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SOME PHASES OF  
NURSERY-KINDERGARTEN-PRIMARY  
EDUCATION, 1926-1928

By

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# SOME PHASES OF NURSERY-KINDERGARTEN-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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CONTENTS.—Enriched environment—A new type of educational literature—Children's introduction to reading—Reconstruction of report cards—Nursery school and parent education—Children's progress aided in kindergarten and first grade—Contributions from research for teaching problems.

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Three terms which refer to "the child" as the center of education have come into common use during the 1926-1928 biennium. The terms, "the whole child," "the child-centered school," and "creative expression," when translated into current practice, indicate significant progress in educational procedures.

The "whole child" indicates the several phases of child development which are now considered in many school programs, particularly those for nursery schools, kindergartens, and the first grades. These programs have emphasized social behaviors or character development equally with achievement in the school subjects; physical development is considered in its relation to social and intellectual development, not alone as an end in itself; home and school programs have set similar standards for the child's 24-hour day and for his progress from the nursery school through the kindergarten and elementary grades.

The school program that is "child centered" has emphasized the necessity of providing an environment in which the potential abilities of individual children are discovered and developed. The program provides activities of interest to children through which skill in reading, arithmetic, in social cooperation, and other social and intellectual abilities develops. It offers occasions for the self-initiated or original work frequently termed "creative expression." During such work a child's unanticipated skills and talents, as well as his lack of ability, are exposed to the teacher. With such information the teacher gives individual guidance, capitalizing each child's strength and achievement.

Such procedures as those briefly described indicate that the progressive program of education during the past two years has been

essentially constructive and positive. The program has placed a new importance upon the educational influence of environment. Fundamentally accepted in principle for the past 5 or 10 years, the actual demonstration in classroom practice of an adequate educational environment has been more widespread and more frequently stimulated and supported by scientific research than it has in the past. Instances of this demonstration in practice, which are suggestive of many others, are discussed in this report.

### ENRICHED ENVIRONMENT

School environment was formerly understood to refer merely to the physical surroundings in which a child lives. As now defined, the term includes the behaviors and thinking of those persons with whom the child comes in contact. The child's responses in thought and action to everything he sees, feels, and of which he becomes conscious have long been recognized. The need for providing the kinds of situations which guide his responses into proper habits and attitudes and toward adequate knowledge is a part of the recent emphasis on the value of enriched environment.

Two researches give pertinent illustrations of the influence of environment upon expressed intelligence. A study made by the Family Welfare Society, of Atlanta, Ga., and reported in the Georgia Educational Journal for December, 1927, showed that 12 and 13 year old children in underprivileged families had an average of 20 points lower I. Q. than their 4 and 5 year old brothers and sisters. The cause of this deterioration of I. Q. was laid to home conditions. In this environment there was no social nor intellectual stimulus nor regularity of living. There were no playthings, and the parents made no effort to provide worth-while experiences for the children nor to have conversations which would increase their fund of knowledge or ability to express themselves.

Among the outstanding studies reported in the Twenty-Seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education is one giving the effect of environment in contrast to inheritance upon children's expressed intelligence. The influence of environment on the intelligence, school achievement, and conduct of foster children, as reported in the study, shows that children in better foster homes gained considerably more in measured intelligence than did those in poorer homes; that children adopted at an early age gained more than those adopted at a later age; that siblings placed in better homes expressed superior intelligence over those placed in poorer homes; that unrelated children in the same home resembled each other in intelligence. The findings for children who were not selected for

adoption because of their brightness show decidedly that enriched environment increases children's expressed intelligence.

Such support from research has proved helpful to administrators in justifying the introduction of newer types of teaching method and equipment and in developing courses of study based on newer educational objectives. The studies give added support to the teachers and school administrators who have been following progressive ideas of education. School practice has not, however, waited upon research. A report made in 1926 by Mrs. Hughes, of the Milwaukee State Normal School, on creative activities in her first grade described the situation provided for the children enrolled:

Modern psychology and pedagogy have given us enlightenment as to the real meaning of education \* \* \*. We are now providing a happy, colorful, and joyous environment where children may really live together \* \* \*. The new environment provides many avenues to help children express their ideas, and provides many educative materials \* \* \*. The teacher has a very definite part in the new régime. Her function is "to set the stage" in this new environment, so that children may find worthwhile activities.

In such a program every effort is made to protect the child from his particular social handicaps and to safeguard and to promote his mental and physical health. The teacher in this situation must be equipped with a wide range of knowledge, with a keen sensitiveness to children's reactions to classroom procedures, with techniques for discovering the causes for children's social and intellectual disabilities, and for carrying on remedial measures. Such a teacher also needs a social skill in establishing a classroom atmosphere which begets activity and happiness in the child and in creating rapport with parents in the home.

Assistance for classroom work in matters of behavior problems and social welfare has been provided in many school systems by visiting teachers who go into the homes and by psychological service. To the department of research in the Los Angeles public schools there has been added a division for the study of children of preschool age. A nursery school has been established as a laboratory. It is anticipated that through this laboratory information will be obtained which will be of direct service to teachers of young children, not only in matters pertaining to behavior of children but also in problems of teaching techniques. Corrective work with high-school pupils has been a major feature of this research department's program. It is now accepting preventive work with the young child as of equal and perhaps of greater importance.

