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How children and teacher

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WORK TOGETHER

by Elsa Schneider

Bulletin 1952, No. 14

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FOREWORD

WHEN *The Place of Subjects in the Curriculum*, Office of Education Bulletin 1949, No. 12, was published it was stated that a number of smaller bulletins exploring certain aspects of education touched on briefly in Bulletin 12, would follow. The present bulletin is one of this series. It is designed to show some of the ways in which successful teachers work with children in order to establish rapport and to guide them into productive and happy living.

This bulletin presents in the main a viewpoint based on the belief that if children live in a friendly school environment rich with experiences and materials that stimulate curiosity, and with adult guidance that senses the depth and direction of the curiosity and the possibilities that lie within it and at the same time recognizes the needs for development inherent in every child, desirable growth will result.

The viewpoint is borne out by some illustrations taken from schools here and there over the United States, schools where "good things" are going on.

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How Children and Teacher Work Together

MOST CHILDREN like to go to school. They like to go for a variety of reasons. Many school buildings are inviting. Even their structure seems to reflect a "you will be welcome here" air. School rooms with movable furniture, ample work space, chalkboards within the easy reach of all children, extensive bulletin boards, attractively colored walls, wide windows, and excellent lighting help children to feel at home. Once they are in school, flexible schedules which allow for work, rest, relaxation, and play add to the pleasure of being there. A wide variety of resource materials satisfies curious minds. But most of all when children are enthusiastic about going to school it is because they feel the teacher likes and understands them. In return, they like her. They feel important to the group; they know that they have come to school to learn, and they soon find out that they have much to give.

How do children develop these feelings? They develop them out of school experiences which are happy, in which children and teachers work in harmony, each gaining some satisfaction in achievement. And, achievement is measured by the way children meet the problems *they* face in everyday living.

The teacher is the key person in all this. She learns all she can about the children, observing them as they work and play alone and with others, becoming acquainted with their parents, visiting and conferring in their homes, studying cumulative records made by the school, and talking with teachers, the nurse, and other people who know the children.

"Working together" has a simple beginning. Young children have a chance to tell about themselves. The teacher helps them learn how to make simple rules about using toilet rooms, moving about their own rooms, going to the playground, getting out and putting away materials; to select games to play, stories to dramatize, or songs to sing; to choose what they want to do—paint, work with clay, look at books, play with toys, or take care of pets. When there is conflict in choice, or desires are beyond capacities, the teacher helps the boys and girls arrive at conclusions that are good for them.

The teacher encourages children who like to be together to work and play with one another. She is sensitive, however, to the needs of those who seem



Children study in small groups, with the teacher ready to help

to be ignored or left out. She analyzes the reasons why and through skillful guidance helps the "unwanted" develop abilities which will help them win friends.

As the children grow older, they want to be more independent. At the same time, they face more complex problems. Curiosity and the desire to learn drive children to seek answers to their questions and to express new interests. They feel the need for having many resources at hand. The teacher understands how to guide curiosity to produce growth. She is alert to see that materials are secured when needed. She suggests ways in which the children can use their own initiative to get materials.

As children mature, they find that working together in groups is reassuring. The teacher helps the children use their time well by giving them opportunities to discuss their problems as a group. Then she works with individuals or small groups, helping them set up a simple scheme for keeping track of the activities within groups and for listing problems they cannot solve without additional help. She arranges for time when she can meet with groups who need her direct guidance.

Leadership within the groups is passed around. Cohesiveness is built as the children share ideas, work together, evaluate their progress, and examine their own skills. Group standards are developed as they work together. They have their own ways of spurring on the procrastinator, of helping those who don't see the point, of deciding what they want to accomplish and what they think is unimportant. The teacher is always aware of what is going on but she doesn't "take over" if things are not going ex-

actly as she, in her adult way of looking at things, thinks they ought to go. This does not mean there is turmoil, frustration, or complete freedom. Rather, the teacher realizes that children learn through their mistakes as well as through their successes. Through a question here and a suggestion there, she leads them to evaluate their way of working and their achievements, and to remake their plans so that they may reach their goals. She may need to change the personnel of a group that is having trouble or sit with the children as they work.

Some of the "working together" is a very personal thing—between the teacher and a pupil. The teacher helps the child examine his strengths and weaknesses and plan steps to take so that he may in his own way develop greater skill. A child usually needs guidance in learning to read, to write, to spell, and to accomplish other skills involved in becoming independent, in working with people, in playing games; in short, in achieving those things which are important to him, his parents or teacher, or to the group of which he is a member.

