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I

A REVISED READING PROGRAM

(Report made to the Kindergarten-Primary Section of the State Teachers Association, November 24, 1921.)

I was asked to make a concrete report along the lines of our efforts in reading in the Norfolk City Schools. This report I have entitled "A Revised Reading Program". Whatever we may or may not have accomplished in this line, I am reminded, as I attempt to summarize, that "Our aim exceeds our grasp". The Reading Program, which we developed and printed, I feel is superior to our practice in many instances. Again I am sure that by the expression of this work, ideas have been clarified and thoughts stimulated which are superior to those expressed in the printed production. So we count not ourselves to have apprehended, but press forward to a realization of higher ideals.

By way of explanation, I wish to say that this Reading Program was initiated in a scientific study of reading at the University of Chicago, continued in Rochester, N. Y., and presented in its present development by the kindergarten, primary, and elementary teachers of the Norfolk Public Schools.

Time will not permit that I should discuss this program in detail. Therefore, I shall emphasize only the principles or aims upon which it is based and merely indicate the methods of development. Here may I say, that having been a teacher and supervisor both in county and village schools, I know that these principles are applicable to the schools of our State irrespective of location. The difficulty in adaptation lies in the meagerness of reading material, which is a handicap to all, but particularly to the rural district.

It is interesting to note how the ideas of one age and generation are re-echoed and modified in succeeding time. Horace Mann

wrote in his Secretary's Report to the Board of Education in 1838, "I have devoted especial pains to learn, with some degree of numerical accuracy how far the reading, in our schools, is an exercise of the mind in thinking and feeling, and how far it is barren action of the organs of speech upon the atmosphere". Here is shown the fact that he recognized practically a century ago just what we theoretically accept today—that is, the value of all reading is as it affects thought and feeling. He, then, was trying to free these vital elements from the domination of formal spelling, just as we of the present are trying to give these objectives pre-eminence over the mechanical process.

So in the Reading Program of Norfolk, we accept as the first aim—"Permanent Interest in Reading." There can be no permanent interest in reading unless the reading experience be tied up with the stimulation of thought and desirable emotional states. I think our practice will bear out that we more generally accept the value of the former than the latter. If a reading attitude of mind and feeling be established one has gone a long way toward establishing a permanent interest in reading.

The following incidents illustrate contrasting feeling attitudes. A little girl just entering the second grade, and whose first grade reading experience had been unpleasantly colored with reading drill of the type: Come. Come. Come away. Come with me. Come with me to the tree.—all of which is only too familiar to some of us—said to me, when she opened her copy book and saw the word *come*, "Oh, don't say come to me, I hate that word. I never want to hear or see it again. Last year it was come, come, come all the time." In contrast to this case, recently a little pupil in the high first noticing I was in the room, indicated that I should come to him and see what he was doing. After thoroughly explaining the work in hand, he took out his reader and

said, "Now, I'll show you a good story. It's my reading lesson". Then with the *naivete* of childhood, he remarked, "You may take it, and read it if you can. It's a fine story". Evidently this child had, toward reading, the right feeling attitude upon which to build a permanent interest.

If a reading attitude of mind is to be gained, there must be diversity of material. I feel that it is easier in reading than perhaps any other phase of our school work to provide for differences of ability in children. Yet despite this possibility, I am sure that our standard of attainment is far beneath the ability of a large percentage of our pupils. The practice of adhering to a two or four book text-book reading program, particularly for each of the elementary grades does as much to destroy as to establish a permanent interest in reading. Therefore, beginning in the kindergarten with the table of picture and story books, we seek to provide throughout the grades, by the reading table, book shelf, story hour, reading club, and school library, a diversified reading experience which shall lead to a permanent interest in reading.

For the second aim in reading we have placed—"Economic and Effective Study Habits." More important than the books read or the facts remembered are the habits of thought and the methods of work formed. Therefore, the procedure from year to year, leading to the accomplishment of this aim, emphasizes the *how* rather than the *what*.

The phase of reading emphasized in our third aim is—"Thorough Mastery of the Mechanics of Reading." To some this is still the paramount object of reading. Permanent interest and habits of thought fade into insignificance in comparison with this more objective and measurable result. Certainly no one would underestimate the importance of the mastery of mechanics, but if its importance be magnified there is danger of the results indicated by Horace Mann in the paragraph from which I have before quoted, the concluding statement of which is, "It would hardly seem that the combined efforts of all persons engaged could have accomplished more in defeating the true purpose of reading". In the mastery of the mechanics of reading, we have three distinct problems—silent reading, oral reading, and vocabulary work. The method of

teaching oral and silent reading are distinctly different and as such are indicated. Vocabulary work which has been too often considered a matter particularly of the first and certainly of the early grades, we have attempted to develop throughout the grades.