An example of cooperation which helps classroom teachers with materials for instruction is found in the close affiliation between the public library and the public schools of Kalamazoo, Mich. The children's department of the public library has established "a children's

house." In this house not only books are available for the children and the teachers, but mounted photographs, stereoscope pictures, stereopticon slides, and mounted exhibits showing industrial processes may also be borrowed for classroom use. A museum of local historical interest and of foreign material is well arranged for classroom visitation.

These two examples indicate types of service to assist teachers in providing a more adequate educational environment. Many others could be mentioned such as the transportation provided by several cities for school children to visit art museums, botanical and zoological gardens, and places of civic and industrial interest. In fact, there is little limit to the possibilities for enriching the school environment.

#### A NEW TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

Many timely reports of creative work in education have been issued during the past two years by universities, teachers colleges, boards of education of public-school systems, and by private organizations. These reports both printed and mimeographed, are the beginning of a new type of educational literature which is making a definite contribution to current practice of progressive education. In times past, such reports have been confined to privately supported schools and institutions and to research centers. It is particularly significant to note that current contributions are now coming from all types of public and private institutions interested in the education of young children. Problems presented from many individual points of view add materially to the suggestiveness of the help available for those about to inaugurate new methods or materials of teaching.

The subjects covered in these reports include creative activities in classroom work, equipment, and supplies for activity curricula, reports on conditioning young children's behaviors, studies in character development, and reports of individual and coordinated effort in conducting programs of child development and parent education.

The Boston public schools have issued a bulletin entitled "Training the Emotions, Controlling Fear." This study not only shows how children may be helped to control the fear impulse but it includes outlines for classroom discussion which will guide the teacher in helping the children to overcome their fears. A study from the department of statistics of the public schools of Flint, Mich., covers the types of movable and stationary desks and seats for the primary grades. The institute for the coordination of women's interests, of Smith College, describes the nursery school as a social experiment. A report from the commonwealth fund presents a group of papers to show the relation of the child-guidance clinic to the community, giv-

ing the viewpoint of a clinic, the juvenile court, the school, the child-welfare agency, and the parent. The National Research Council, committee on child development, has issued a directory of researches under way in child development. The Teachers College of the University of Nebraska describes the educational activities inherent in an air-mail and a railroad project carried on by primary grades. The State Teachers College at Moorhead, Minn., describes two experiments in conduct education, and the State Normal School in Milwaukee, Wis., has issued a series of pamphlets on creative activities in the kindergarten-primary grades. Between 60 and 70 such pamphlets have been received by the Bureau of Education during the past two years. They dignify current achievements, suggest new projects, and encourage other groups of workers both to experiment with educational method and procedure, and to give to others the benefit of their achievements.

#### CHILDREN'S INTRODUCTION TO READING

There seems to have been slower progress in making a psychological approach to the teaching of reading, arithmetic, spelling, and handwriting, traditionally accepted as "fundamental" subjects, than to nature study, fine and industrial arts, and the sciences. However, correlation of subject matter in units of work has motivated the teaching of these subjects. Through a single activity such as dramatization there is a definite need for reading and for writing plans and records of progress, and for number activities to estimate and measure for costumes and scenery. An appeal is made to the children's interests and abilities. In fact, such units of work give a definite purpose for developing skill in all subjects through drill, whether individual or group. Programs so planned are easily detected by the classroom visitor who sees small groups of children independently engaged in a variety of both construction and drill activities.

Using beginning reading as an example, an effort was made to discover the extent to which changes in methods of teaching the more traditional subjects have taken place in current practice during the past two years. Three questions were asked of students enrolled in Dr. Laura Zirbes' class in methods of teaching reading, Teachers College, Columbia University, in the summer of 1928. The following is a summary of the replies received from the instructor and from 14 graduate students<sup>1</sup>, working in city and State school systems

<sup>1</sup> These students included 5 general supervisors and assistant superintendents, 4 critic teachers, 2 directors of remedial reading in public-school systems, 2 elementary school principals, and 1 State supervisory agent. They represented 10 States and the Canal Zone.

and in teacher-training institutions throughout the country. The three questions were: (1) What have been the outstanding points of progress in teaching reading to beginners during the past two years? (2) To what extent is this progress actually in practice in your classrooms? (3) What influences seem to have retarded progress?

*Progress in methods of teaching beginning reading.*—Replies to this question are summarized as follows: Experiences and activities of interest to children are considered the best content for first lessons in reading. By this method the meaning of what is read is emphasized at the outset, book reading becomes a means to an end instead of an end in itself, abstractions are eliminated, life situations of interest to children are immediately connected with school work, and the child's initiative is used and his desire to read is whetted.

Methods of teaching beginning reading, based on children's interests and experiences, emphasize different procedures from those which the stereotyped "systems" encourage. Reading is now considered a life activity and handled as such rather than as a formal school subject; it is, therefore, not confined to a reading period but used in all experiences of the day's program. Teachers are capitalizing the interests children bring to the classroom and in addition are providing rich and varied experiences before beginning the definite teaching of reading. The children's own vocabulary is used as a starting point for the addition of many new words in their daily conversation and in their reading lessons. Kindergarten teachers are assuming a definite responsibility with their pupils in providing rich experiences, in building vocabularies, in developing clear-cut diction and enunciation, in providing practice in the use of complete sentences, and in stimulating curiosity regarding material to be read.<sup>2</sup>

The practice of teaching children to read by first comprehending the meaning of *wholes*, such as the sentence, before they are taught to recognize phrases and words, is widely accepted. The teaching of these wider units helps to prevent slow and laborious reading. Phonics is used to meet individual needs rather than presented as formal drill to all children. Premature stressing of phonics is avoided, since it tends to fix habits of word calling and short perceptual span units. There is less emphasis upon oral reading and more upon silent reading. More attention is given to individual differences in reading, in ease of learning, in interests, and in difficulties. Informal tests are

<sup>2</sup> National Society for the Study of Education. Twenty-fourth Yearbook. Part I. Report of the National Committee on Reading. Bloomington, Ill., Public School Publishing Co., 1925. 20 p.

used to record progress in acquiring skill instead of depending upon the exclusive use of commercially made "seatwork." Wider reading experiences, guided by the teacher, are preferred to intensive work in mastering a few selections. Care is taken to prevent strain and other emotional disturbances which formerly resulted from the undue pressure on reading power.