Sometimes the "working together" involves the entire group, as for instance, when the work of the whole day is being planned or when the activity involves everyone in the class. Although goals may be set by all, usually the actual work involved in achieving the goals or purposes is carried out by small committees. The teacher takes time to discuss with the whole group and then with the chairmen and committee members of each group the responsibilities of a pupil chairman, and similarly, the responsibilities of the committee members. When committees work in a new experience, the committee members, sometimes with the teacher, take time out to discuss certain skills essential to working together—giving every member a chance to talk, giving each a responsibility, working without wasting time, using materials wisely, taking brief notes without copying directly from the book, reconstructing the notes and one's own ideas into interesting reports. The committees report back to the whole group when they are ready. They report in different ways. Some give oral reports or written reports; some use illustrations, some dramatizations; others present their reports in the form of radio broadcasts or panel discussions.

Sometimes the whole school works together on such things as planning a special program, studying ways to make the school safe, organizing an activity program to be carried on during the noon hour or while children wait for the bus, or naming a new school. (At times, different grades assume responsibility for part of the work; at other times, "working groups" involve children from the various grades. Through planning and working together with the teachers, the children learn to satisfy their own needs for growth and to enter into democratic living in small and large groups.

As the children and their teacher work, play, and live together in schools like this every child comes to know that:

HOW CHILDREN AND TEACHER WORK TOGETHER

- he has friends in the class, his being "there" makes a difference, and he is missed when he is away.
- the teacher and principal believe in him. He and his schoolmates have a part in planning what goes on in school. Their ideas count.
- his work is important to the group. Once he accepts responsibility for something which he is able to do and which is needed by the group, he must carry through; he approaches his responsibility with confidence that he can carry it. He knows that he does not have to work exactly as others do; instead, he can work at a pace and in a way that is comfortable for him. He learns, however, that he must often work hard to do the work he really wants to do.
- he can get help in carrying out his responsibilities from his teacher and classmates, from books and other source materials, as he works alone, in a group, or as a committee member.
- he is becoming more skillful day by day as he learns to read, write, figure, listen, and talk; to make decisions on the basis of what he reads, hears, sees, and discusses; to express himself creatively through different mediums; and to work with materials and tools. He knows that as he becomes more skillful both he and the group profit.
- other children respect his rights and belongings and he is learning to respect their rights and their belongings.
- he can trust the teacher and his classmates and they can have faith in him.
- the teacher is a friend who will listen to him when he is troubled and will hold in confidence the things he tells her in confidence.
- he and the teacher and his parents are all friends, working together to help him "grow up" and since he is doing his best they, as well as he, are satisfied with his progress. Consequently, he is free from anxiety, tension, and fear.

The teacher who works well with children recognizes that in our country it is extremely important that people learn how to plan their lives well and to work and live in harmony with others. She knows that children can best develop the skills and qualities essential to happy and successful living in a day-by-day atmosphere which involves thoughtful planning. All over the country, classrooms reflect good pupil-teacher relationships.

The remainder of this bulletin contains a limited number of examples of some of the things that are happening in schools as children and teachers work together to accomplish purposes that are important to them as individuals and as members of a group.

Children and Teacher Work Together—On Things of Concern to the Whole School

Some people might say that Sue Saki is "just a doll" from Japan. The children of the school know better, however. They know that she represents the spirit of American-Japanese understanding.

Today, Sue Saki is compiling a scrapbook in duplicate. One copy is for the friend who brought her from Japan and one for a Japanese teacher who visited the John Ward School last year. When this teacher went back to Japan, he started a series of radio broadcasts concerning the elementary school program. Through him and his broadcast Sue Saki will have a chance to "tell" the children of Japan of her experiences among the children of the Ward School. She will describe what home and school life can be like for an American child.

Every grade level in the school is contributing to Sue Saki's scrapbook. She has many subcommittees, a photographer, and writers working for her in the classrooms. It is expected that she will tell the story of the United States as it really is today. It is also expected that the spirit of friendly understanding between a group of American school children and a widening circle of Japanese young people will be enhanced by the observations of "just a doll."