However, I think that much more careful work needs to be done in estimating the reading vocabulary of pupils in the early primary grades and determining the reading ability correlated with this. If a reading vocabulary of eight hundred words gives ability to pronounce 95% of the words in the second readers, then a child with a reading vocabulary of four or five hundred words clearly has not the mastery of mechanics which will result in the exercise of the mind in thinking and feeling if subject matter of second grade difficulty be used. No doubt, the meagerness of the reading vocabulary is the keynote to the poor reading of the slow sections in many grades.

Our fourth and last aim stated in the reading program is "Economical and Effective Use of Books"—in individual books, pages, chapter headings, index, in books of different types, encyclopedias, etc. This habit can only come through a conscious focusing upon this as a definite aim throughout successive years.

In the arrangement of the reading program, we state the kindergarten and first three primary grades to be the period for stimulating interest and mastering the mechanics of reading, and necessarily oral reading is rather conspicuous; the elementary grades—the fourth, fifth, and sixth years—are stated as the place for broadening interest and increasing the rate of reading, so naturally silent reading must predominate.

We do not claim there is anything new or original in the work which we have compiled; it is simply the composite experience of many who have been trying since the days of Horace Mann to say that reading is a thing of thought and feeling rather than a barren action of the organs of speech upon the air. Yet, there are with us as there are in other parts of the state and country, those who have not mentally heard. And my only excuse for consenting to give this synopsis of thought is that it might add some to the number of those who hear.

If more teachers would hear that reading must awaken thought and feeling, more

legislators would hear and it would not be so difficult to get free text-books for our State, which is the basal material for the accomplishment of our aim. If more teachers would hear that even in the primary and elementary grades reading may be a bond for the bringing about of unity of thought and feeling among our people, more citizens would hear and our library facilities providing a more diversified reading experience would be increased. If more teachers would hear that reading is a dynamic force, more text-book makers would hear and publishers would not offer to the public a reader built solely on a mechanical basis. For after all, we get what we want. It may not be to the extent we wish it, but it is in the line of our desire. In our small moments we are inclined to deny this, but when we are at our best, we know it is true.

I do not believe in a reading mania, but I believe like Tagore that, "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information, but which makes our life in harmony with all existence". In the realization of this ideal, I think reading has its part and as such in our reading program we would emphasize it.

LUCY S. SAUNDERS

II

THE RELATION OF HEALTH TO HOME ECONOMICS

Home Economics covers a vast field in which we consider not only problems relating to the three necessities of life—food, shelter, and clothing—but those "embracing every aspect of human life exhibited in the home." We are realizing more fully than ever that no home exists without a definite relation to its community, state and nation. The homes of this country are responsible for about fifteen million physically defective children of school age, and for the fact that thirty per cent of the young men of an age for military service were not physically fit to respond to the call. It is in these homes also that tens of thousands of young children die each year from preventable disease; it is from them that a steady stream of recruits is contributed to the army of criminals and insane. It is the parents of the population who are responsible for

our deficiency in natural vitality, for so many low-powered lives, for the existence of so many incompetent citizens.

The keynote of the Home Economics conference of the National Educational Association last year was the placing of future emphasis upon "health". Much stress was given to the fact that the teacher of Home Economics has a greater responsibility than merely the teaching of the fundamental principles of cooking and sewing. She must consider each child as a future citizen of the nation, who must be prepared to render the most efficient service of which she is capable; and in order that she may be mentally efficient, she must have that degree of health which makes for initiative, endurance, and success. All the work bearing upon food and clothing must have for its objective the maintenance of health.

Home Economics has a definite contribution to make to three of our great national movements. It is in child health, child care and child feeding; in the functioning of education in the problems of life; and in the forces which are threatening the integrity of the American home. Everyone is interested in the health of children, but not all are awakened to the necessity of teaching health and fixing health habits so that they may make for the highest degree of physical efficiency in manhood and womanhood. Do we often ask ourselves this question—what is health? Health is not merely freedom from illness, nor merely sufficient vigor. It means the possession of a reserve force of strength and energy—the physical capital which is so large a factor in personal success. Childhood is the time to build up this reserve. In other words, "health is that abundance of life and overflowing vigor which are foundations of success and happiness in life."

Why should we teach health? Statistics tell us that over six million of the school children in America are suffering from malnutrition.

Dr. Emerson has called any child malnourished who is 10% underweight for his height. He also made the statement that "children do not become underweight to this degree of ten per cent except for adequate causes. The causes of underweight are physical defects, insufficient food and bad food habits, lack of home control, over-fatigue, and faulty health habits. It is not necessary that the home economics teacher