*The extent to which these progressive ideas in teaching are in actual practice* was chiefly described by those giving information as "not widespread" and as "50 per cent." Students leave the training schools with the new ideas of reading method, but frequently take positions in school systems where formal methods of teaching and "systems" of learning to read are required of the teachers. In some school systems the new ideas are still in the experimental stage. To introduce these, one school system first used a single classroom as a laboratory for experimentation. In this way the value of the methods studied could be proved with a view to later adoption by other first grades. Extensive reading is encouraged so far as materials are available.

*Factors retarding progress in methods of teaching beginning reading* are arranged in the order of frequency with which they were mentioned. Parents, school superintendents, boards of education, and the general public often have a wrong attitude toward new ideas of teaching method. Many parents want children to read too early and do not realize the values of soliciting children's interests to increase their knowledge and skills. There is a lack of appreciation on the part of many school superintendents that child study instead of subject matter forms the basis of teaching method. Many superintendents still require teachers to use formal and traditional methods of teaching. Public opinion generally favors a more formal type of teaching.

Many teachers are not acquainted with the psychology of an activity program and are not prepared to carry a teaching program on that basis. This is sometimes due to a lack of recent study or training, and sometimes to a definite "mind set" against change in procedure. Either a total lack of supervision or supervision which disregards the new philosophy of child study has hindered the progress of new methods of teaching beginning reading. This has particularly affected the inexperienced teachers working in their first positions. Suitable reading material is a necessity for the new program of teaching reading. The library of books necessary to supplement sets of readers is often lacking.

Other statements of hindrances include curricula based wholly on subject matter; promotion requirements for first grade based upon the mastery of a certain number of books or pages read; expectation

of uniform progress for all children; large classes which make it difficult for teachers to provide for individual differences among the children; daily programs divided into short periods; programs of testing which emphasize achievement to the exclusion of growth.

All of the hindrances to the practice of using new methods of teaching reading are remediable. Popular magazines are arousing general interest in child study in relation to learning. More teachers colleges and normal schools are basing the theory and practice work offered their students on the new ideas of developing skills through interests. More experienced teachers are enrolling each year in the summer sessions and extension departments of teachers colleges and universities. Teachers' professional organizations are including demonstration work and discussion of modern school practices in their programs of meetings. Mechanical work involved in preparation of typed or mimeographed materials needed by teachers is cared for in many school systems by clerks assigned to assist in elementary school buildings. A sound basis for changing certain undesirable promotion requirements is given in a recent investigation<sup>3</sup> which shows that a 6-year chronological age does not in itself constitute readiness for reading.

In some instances, public schools and practice departments of teacher-training institutions are offering special assistance to teachers by the appointment of teachers of remedial reading. Teachers are studying and have more knowledge about the techniques of teaching in their relation to activities of the school program and to the important objectives of social behaviors now generally emphasized. These constructive influences may well bring to the children throughout the country greater ease and happiness in learning to read. They may also guide public opinion in thinking of learning to read as a thought-getting and thought-expressing process rather than one of alphabet or word recognition.

### RECONSTRUCTION OF REPORT CARDS

Measures of pupil progress, recorded on report cards for the benefit of parents, have, perhaps, been less affected by the new ideas regarding curricula or methods of teaching than have any other one part of the school program. This may be due both to the fact that teachers do not have confidence in modern educational methods, and to the difficulty of explaining newer educational terms and methods of rating to school patrons and to the lay public. To effect changes

<sup>3</sup> An investigation of practices in first-grade admission and promotion. Mary M. Reed. New York City, 1927. New York City, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1927. 128 p. (Contributions to Education, No. 200.)

in content and, in form of such a personal record as a report card requires a carefully planned educational program for the parents. Findings from a study of 419 cards in current use for kindergarten-elementary grades indicate how few reflect modern principles of education. The mechanics and contents of the cards were studied for evidences of the following new educational objectives emphasized in recently constructed curricula: Importance of character development; correlation of subject matter; emphasis on individual instruction; use of standardized tests; appeal to children's interests and use of their experiences in school programs; cooperation of school and home; recognition of the educational value of extracurricular activities; encouragement of appreciative and creative expression in such activities as art, music, and literature.

On the greater number of cards studied, the pupils' behaviors are rated only under the general traditional terms of "conduct," "deportment," and "effort." Comparatively few cards list from 4 to 20 such behaviors to be rated as courtesy, cooperation, obedience, initiative, self-control, etc. On still fewer cards the behavior traits are classified, defined, or placed in relation to specific situations. For example, "Courtesy—Listens attentively while others are talking; avoids interrupting the person speaking; shares work and play material with others." A major number of the behaviors defined are stated in such negative forms as "wastes time," "gives up too easily," and "is discourteous." In only rare instances have "social studies" or "units of work" supplemented lists of detached subjects. Just as infrequently are ratings given for such specific types of skills as oral and silent reading. Few ratings relate the individual child's achievement to his individual capacity and to standard norms. "Creative expression" and the pupil's individual interests are given space on the cards in only a few instances, and advantage is rarely taken of the opportunity to capitalize parent cooperation in the child's all-around education.