Much excitement was aroused when it was decided that the elementary school children of the city were going to name the new school. The children in each "old" building were to suggest names. They studied about the people for whom they thought the school should be named, and each school sent in a list of suggestions. A committee drew up a ballot consisting of the 10 most frequently proposed names. On election day, the ballots were distributed to the schools and the children voted for their preference. The name receiving the highest vote was adopted.

At the beginning of the year the eighth-grade pupils, realizing that this was their last year in the school, decided to make a list of things "This School Needs." This was the only school most of them knew. They were proud of it but were conscious of certain lacks.



Children learn how to measure and make change

The list they developed:

This School Needs

An additional teacher
 New sink in the kitchen
 Bicycle rack
 Playground equipment
 More books

Telephone
 Window shades
 Cement walk
 Full-length mirror
 Wastebaskets

The group planned ways of getting at least some of the things. They thought through ways of earning money, of enlisting the help of the parent organization, of working with some of the service and civic clubs that had always been interested in the school, of presenting their problems to the school board. They talked over their plans with the principal.

By the end of the first semester the school board had put in the sink, provided window shades, and promised that another teacher would be added to the staff. The factory located in the town donated pipe for playground equipment. Some of the fathers and the eighth-grade boys made various pieces of climbing apparatus. They also put in a walk made of native stone. The mothers and older girls prepared supper at school on the days the men and boys worked. The middle-grade children helped serve. One of the mothers donated an old mirror which the children refinished. A service club gave some money for books in return

for a program the eighth-graders presented at one meeting. The children made wastebaskets out of large tin cans donated by one of the grocers. The children built a bicycle rack, but soon discovered that it was not sturdy enough. Now their problem was to find a way to buy one.

The seventh-grade pupils agreed to work toward getting the other things on the list when they got to be eighth-graders!

The fifth-grade pupils of the Greenfield School have functional number experiences. They set up a shop for buying and selling materials used in craft activities. All the children in the school patronize the store. The fifth-grade boys and girls are learning about borrowing money, buying through wholesale and retail stores, selling at a margin of profit large enough to keep themselves in business, keeping accurate records, measuring, and advertising. They are doing a service to the school, too. Interest in crafts as a hobby is keen. When the source of supplies is close at hand, enthusiasm is less likely to die!

Children and Teacher Work Together—On Activities Within the Class

The second-grade teacher told the curriculum coordinator that she wanted very much to have the children take a more active part in planning but she just didn't know how to go about it. The coordinator suggested that a good way to begin might be to ask the children to plan an "opening exercise" for the following week.

When the teacher approached the children with the idea, they were full of plans. They made a long list of things to do. Because the children had never before had a chance to select things to do during school hours, much of the discussion that followed was irrelevant and impractical. As they looked over the list, they sensed how ridiculous or impossible some of their suggestions were. As they became more practical they decided to sing two of their favorite songs and then have Stephen and Ann put on the puppet show they had worked out.

Pleased with the success of this pupil-planned activity, the teacher decided that a trip to the airport would involve many situations that would call for group planning. But because the children were inexperienced, she wanted to be sure the planning would be successful. She talked with the principal; next she called the "room mother" and was assured that there would be cars available to transport the children. Then she visited the airport—to preview the possibilities.

The next day she listed on the board the many things the airport had to offer. She pointed out that it would take a week or more to see everything at the airport. The children decided what they wanted most to see during the 1-day trip. The boys and girls in each row gathered around the middle desk of the row and decided on two things they would like most to see. Fourteen points were listed on the board. After eliminating duplication, 9 were left. Definite plans had to be made on how to see all these things. The decision was that the children would divide themselves into three groups, each group being responsible for exploring three areas of interest. After the visit, each group would make a report to the class.

The children made a few simple rules to be observed on the trip.

For several weeks after the trip was made much of the work was centered on the things they had learned. Together the children and teacher made

long-range plans of some of the activities they wanted to accomplish. Among these were making an airplane big enough to hold several children, painting a mural of the airport, and writing stories and poems about flying. Each day the children and teacher talked about "What We Will Do Today." As they planned, the children listed "The Things We Have To Do," "The Other Things We Will Do If There Is Time," and "Those That Can Be Done Another Day."

The next step in cooperation was planning a new unit of work. The teacher laid the ground work for a unit centered on "Learning About Our Community." The children were interested, as the teacher knew they would be, and had all sorts of ideas on what they wanted to find out, where they could find out, and how to go to work; cooperative planning came much more naturally as time went on.

