toward the welfare of the whole state, I am including it at this place in the discussion:

#### THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT

The election of Hugh S. Duffey as superintendent of the Handley Schools will be received with very general approval. He is fully qualified by experience and innate ability for the position. He can be relied upon to carry on the superior school system of Winchester. He comes into office endorsed by his present superior, Superintendent Clerk, and was the unanimous choice of the School and Handley boards. He has the support of all factions and his popularity with the pupils of the Handley Schools has been frequently evidenced. Difference of opinion as to school management are certain to occur. Mr. Duffey is only human, and he will do things of which all will not approve. Then, go to him and tell him what you think and offer some better plan. He will gladly welcome such suggestions if made in the spirit of helpfulness. It is the inert, passive opposition that takes the heart out of public men. The opposition which does not come into the light of day, but at every opportunity, when reply and explanation are not possible, a knock and criticism is made, often based upon erroneous information.

Public men waste their energies, impair their efficiency and often give up a hopeless task in the effort to penetrate the wall of silent and passive opposition based frequently upon prejudice and unfacts.

If Mr. Duffey succeeds your children will receive a better education. If he fails your children will suffer. He has the ability. Your support is only necessary for him to administer the Handley Schools so that the people of Winchester will realize to the fullest the wonderful advantages of this great school plant. Do not follow him blindly. Make suggestions and criticize, if need be, but let your criticisms be based upon an intelligent and sympathetic effort to help him and thereby yourselves.

As a pledge of this approbation and support they passed the following resolution:

Whereas, the Federation of Women's Clubs of Virginia has heard with interest, the discussion of the Character Education Program now being worked out in the Handley Schools of Winchester, and the report of the "Women's



and Children's Crusade" in behalf of this system of Education,

Be it resolved: That it is the sense of this convention that all the woman's clubs affiliated with this organization should take an active and intelligent interest, to the limit of their ability, in all things which affect the moral environment of the children of the various communities represented by our membership.

Be it resolved further: That it is our opinion that it is our duty to assist in the application to the Education System of the state, the following principles of Character Education:

1. Change the school to fit the child, not the child to fit the school.
2. Teach children instead of books.
3. Teach life instead of facts.
4. Teach thinking instead of memorizing.
5. Encourage expression instead of practicing repression.
6. Teach only subjects that have an immediate interest instead of merely some vague future worth.
7. Teach the habit of grappling independently with all problems instead of looking for some one else's opinion as an answer.
8. Make every problem a challenge to be met, not a worry to shirked.

As a further evidence of the same hopeful outlook the following editorial on the same subject from the Winchester Star is most conclusive:

#### CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

We publish in today's issue a news item from the Charlottesville Progress, giving an account of the action taken at the annual convention of the Federation of Women's Clubs of Virginia, held in Charlottesville, which means more for the progress of education in the state that can possibly be estimated. This action on the part of the Federation of Women's Clubs was the result of a discussion of Character Education and Religious Education and the possible application of the same to the public school system of the state. The chief feature of the discussion as indicated by the news item was a statement of the program now being worked out in the Handley Schools and a report of the success "of the women's and children's crusade" recently successfully carried out in this city.

By passing resolutions pledging their support to this "Character Education Program" this organization has put behind this movement a force which is capable of securing success for the same.

This is no exaggeration when one realizes that the Federation of Women's Clubs represents about ninety five organizations with an approximate membership of ten thousand women. These organizations extend throughout

the whole state and if their members live up to the resolutions passed at their annual convention the children of Virginia in the public schools will derive a benefit more far-reaching in its results than any action which could otherwise be taken.

The Star realizes profoundly the great truth that the children of the present are the rulers of the future, that the life they live now is as important a part of their lives as the life they will lead when they are full grown citizens.

To make their lives now what they ought to be will guarantee their lives being then what they ought to be. By pledging their support to a proper character education program the Federation of Women's Clubs has done a very great thing for the children of the state, and by fulfilling that program they will redeem the educational system of the state.