No one card reporting pupil progress can be used satisfactorily by all school systems. Curricula and administrative organization of classes and supervisory units in individual cities require individual consideration. The groups of lower and upper elementary grades seem to need different items for rating and different methods of rating. In constructing a new report card, parent cooperation is proving both helpful and economical. Such cooperation familiarizes parents with the new objectives of education and enlists their aid in strengthening the school's efforts to develop desirable habits in the children.

A program that is being developed in San Francisco as a test of effectiveness for its activity curriculum, which has been in use

for three years, is expected to lead the way to a reconstruction of the report card. A detailed inquiry has been submitted to parents who have indicated their willingness and ability to cooperate by keeping records. This inquiry, which is arranged in two columns, is headed by such objectives and activities accepted for the school program as *habits* of sharing responsibilities, of motor control, of health, of table behaviors, and of rest and relaxation; *attitudes* of courtesy, of respecting the rights of others, of fairness in dealing with others, of self-reliance and initiative, and of respect for law and authority; *use of school subjects and materials*, such as language, use of materials, nature work, reading, numbers, and music. In one column are statements of the desired school attainments and in the other are statements showing a possible carry-over of these attainments in the home. Space is left in the second column for insertions and a blank page is left for written explanations. To illustrate: Under "Sharing responsibilities" the first statement in column 1 is "Hangs up hat and coat. Takes care of rubbers and umbrella." In column 2 the first statement is "Puts away own clothes" and the parent is requested to check one of the following terms, "voluntarily," "when reminded," "when scolded."

Parents so initiated into the new objectives of school work can be depended upon for cooperation when a change from a traditional type of report card is desired. The desired goal is for records of progress which shall be sufficiently comprehensible to parents, teachers, and children to assure intelligent and unified effort in helping a child progress socially, physically, and intellectually.

#### NURSERY SCHOOL AND PARENT EDUCATION

Objectives and procedures of every new movement, to which many organizations actively contribute, are in a condition of continual change. The nursery school is such a movement. Specific contributions are made to its program by people from the fields of education, nutrition, psychology, and mental and physical hygiene. Due to these contributions, most of which are based on scientific research, there has been no crystalization of the programs of education for young children in nursery schools. Questions which are still controversial include the size, kind, and quantity of play materials and of physical apparatus; the amount of independent personal care and care for property to be expected of children at the 2, 3, and 4 year age levels; the size of group which a nursery school teacher can handle, and the desirability of conducting any organized group work; the amount of indoor and outdoor play; adequate provision of food for midmorning, noon, and afternoon lunch; the values of conducting nursery schools a full day or a half day; types of records

to be kept each day, each week, and at other times during the school year; the details of physical examination considered essential and methods of preventing contagion; adequate methods of giving mental and social tests.

Even this list of controversial questions does not complete the problems continually arising in nursery schools. A wholesome outlet for these questions has been provided at the annual meetings of the International Kindergarten Union, at the conference on research of the committee on child development of the National Research Council, and at the biennial conference of nursery school workers called by the National Committee on Nursery Schools.

A subcommittee of this National Committee on Nursery Schools has continued its study of minimum essentials for nursery-school education. Due, perhaps, to the many points of view of those cooperating in the work, the committee has found it a difficult task to outline the minimum requirements for nursery schools without apparently determining procedures which could be interpreted as typical. A need for the minimum essentials is found in the number of informally organized schools using the name "nursery school" without providing trained teachers and consultants to guide the work.

The number of nursery schools listed by the Bureau of Education in 1926 was 67, and in 1928 it was 121. Many of the schools listed in 1926 did not continue and many new ones have since been opened. Of those listed in 1928, there are 68 which were opened during the years 1926, 1927, and 1928. The 121 schools are located in 70 cities in 27 States and the Territory of Hawaii.

A total enrollment of 2,573 children is reported from 107 of the nursery schools, with a median enrollment of between 16 and 20 children. There is an average of 9 children per teacher, with, however, a certain amount of assistance from student teachers, research workers, nurses, or parents.

The median length of day for all the nursery schools listed in the directory is between 6 and 8 hours. In this way all the problems of growth connected with the child's eating and sleeping habits, as well as the social problems and those connected with handling play materials, are brought to the attention of the teacher. Nearly all the schools operate for 5 days a week; 2 schools in orphanages operate 7 days a week; and 7 schools, 2 supported by tuition fees, 4 caring for the children of working mothers, and 1 located in a hospital, run for 6 days a week.

For all nursery schools there is one main service to be rendered. That service is the education of young children and their parents. In addition, some schools act as demonstration and teacher-training centers and others as research laboratories. Of the schools listed by the Bureau of Education, 74 are organized specifically for the edu-

cation of young children and their parents; approximately half of these schools are supported by tuition fees and the other half by philanthropic organizations; 10 nursery schools included in the 74 are located in public-school buildings, but only 4 of these are wholly supported by the school systems. Thirty-two nursery schools act as demonstration or teacher-training centers for departments of home economics and education in colleges and universities. Three schools offer demonstration facilities for home economics courses in institutions of high-school level. Twelve nursery schools act as laboratories for institutes of research in child development.