All this did not happen in a week. Actually the second semester was well on its way before the teacher felt really comfortable in planning *with* rather than *for* the pupils.

* * *

Kindergarten children cannot write but their teacher can! This letter to parents in October shows how even very young children learn to work together:

DEAR PARENTS,

Have you ever said to your child, "What did you do in kindergarten today?" Has your child ever replied, "Nothing," or "We just played?" I ask the question because just a few days ago the following story came to me. A little child called to his teacher and said, "Hey, school teacher, when are you going to teach me something?" This story made me realize that possibly you are wondering what your little ones are doing in kindergarten each morning and afternoon.

I would like to give you a résumé of what we have accomplished up to now. The first week of school we were busy getting acquainted with one another, learning the names of our new friends, and learning how to get along in a large group. Right here let me tell you how much I appreciate your help in taking care of the loops and names on all of the children's wraps. It is much more important than it seems for when a child can easily identify his own belongings it gives him a sense of security instead of a feeling of frustration.

Besides becoming acquainted with each other, we learned about the building. We learned to use the kindergarten entrance and we learned where the materials used in kindergarten were kept. We explored our large playgrounds and our own particular playground. Then we went about the school building to find out where the rooms of brothers and sisters were located. We met the superintendent and secretary who showed us the office. We met the bus drivers and our cooks who showed us the kitchen and the food storeroom. It was exciting to go through the tunnel to the Activity Building where the basketball games are played.

Science has proved most interesting to the 5- and 6-year-olds. We have observed and cared for a turtle, goldfish, and polliwags. Diane presented us with a pair of hamsters which the children have named "Pinky" and "Winky." We saw a film

strip on hamsters which showed their development from the time they were wee babies until they were quite grown up. Learning how to clean the cages and care for pets properly develops a great sense of responsibility in the children.

Besides the pets, we have a lovely terrarium with many kinds of beautiful plants. We also have a rock collection and a shell collection. Our nut collections are just getting started with an array of black walnuts, hickory nuts, and chestnuts. All in all our science corner is very much alive, thanks to your boys and girls.

Each day we vary our program with songs, records, good stories, and poems. The children already have dramatized two of the stories. All of these interesting activities together with rhythms, handwork, games indoors and out of doors make a comprehensive and meaningful program that helps to develop your child and keep him a happy individual.

Judy, who had a September birthday, gave the class a beautiful farm storybook. May I suggest if you are sending a birthday treat at some time or other to talk to me about it first?

I'd like to mention a very worth-while project which the children enjoyed. They made two bright-colored picture books for the little girl who has an incurable disease. The *Journal* wrote a story about her. Your children were delighted to make someone else happy with an unexpected gift.

I hope this write-up has given you a little idea of what is going on from day to day in our kindergarten. From time to time I shall write to you about our new centers of interest.

Thank you for your flowers and plants which make our room very attractive. Please drop in and have a short visit at your convenience.

Cordially yours,

.....

The fifth-grade children in a southern city were pleased when they received a letter from a fifth-grade boy who lived in Oregon. The boy wanted them to tell him about their city, especially why it had grown from a town into a city.

The class first discussed the question "What makes any city grow?" In a sense, they reviewed an earlier unit and came up with such things as farm land, raw materials, good harbors, and means of transportation. When they tried to decide which of these and other things had helped in the case of their own city, they found they needed information from the community.

With the help of the teacher, the children made a list of the different citizens, governmental agencies, organizations, and other sources which could give them the data they needed.

The class then divided into committees, according to interest. Each committee chose a chairman and a secretary. A list of questions they wanted to ask in their interviews was made. One member of each committee telephoned for an appointment on the day set for collecting information. The teacher talked with persons to be interviewed to be sure they would be willing to have the children call on them and would understand the purposes of the interview.

Because the public library was more centrally located than the school, the teacher, members of the class, and several mothers went to the library—the starting and returning point. After the interviews were completed, the children returned to the library where they had an opportunity to assemble and talk over the facts they had gathered. Books, copies of old newspapers, and other source materials were used to round out reports.

The next day, each group made its report to the class. Included in the reports were maps, folders, and pictures. One complete report was sent to the Oregonian, who, undoubtedly inspired by his teacher to get information about a distant city, was pleased with the report.

The fourth-grade pupils (the oldest group in the school) were having a class meeting. The president opened the meeting.