We would add that what the educational system of the state needs more than anything else is to teach the teacher that, "book learning" taken for granted, the matter of supreme importance is the study of the child, that their success depends, this taken for granted, not upon how much they know about books, but upon how much they know about children.

Thanking you again for this opportunity of increased service in publishing these facts, I remain,

Very truly yours,

ROBERT B. NELSON

#### SCHOOL BUILDING OPERATIONS

With the limited staff of the State Department of Education it has been much handicapped in furnishing plans and specifications for school building this spring at the time requested. "Much building is being done in Virginia at the present time," said Superintendent Hart in discussing the situation. "While the Department has not checked up the total amount of building construction for which it has furnished plans and specifications, from evidence in hand it seems that the amount will run considerably beyond \$1,250,000. Altogether the amount of building will represent about twice that of last year.

This season, it is said, a number of communities are using for larger buildings the plans and specifications furnished by the State Department of Education. One community is using these plans for a twenty-four room building and another community will shortly use similar plans. The favored type of construction is the one-story building.



## TESTS WILL NOT REPLACE SKILL INCREASE IN TEACHERS' SALARIES IS MYTHICAL

Tests will not replace skill, they will not replace tact, they will not replace kindness, they will not replace enthusiasm, or nobility. On the other hand, they will not in any sense harm us, and they will be useful as helps, no matter how ideal our aims. Our ideals may be as lofty and subtle as you please, but if they are real ideals, they are ideals for achieving something; and if anything real is ever achieved it can be measured. Not perhaps now, and not perhaps in fifty years from now; but if a thing exists, it exists in some amount; and if it exists in some amount, it can be measured. I am suspicious of educational achievements which are so subtle and refined and spiritual that they can not be measured. I fear that they do not exist.—E. L. Thorndike.

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The common school is the greatest discovery ever made by man. Other social organizations are curative and remedial; this is a preventive and an antidote. They come to heal diseases and wounds; this to make the physical and moral frame invulnerable to them.—Horace Mann.

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### INDEPENDENT STUDY A CONDITION FOR COLLEGE GRADUATION

As early as possible in the college course there should be provision of opportunities for independent study, carried on in the spirit of research without meticulous oversight and with judgment only of the final results. None should be allowed to graduate who have not demonstrated their capacity for independent study and registered definite mastery of some field of knowledge.—Dr. Samuel P. Capen, Chancellor of the University of Buffalo.

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The National Education Association by tradition, by practice, and by reason of first-hand experience, daily endeavor, and fundamental interest is and must remain chiefly concerned with the operation and management of the great public-school system.—Dr. William B. Owen, President of the National Education Association, Chicago, Illinois.

Despite rising costs of education, increases in teachers' salaries in recent years have been largely mythical, asserts Professor A. N. Farmer, of Des Moines, Ia.

"Teachers' salaries in large cities in 1923," said Professor Farmer, "average \$1,860, based on figures of the United States Bureau of Education. In 1913 they averaged \$1,143. This looks on its face to be a substantial increase. But commodities and services that could be purchased for \$1 in 1913 are valued at \$1.72 in the currency of 1923.

"The increase in teachers' salaries, therefore, turns out to be no increase at all, but a reduction. Measured by the purchasing power of the dollar, the salary of \$1,143 in 1913 has been replaced by a salary of \$1,081 in 1923.

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### FISCAL INDEPENDENCE FOR BOARDS OF EDUCATION

"The city board of education should be independent of all other boards, because the schools are important enough to demand the attention of a board directly responsible to the people and because experience has demonstrated that an adequate public school system can best be developed by a board having authority to levy its own taxes or to determine the amount to be appropriated, and after the appropriation has been made to spend the funds without interference.—*School Life*.

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### TRUTH

No human being is constituted to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and even the best of men must be content with fragments, with partial glimpses, never the full fruition. . . .

The truth is the best you can get with your best endeavor, the best that the best men accept—with this you must learn to be satisfied, retaining at the same time with due humility an earnest desire for an ever larger portion. Only by keeping the mind plastic and receptive does the student escape perdition.—Sir William Osler.