Few advocate that nursery schools be made a part of public-school education. This would be hardly defensible until more definite techniques of teaching young children have been determined and until a larger proportion of the 4 and 5 year old children are cared for in kindergartens. However, nursery schools are being organized as demonstration centers in a few public-school systems and teacher-training institutions. They inform the teachers of all grades or the students in training about the educability of preschool children. Opportunity is provided for the observation of the reactions of children much younger than those with whom teachers are accustomed to work. They are able to see the simple elements of behavior in their earlier phases of development. The public-school nursery school also makes preparental education possible. In Detroit, Highland Park, Mich., and Los Angeles, Calif., both elementary and high-school pupils have opportunity to observe and to participate in the work with young children, learning something of the responsibilities of parenthood.

Education of the children's parents is cared for in nursery schools in several ways. These include daily conferences with teachers, discussion and study groups, home visits by the school staff, and observation of and participation in the actual work with the children. In 14 nursery schools the mothers, and in one or two instances the fathers also, are expected to give stated time to participation in the nursery school program.

The nursery school exercises marked influence in furthering parents' observation and study of their children. Such observation and study focus attention upon the home environment as a most significant factor in controlling children's social and intellectual growth as well as their physical development. The importance of fitting the home to the child is emphasized. This refers both to actual provision of space and of proper proportioned equipment for children, and also to the standards of home programs. Study groups provided for parent education have placed special emphasis upon the necessity for parents to control their own emotional and intellectual life because of its influence upon their children.

In keeping with the growth of interest in the education and welfare of young children, a committee of seven, with 124 associates and contributors from the National Society for the Study of Education, has assembled material during the past two years for the yearbook "Preschool and Parental Education." A complete picture of programs contributing to the development of young children and to the profession of parenthood has been prepared. The history and the purpose of the preschool and parental education movement have been summarized; detailed descriptions of the organizations and programs of work of child-welfare agencies, day nurseries, clinics, nursery schools, and kindergartens have been prepared; a survey has been made of all projects sponsoring parent education, as well as an extensive survey of completed research in the fields of preschool and parent education.

This yearbook specifically shows the breadth of interest in preschool education. It also shows appreciation of its importance in relation to the whole gamut of growth which determines the success of childhood and adult life.

Another indication of the breadth of interest in preschool education is found in the variety of sources from which inquiries concerning nursery-school education have come to the United States Bureau of Education. These inquiries suggest that there is perhaps as wide a variety of organizations vitally concerned with the education of young children as there is in any other one phase of education. Aside from superintendents of schools, from those in charge of departments of education in universities and colleges, from directors of teacher-training institutions, teachers, and others engaged in the school program, inquiries have been received about preschool education from the following agencies: National organizations, such as the American Federation of Labor, American Sociological Society, American Child Health Association, and American Red Cross; from Federal bureaus; from State boards of health, public welfare, agriculture, and control; from county bureaus of health and home advancement; from municipal departments of health, of public and infant welfare, of child guidance, of "institutes and agencies," of research; from clinics for infant feeding, committees on preventing delinquency, and from juvenile and family courts; from municipal and philanthropic charities, community chest committees, public charity associations, day nursery associations, social settlement centers; from foundations which aid projects in preschool and parent education; from organizations such as parent-teacher associations; and from public libraries, editors of periodicals, and consulates and educators in foreign countries.

There is evidently a definite and a widespread appreciation of the need to establish right beginnings of adequate personal, social, and

intellectual habits and attitudes in young children. There is, also, widespread appreciation of the need for making a profession of parenthood.

#### CHILDREN'S PROGRESS AIDED IN KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE

Benefits children receive from attending kindergarten have been well described in two research studies recently completed by Edward W. Goetch and Ada S. Woolfolk, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Goetch compares achievements in the elementary school of children with and without kindergarten experience. He finds that kindergarten children have a higher scholarship and a higher social ranking, based on teachers' estimates; that they have higher intelligence and achievement scores and a higher educational age according to objective tests; and that they have fewer failures in promotion and more regular progress through the elementary grades. "The kindergarten is an important factor in later elementary school achievements in preparing pupils to undertake the work of the first grade successfully and in enabling them to maintain almost unbroken progress through the first six grades."

With the opening of public-school kindergartens in Atlanta, Ga., an opportunity was given to test the value of kindergarten attendance in aiding underprivileged children to overcome the influence of an adverse environment. A group of 75 children were given the Stanford-Binet test. Part of this group went to kindergarten and part were unable to go. At the end of the school year, the children were retested and only those who went to kindergarten showed improvement in mental development.

Establishing and maintaining kindergartens in a public-school system depend largely upon the knowledge school patrons and school administrators have of the educative results of kindergarten attendance. Results from such studies as those reported are of definite value to those seeking information.

The extent to which city school systems now provide kindergarten education is indicated by the number of their elementary-school buildings which house kindergartens. Data from a sampling of 160 city school systems maintaining kindergartens representing cities of all population sizes, located in 41 States, give the following information:

<sup>4</sup> The kindergarten as a factor in elementary school achievement and progress. Edward W. Goetch. University of Iowa Studies: Studies in Education, Vol. III, No. 4, 1926.

The mental growth of the preschool child in the dependent family. Ada S. Woolfolk. Georgia Education Journal, Vol. 20, No. 4, December, 1927.

*Elementary-school buildings housing kindergartens in 160 cities*

Population	Per cent of elementary-school buildings that house kindergartens	
	Median	Range
100,000 and more.....	61.5	16-100
30,000 to 100,000.....	91.5	13-100
10,000 to 30,000.....	83.0	5-100
Fewer than 10,000.....	100.0	20-100

The per cent of buildings having kindergartens in some of the larger school systems is reduced by the fact that some elementary buildings contain only upper grades, and the kindergartens are housed in buildings with the primary grades.