The minutes were read and approved. The secretary had done a good job in writing the minutes.

The first order of business was the appointment of a committee to put flowers in the cafeteria.

Then one child suggested that it would be nice to send notes and get-well cards to children in the room who were sick. Someone else suggested that since they were the oldest children in the school they ought to send them to anyone who was sick, not just to the fourth-graders. A motion to this effect was made and carried.

A girl asked to be recognized. She said, "Someone who sits near me is always putting his feet on my chair. It is disturbing when I try to work." A boy nearby squirmed self-consciously.

Another child said promptly, "That's not fair. Ann is sort of naming people. There are only a few people who could do that. We agreed that people's names should never be mentioned in our meetings when it was something bad. Ann ought to tell the teacher quietly." The silence which followed indicated that the other children agreed.

A child asked, "If the teacher takes something away from you, should you get it back?"

The president said, "Shall we have a motion?"

There was a motion and a second, favoring the return of articles.

The discussion which followed was objective:

"You might need it."

"It depends on its value—you might just want to throw it away."

"If they are just playthings, she might keep them until the end of the year. If it is work material we ought to get it back so we can use it."

At this point the teacher asked if she might speak. After being recognized by the president, she said, "I want to show you some things I have taken away. (She showed a whistle, a compass, a knife, a pencil, a paper

knife.) You may make your own decision. Try to keep in mind some of the things we have discussed before."

There were no more remarks, and the vote favored the return of personal possessions.

Next, a girl came to the front of the room and held up a large card on which the word "FRIENDLY" was printed. In response to the question, "What does this word mean to you?" this discussion followed:

"It means when you see a new person, you should be friendly."

"When someone hits you with a ball or something, you shouldn't fight, you should be friendly."

"When you are in company, you must share."

"If you are mad at someone, you should be friendly and not fight."

(The children have a "word of the week." They try to learn what it means, to "practice" it and others that they have already studied.)

The singing committee then led the class in two songs which they had selected. The meeting was adjourned and the children went quietly into their next activity.

The eighth-grade boys and girls were enthusiastic about a Thanksgiving story they had written. They decided to present the story in the form of choral speaking to the sixth and seventh grades. The teacher suggested that it might be fun to make a tape recording and play it back to hear how their voices sounded. After some practice, the recording was made. As the children listened to the play-back, they were surprised to find they weren't quite as good as they thought they were! The boys and girls made constructively critical comments about individual and group performance. The teacher's comments were concerned mainly with things which the pupils, lacking experience, did not recognize as weaknesses in performance. When the children felt they had improved, another recording was made. The play-back proved to them that progress had been made.

Through this process of performing and evaluating the children were learning a great deal about breath control, enunciation, speed, and intensity of sound. More important, they were learning to look at themselves objectively, to give and take suggestions without having their feelings hurt, and to laugh at themselves good-humoredly.

Every child in this third-grade class appeared to be engaged in something of interest. One group was in a corner where a large puppet stage had been built. These children were using both puppets and marionettes in practicing a play which Dan and Ruth had written. In an adjoining room, some children were sawing cardboard to be used for making scenery. Some



Puppets are used in many worth-while activities in the classroom

were making curtains for the puppet stage. A list of responsibilities was posted.

The marionettes and puppets had been received as Christmas gifts and brought to school. The teacher said the children were now using them "just for fun"; later she hoped to develop the early history of the community through them, making whatever puppets were needed.

One child who was making curtains sat on a chair before a group of children who were painting a side view of her as she worked.

Bookcases and small tables were filled with colorful and useful books. A large round table had white and colored paper, ruler, paste, and scissors on it. Two large double easels engaged four children who seemed unaware of all others as they painted "as they pleased." Children's drawings of the sun, the earth, the moon, in creative imaginative free-moving style added to the room's already dynamic quality.

On the wall were two small posters, each holding an envelope. On one was printed, "I won't be gone long—Boys." On the other, "I will be back soon—Girls." Each child had a name card which he put into the envelope and removed. The children had worked out this simple way of solving a problem.

At the back of the room was a large cage, about 3 by 4 feet, holding a pair of doves! These were the gift of a nearby zoo. "How do you take care of them?" Mike, whose week it was to look after them, was asked.

"Well," said he, "They have a history. They spend a lot of time on the perch. They eat in this bowl; they drink here. Every Friday we clean the cage. They are both female—that is, girls. Now we want a boy."

The children in the fifth grade got interested in the machines that were being used in excavating the foundation for the school annex. They asked many questions about the machinery being used. The teacher helped them find ways of satisfying their curiosity and at the same time aroused deeper interest with the comment, "I wonder how man's way of working has changed because of machines. After all, the kinds of machines you are learning about are fairly new, but even long ago big buildings were built." This led to speculation, then to a desire to find out how man did work. The teacher and children found reading material, pictures, movies, and filmstrips which would help them answer their questions. They found additional information in the library and at home.

A newspaper reporter who seems very much interested in the local schools wrote this report of a classroom in action:

There is a little log cabin out at Roosevelt Elementary School but its purpose is for more than shelter.

Built by the hands of Roosevelt third-graders, the cabin took weeks of work, hours of conversation, and no little ingenuity.

The teacher got the "logs" from the Newspapers, Inc., press room. They are the heavy cardboard cores of newsprint rolls and 134 of them went into the construction of the cabin.

The high-school vocational education department sawed the log ends so they could be fitted at the corners, but the youngsters had to figure the log lengths for doorways and windows.

They constructed the door and window frames themselves and built a door with leather hinges just like the pioneers used back when the West was being settled.

The logs were too short to run the full length of any walls so the children doweled them together with tin cans that slipped snugly inside the logs and then covered the outside joints with wide tape.

For a fireplace the boys put up a framework of orange crates and the girls covered it with a realistically painted paper fireplace of natural rock.

They made their own furniture—chairs of orange crates and a bed with a rope spring and mattress. They dipped their own candle sticks and even made the candle holders. A nail keg became a churn.

From the State museum they borrowed a spinning wheel, a fireplace crane and kettle, andirons and a pewter teapot to equip the rustic residence.

For the third-graders it was an unforgettable experience—many of them even spent their Washington's birthday and rodeo holiday in the classroom working on the structure.

For the teacher it was an excellent way to get the youngsters to develop their knowledge of English—many of them come from non-English-speaking homes.

They also learned the history of the westward movement of their forefathers; how those people lived and survived in the rigorous environment of the times.

A little bit of geography entered their discussions, too—they traced the travels of their own families and ancestors.

They also gained a great deal of knowledge in the blending of colors to match that of natural rock in this area when they painted their fireplace on white paper.

Learning by doing is not a new educational technique, but it is often ignored in many of our nation's classrooms today. Our local schools are using that method more and more.

Children and Teacher Work Together—On Problems of Individual Improvement

Bert's parents were both relieved and upset when he at last broke down his defenses and told them why he disliked school. There were three reading groups in the third grade, and although the teacher did not label them bright, average, and slow, the children knew that was the basis for organization. Bert was in the slow group. His two best friends were in the bright group.

Bert's family knew he showed little interest in reading. He had access to many good books, but did not bother to do more than glance at the pictures occasionally. He did have a serious eye difficulty which was responding slowly to treatment. The parents felt that once the disability was corrected, Bert would read well. His actions proved he was an intelligent boy.

In talking about school Bert said, "I just hate reading. We read such silly stuff. The other groups read interesting stories about animals and Indians. But not us."

Bert's mother visited school. She told the teacher what her son had said, and asked if anything could be done to help him change his attitude toward reading.

That afternoon Bert came home shouting, "Mom, I got a different book." The teacher had asked him if he would like to take a new book home. He agreed immediately. Then she said, "Suppose you try to find the answers to the three questions I wrote on this card."

Bert curled up in a chair with the "new" book immediately after supper. Without help from anyone he read through the story and found the answers to the questions.

The next day he studied by himself, instead of joining the "third" group. His friend helped him with some flash card drills. Before long, he was moved into the middle group and he was happier than he had been in a long time.

The seventh-grade teacher was new to the school. The children seemed to like him. They were making progress in their work, with one excep-

tion. Ronnie just couldn't spell! He rarely got more than two words right when tested on the word list.

The teacher discovered Ronnie's keen interest in major league baseball. On a Monday morning he told the class about the exciting game he had seen over the week end. The teacher suggested that Ronnie write a short paragraph for the school paper. After much struggling, he brought the write-up to the teacher who discovered that the only words not misspelled were "of" and "to" and the phonetically true words.