The ratio between kindergarten and first-grade enrollments indicates the use that parents make of the opportunity to send children to kindergartens. In considering the figures given, however, certain facts must be kept in mind: The proportion of elementary-school buildings housing kindergartens in these 160 cities, as indicated in the first table; the general custom of providing more rooms for first grades than for kindergartens, though one kindergarten room generally cares for two enrollments each day by having different groups attend morning and afternoon sessions; waiting lists maintained by many cities for kindergarten enrollments, although 6-year-old children are rarely refused admission to a first grade. The following figures indicate a fairly high proportion of first-grade children who have had kindergarten experience:

*Kindergarten enrollment compared with first-grade enrollment in 160 school systems*

Population	Per cent of kindergarten to first-grade enrollment	
	Median	Range
100,000 and more.....	48.0	15.0-127
30,000 to 100,000.....	75.5	23.0-210
10,000 to 30,000.....	70.5	8.0-126
Fewer than 10,000.....	70.5	04-384

Cities having a decidedly larger enrollment in kindergartens than in first grades evidently provide a 2-year differentiated curriculum in the kindergarten. In 29 of the States having permissive or mandatory laws for the establishment of kindergartens the entrance ages are 3, 4, or 4½ years.

It has been said that the kindergarten is naturally the recruiting and receiving division of the school system. It has many functions in regulating school entrance, in establishing valuable contacts with the children's parents, and in enlisting assistance from such public and private agencies as contribute to the protection and the supervision of the development of infants and young children. These functions of regulating school entrance are assumed by the first grades in school systems which do not maintain kindergartens.

Rules and regulations provided by boards of education for controlling entrance to kindergarten and first grade list but few requirements and seldom suggest possible home preparation of the child for school entrance. There is a surprising indifference to the responsibility which should be placed with this port of entry to the school system. A study of kindergarten entrance requirements reported by 108 cities showed that in 98 cities children are admitted solely on a chronological age, at 4 or 5 years. Ten cities require a mental test, but none mentions records of personal or social characteristics nor physical examinations. It has been stated frequently that tests administered to young children before they feel at home in their new environment undoubtedly give inaccurate results. Consequently many school systems include the test for mental age during their year's program, though they do not mention it in their rules for admission. At the close of the child's year or two years in kindergarten the school should have records of his home and social background, of his physical condition, his mental age, and his personal characteristics. Such records give the school a foundation for grade and group classification.

Adaptations of curriculum are made to meet the needs of both slow and rapid learners, mental and social maturity being determining factors in grade placement and group classification. To meet the individual needs of children entering kindergarten at 4 years of age, several curricula have been constructed to cover two years of kindergarten experience. A notable example of this is the "Suggestive Curriculum Material for the Four and Five Year Old Kindergartens" developed by the Wisconsin State Kindergarten Association. This material analyzes the typical responses of children at these age levels and suggests specific educational objectives and activities with materials, in plays and games, language and literature, drawing, and other art experiences for each age. To this beginning, other phases of kindergarten work will be added. The whole curriculum is in loose-leaf form allowing for alterations and insertions.

Entrance requirements for first grade reported by 97 cities are also based chiefly on chronological age. Ten cities, however, definitely state that chronological age must be supplemented by a mental age

of 6 years or by a record of kindergarten attendance. Several cities now require kindergarten attendance as a prerequisite for first-grade entrance regardless of chronological age. In her study "An Investigation of Practices in First-Grade Admission and Promotion," Dr. Mary M. Reed includes the following statements in the interpretation of her data:

The use of chronological age as the decisive factor for the admission of children to first grade shows a tendency to hold to traditional objectives, to disregard the findings of scientific research, and to ignore the value of kindergarten learning as a basis for first-grade work on differing levels of ability.

The lack of correspondence between the chronological age factor for the admission of children to first grade and the reading factor for the promotion from low first to high first grade tends to disregard those curriculum objectives which are based upon continuity in developing traits important for the individual and social life of a child at this stage of growth.

To admit children to first grade on a chronological age basis and promote them on a reading achievement basis without scientific placement of reading inevitably tends (1) to lead both teacher and pupil to place emphasis on a narrow aspect of the curriculum and to neglect the outcomes from a balanced curriculum, comprehending leisure, practical efficiency, health, and citizenship, and (2) to place emphasis on curriculum content for which children may not be mentally, intellectually, emotionally, or physically ready.

Many schools in New York City have extended their kindergarten program to include informally organized first-grade work under the name "kindergarten extension classes." In a social and informal environment, the curriculum covered in these classes is a step in advance of the kindergarten and includes the activities 6-year-old children need and enjoy. An investigation of the value of these classes was made by the district superintendent in charge of Districts 43 and 44 and reported in the 1927-28 Report of the Superintendent of Schools, New York City, page 401:

The value of the training received in the kindergarten and kindergarten extension classes has been a moot question since their establishment. During the past year I made a study of the age-grade progress reports of the present 4B grade in the schools of these districts with the view of finding out the relative progress of pupils receiving this training and of those not receiving it. My survey showed that the children having had both kindergarten and kindergarten extension training made the best progress and those having kindergarten training only made better progress than those who entered school in the 1A grade.