With this as a clue, the teacher compiled a list of phonetically true words taken from baseball and other sports and asked Ronnie to study them. When tested, he had every one correct. When the teacher showed the "100" to Ronnie he beamed with pride. Then the teacher explained that the words on the list were spelled exactly as they sounded, but that was not true of all words. When Ronnie was asked how he could learn to spell the other kind of words, he said, "I guess you just have to study them until you know them." Each day the teacher gave Ronnie a list which was made up basically of phonetically true words but which included two or three others. With diligent work and the guidance of his text for study of non-phonetic words, Ronnie soon became more proficient in spelling. His interest in written work was closely related to his improved skill in spelling.

* * *

The first-grade children were sitting on the rug in the front of the room, talking about the plans they had made.

The teacher said, "Alice, have you met with your committee about this chart?"

Alice seemed embarrassed, "I know what we are going to do."

"Have you met with your committee, or did you just decide by yourself?"

"Myself."

"Well, two good chances have gone by to call a committee meeting—yesterday morning and this morning. Committee members want to help you, but you are the one who must call the meeting. When do you think you can hold it?"

Various members of the class said, "At story time," and Alice squirmed.

"She doesn't want to miss the story. Be sure to find a time before tomorrow noon to hold your meeting, Alice."

The teacher didn't pursue the discussion further. She knew that 6½-year-olds were "young" at this business of working with others.

* * *

Children and Teacher Work Together—On Ways To Use “Free” Time

About Christmas time, the second-grade teacher noticed that the children were irritable, unable to work together, careless about finishing things they started, and weary before the day was over. She realized that she was “pushing” them in an effort to have them all master the fundamental skills. She decided that one way to begin to counteract some of the bad things that were happening might be to allow a bit more freedom. A “choice of activity” period was included in the daily program.

On this particular day, the children were seated in a semicircle in the front of the room. Their conversation went something like this:

TEACHER: “Who knows what he wants to do during our choice period?”

SUSAN: “I’d like to plant our butter beans. My mother helped me dig some real good dirt. It’s in that basket over in the corner.”

TOM: “I’d like to finish the picture I started yesterday.”

JOHN: “If someone would help me, I’d like to spatter paint. I always make a mess though.”

TEACHER: “Who would like to help John?”

(Several hands went up. John chose one boy and one girl to help him.)

BOB: “Couldn’t we look up stories to read at our reading party Monday?”

TEACHER: “That is a good idea. Who else wants to get ready for the party?”

(Quite a few hands went up.)

“If you can’t find a story you like in the books we have we can borrow some books from the other grades.”

DAVID: “I know what story I’m going to read. Lucille, Jack, and I would like to play the arithmetic game.”

RICHARD: “You told me yesterday that I could tell about the speedometer I brought to school. May I do that right after lunch?”

TEACHER: “I think so, Richard. It looks as if all of you know what you are going to do. Shall we get started?”

As the children worked, the teacher helped here and there, as she was needed. Then she talked quietly to four children who went to their desks to get their books. They gathered around her in a corner of the room for special help in reading.

As the children finished eating lunch in the school cafeteria, they went out to the playground. Those who went home for lunch returned to school



In the library corner children become acquainted with appropriate, timely books

early. The playground, which was not large, was overrun with active, shouting, energetic children of all ages.

The student council representatives became concerned. Children from the lower grades reported that the big boys and girls were interfering with their play. The older pupils complained about the young ones.

The student council was made up of the usual elected officers and two representatives from each room. One teacher served as consultant. Because the council felt it was important for all pupils in the school to know how business was conducted, they held some of their meetings in the various classrooms, or invited several grades to the cafeteria where group meetings could be held.

The latter plan was followed for the discussions on ways to approach the noon-hour problem. All first-, third-, and fifth-grade children attended the first session; second, fourth, and sixth graders, the second. The council presented the problem and discussion was at first limited to council members. Then discussion from the floor was invited.

It soon became evident that everyone wanted some freedom of choice during the noon hour, but that complete freedom of activity was not possible. The children agreed to appoint a noon-hour committee to study the problem.

The committee knew it could not work without the help of the teachers. They asked the principal to appoint two classroom teachers, one to represent the primary grades and one to represent the upper grades. They also asked



Quiet games in the classroom are popular with children during the lunch hour and on rainy days.

to have the physical education teacher help them. After thinking through the various problems, they came up with this plan: Sixth-grade children would be asked to volunteer for one month of lunch-hour duty. These children would work with the teacher committee in planning in- and out-of-door activities. Throughout the school the children would plan with their teachers at the beginning of the week what activity each preferred for the week. The teachers would help the sixth-grade volunteers to learn how to conduct a variety of activities.