For children of a 6-year chronological age but a lower mental age, several school systems, including Rochester, N. Y., Seattle, Wash., and San Francisco, Calif., are providing preprimary classes or slow-moving first grades. These classes provide "work on his own level in an atmosphere of success" for the child of slow mentality or for the foreign child with a language handicap. It has been found that children repeating first grade are more apt to repeat the failure in

later grades, due as much to negative mental attitudes early acquired, as to inability. The preprimary grades give an opportunity to discover individual differences in reading readiness before the child is placed in a grade where the acquisition of that skill is necessary. As these children make certain desirable social adjustments and give evidence of reading readiness, they may be transferred to classrooms where the children are progressing at a more rapid rate. The plan is a less formal version of the X-Y-Z grouping used in certain cities. These plans help to classify children on ability levels during the first years of their school life. Opportunity classes are organized in most large school systems to care for older children who are retarded. No system of classification has been generally adopted to care for younger children of slow mentality or for those who lack social adjustment.

The value of preprimary groups in Rochester, N. Y., was studied by a committee appointed by the superintendent of schools. It was found that by placing approximately one-fourth of the children completing kindergarten in preprimary grades, that the resulting increased proportion of successful children has warranted the continuation of the experiment. Further experimentation is being conducted in Rochester with slow-moving classes in the third and fifth grades for the purpose of giving the slow child definite opportunity to keep his intellectual and emotional balance through the elementary school.

The large amount of retardation in first grades throughout the country has prompted these plans for caring for individual differences of young children. The advisability of introducing a new name, preprimary, for one of the early grades has been questioned since there has been continual controversy about the use of the name kindergarten to denote the first unit of the elementary school. The name "preprimary" is used in certain situations to satisfy patrons that the child of a 6-year chronological age is having some form of first-grade work. It also prevents the child's discouragement on being retained a second year in either the kindergarten or first grade. The differentiated 2-year kindergarten curriculum as used in Wisconsin provides for the slow-moving children without introducing a new grade name.

To make adequate provision for individual differences among children and to assure continuity from grade to grade, it is necessary for teachers to be able to work with any of the different age levels within the first school unit. Training for teachers of young children, offered in a majority of colleges and universities, covers the entire unit of kindergarten-primary education and, in many instances, also includes preschool and parent education.

## CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RESEARCH FOR TEACHING PROBLEMS

A number of plans have been devised to give practical aid to classroom teachers. Supervision is the aid most commonly provided. In a few city school systems the supervisory program is so organized that helping teachers, skilled in some particular phases of school work, go into classrooms to demonstrate, to guide and, occasionally, to stay until the classroom teacher's problem is well on its way to solution. Demonstration schools have been provided in some school systems. Teachers may go to them for observation of some special teaching technique or for help with some detail of classroom management or arrangement. In both cases, supervisory and demonstration school programs, investigations are continually in progress to discover more effective ways of solving teaching problems. The reports, previously mentioned, of studies and of work accomplished by different educational agencies offer practical examples of available assistance for all teachers and school administrators.

Findings from scientific research seem to be more helpful in analyzing and solving practical teaching problems than they have been heretofore. Special contributions have been made by research to behavior problems involved in curriculum construction, in teaching techniques, in language development, and in child personality. Findings of special help are illustrated by the following digests of certain studies completed within the past two years<sup>5</sup>.

*Self-measurement of teaching techniques.*—Under the headings of "Adaptation of routine procedures so as to promote in the children both physical development and desirable habits, attitudes, and skills" and "Adaptation and use of the school situation for the children's need for educative work and play,"<sup>6</sup> Doctor Bain analyzes teaching techniques to be used with young children. Under these headings a scaled analysis is made of 28 observable teaching procedures with which a teacher may evaluate her own work.

The teaching procedures include physical care of the classroom such as cleanliness, lighting, and ventilation. They include descriptions of the teacher's and children's responsibilities in developing habits of personal hygiene; care of personal property; protection from physical danger; and promotion of health expressed in posture,

<sup>5</sup> Lists and digests of other researches may be found in the following publications:

Bibliography of research studies in education, 1926-27. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1928. (U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1928, No. 22.)

Child development abstracts and bibliography. Issued by Committee on Child Development, National Research Council, Washington, D. C.

Twenty-eighth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Preschool and Parental Education. Part II. Research and Method. Public-School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill.

<sup>6</sup> Teaching in nursery school, kindergarten, and first grade. Bain, Winifred S. New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1928. 128 p. (Contributions to Education, No. 382.)

food assimilation, rest, and repose. They include desirable social and emotional adjustments, provision for creative work and for artistic expression, for solving problems, and for attaining skill in reading, writing, and number work. Items listed on the scale may easily stimulate teachers to think of their teaching techniques in specific terms—terms associated in each case with both their own and the children's behaviors or modes of thinking. Any teacher can compare her rating on the different scales with that of 30 nursery school-teachers, 98 kindergartners, and 103 first-grade teachers.

*Child personality observed in spontaneous conversation.*—A guide to teachers in observing personality traits expressed by children in their spontaneous conversation is offered by the first of a series of studies dealing with child personality.<sup>7</sup> Records of 3,125 remarks made by kindergarten children were analyzed to discover characteristics of personality of this age child. Approximately 40 per cent or 1,275 of these remarks were descriptive of the traits termed "self-assertion—e. g., of personal power, of self-display, of interjection of self into a situation, of defense of one's feeling of ownership, of resistance to interference, of contradiction, of commands, threats, and derision." "The photographing of the whole kindergarten child in action reveals him as essentially a defender of his individuality, a nonconformist, a relatively unsocial being." A guide to teachers is given in the deduction that the life of the kindergarten-primary child is essentially individualistic, but that it also is a life in which social adjustment must be made gradually. It must necessarily be a period in which the child is becoming acquainted with the verbal side of his environment—a stage of linguistic experimentation and of dramatic play.

*Truthful and untruthful children.*—Some relationship may be said to exist between the characteristic of assertiveness in young children and the characteristic in untruthful children of making overstatements. Overstatement was found by Doctor Slaght<sup>8</sup> to be the strongest statistical measure of untruthfulness.

The findings from his study of truthful and untruthful children in grades from the fourth to the tenth show that untruthful children are inclined to overstate. Whether this was done with intent to misrepresent or from the desire to gain social recognition could not be determined by the data. Untruthful children tend to express overconfidence and self-assurance. They are less inhibited mentally

<sup>7</sup> Studies in child personality. I. A study of the language of kindergarten children. Harold Rugg, Louise Krueger, and Arsenia Sondergaard. In *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. XX, No. 1, January, 1929.

<sup>8</sup> Untruthfulness in children: Its conditioning factors and its setting in child nature. W. E. Slaght. *University of Iowa Studies. Studies in Character*, Vol. 1, No. 4. Published by the university, Iowa City, Iowa, February, 1928. 79 p.

in the presence of an exciting situation. They show evidence of being more vacillating, more impulsive, and have less reliability in judgment and less emotional stability. They are the product, as a rule, of poor home environment, both cultural and economic.

The truthful children seem to have the more stable and centrally coordinated personality, to show a decidedly wider range of information about facts and situations regarding home and social life, nature, mechanics, literature, religion, etc. They were, on the whole, from better home surroundings.

Close relationship exists between favorable home environment and truthfulness. The study may suggest to the teacher certain methods of handling social-moral situations in school. A rich environment, stimulating many ideas and continuous activity, unquestionably fills the child's mind and keeps him busy. An honest, constructive attitude on the part of the teacher helps to lift the children's spontaneous responses to the level of honesty. Knowledge of home conditions can not help but assist the correction of behavior difficulties expressed in school. The parent-education movement is leading to cooperative endeavor with the schools which will assure careful consideration of the child's needs during his 24-hour day.

*Influence of teachers' language upon children's conduct.*—Another study focuses the teacher's attention upon the language she uses with children.<sup>9</sup> It emphasizes the control of conduct through language and the effect expressed approval has upon children's learning. Positive results followed experiments in both situations.

*How preschool children may successfully solve problems.*—Thoughtfulness in solving problem situations can be encouraged with very young children.<sup>10</sup> An analysis of techniques which aid children to handle problems courageously and successfully gives specific suggestions to teachers of children at all age levels. The techniques are quite characteristic of the positive, constructive attitudes maintained toward children by nursery school teachers. They effectively draw out the children's latent abilities. In summary, the analysis indicates that interesting situations which are not too stimulating arouse a solving approach conducive to the arousal of insight; the attention of self-conscious children should be specifically directed to the problem and away from themselves; children lacking in self-confidence and who are overreliant upon adult approval should be encouraged to try out all possible approaches to a problem; children

<sup>9</sup>The relation between early language habits and early habits of conduct control. Ethel Busnell Waring. New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1927. 125 p. (Contributions to Education, No. 260.)

<sup>10</sup>The solving of problem situations by preschool children: An analysis. Augusta Alpert. New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1928. 69 p. (Contributions to Education, No. 323.)

should be taught to vary their solving procedure to avoid unwarranted persistence on one aspect of a problem which interferes with seeing the problem as a whole and hence with the arousal of insight; children who tend to become easily discouraged require individual presentation of the problem to insure at least partial success, since failure renders insight in a particular situation impossible and colors the approach to subsequent problems.

*Children's responses to the teachers' behavior patterns.*—Sufficient attention has not been given to the effect of teachers' attitudes upon children's behavior. The same idea applies in other situations in which people having different degrees of authority work together. Many practical suggestions for such situations can be taken from Doctor Wickman's study.<sup>11</sup> He defines behavior problems as those forms of behavior declared undesirable and unwholesome by social and personal approval. In so far as the children's behaviors attack the teachers' moral sensitivities, personal integrity, authority, and immediate teaching purposes, they are recognized by her as problems in behavior; in so far as behavior is agreeable to teachers, respects their authority, fits in with their teaching purposes as well as their ethical beliefs, it is considered desirable behavior.

There is a tendency for teachers to counterattack children's undesirable behaviors without considering that children are more naturally aggressive and experimental than adults. Teachers require special training to understand what constitutes normal behaviors. They need to be informed about the social and physical backgrounds of children in their classrooms. They also need instruction in methods of treating behavior problems which are caused by emotional disturbances. This is a definite challenge to those in charge of curricula for teacher-training institutions.

*School as a behavior-forming situation.*—In "The Child in America,"<sup>12</sup> reports are given of important surveys and typical programs for child study in the United States and Canada. They show how the school is tending to assume responsibility for the "whole child" and to convert its program, at least for the lower age levels, into a behavior-forming situation. The summaries in this book are encouraging. What the schools have accomplished thus far in broadening and enriching their programs may be but an indication of a far richer future for the children.

<sup>11</sup> Children's behavior and teachers' attitude. E. K. Wickman. New York, Institute of Child Guidance, The Commonwealth Fund, division of publications, 1928.

<sup>12</sup> The Child in America. William I. Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1928. 583 p.

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