When the plan was presented to the student council as a whole, one change was made: Each child would be permitted to take part in two different kinds of activities during the week.

As the plan was carried on children had a chance to choose from a wide variety of activities—listening to music, storytelling, working in different art mediums, playing quiet games indoors or active and quiet games outdoors, resting, talking together in small groups, and others.

Children and Teacher Work Together—On Extending Activities Outside the Classroom

One high spot in the lives of the sixth-grade boys and girls of the Greenhill School is the week spent at the Boy Scout Camp. The teacher, a registered nurse, the shop teacher, and several parents go with them. In this particular instance, the school district takes care of all expenses except food. Some of the children earn money throughout the year to take care of their expenses; some save it out of their allowance. Several service clubs have a Campers' Fund, which pays for those children who could not go otherwise.

A visitor who happened to be in the sixth-grade room immediately after the camping period asked the children if they enjoyed the experience. An enthusiastic "yes" was the answer. "Why did you like it?" she asked.

Because we liked our teacher.

Because we learned to work together. We were not very good at first but we learned how.

What I got out of it was that I was always sort of rowdy and pushed people and caused lots of trouble and I learned how to live with people. (Both teacher and pupils supported this. Such things can happen when the situation is right.)

I liked the hikes, too, and I learned a lot of science.

We went on a hike to an old house, an "old settler's" house. The lady talked to us about how people came to live here.

We took hikes and got flowers. We pressed them and made blueprints.

We put on skits, the leaders and all of us. We lived together under the open sky. We all had sleeping bags. We bought them or borrowed them. We each took one small bag with us.

We chose captains and they picked their teams. The girls had two teams. One went on a bird hike and one had a cook-out.

We had games like horseshoes and volleyball.

We had duties, too. We took turns washing dishes.

After the visitor left the school she wrote: "The attitude of these children toward each other and toward the teacher was one of friendship and happiness in being together. Each seemed to feel himself an integral part of a social group, and each seemed supported by this feeling. There were

no outsiders, no fringe—everyone was a part of a 'whole society.' I have rarely experienced such open-spirited, outgoing, spontaneous personal relations as were evident here in this sixth-grade classroom—which in itself contained little of a material nature that one could call beautiful."

Miss Norris' fifth grade felt cheated. Mrs. Jones, the other fifth-grade teacher, had taken her children on a field trip. Miss Norris told the children she was skeptical about having the whole class set forth to do the things the children wanted to do—collect fungi and moss from the woods located about 15 miles from the school. The children assured Miss Norris they wouldn't cause any trouble and made all sorts of promises.

Finally, Jim said, "My Dad would help us out. Why can't we select a small committee to go on the trip? My dad will take us."

The entire group decided what they wanted the committee to look for. This is the report of the trip, written by one of the children:

Mr. Gilbert took five of us on a field trip. We went to woods, fields, rivers, lakes, parks, and roadsides. Before we got there we stopped at a tree on the side of the road and got some fungi and different kinds of mosses. Then we went on to the woods and got more different kinds of fungi and mosses. We found puff balls, mushrooms, shelf fungi, and other different kinds.

Next we went to the river and found some shells and saw animals' holes. Then we went to the park and saw lakes. We found some cattails and got some sand.

When we got back to school we reported to our room. When the children began to ask us questions, we committee members found out we didn't know all we thought we did about the things we brought back. The whole class planned ways to find out more about the things that interested us most.

The sixth grade planned a picnic. They figured out how much the food they wanted would cost. They earned the money to pay for the supplies by selling old newspapers and junk. For one reason or other, the picnic had to be postponed for several months.

At last good weather and favorable conditions prevailed. Then came the blow! Food costs had risen so much that money which was once adequate would no longer buy the kind and amount of food the children thought they had to have.

They talked about raising more money or bringing additional food from home. Then the teacher suggested that they explore the possibility of substituting less costly foods. After much investigating, figuring, and evaluating, the children decided to keep within the budget. From all reports, they had a good time, felt satisfied with the food they finally purchased, and were pleased to keep within the original budget.



Good pupil-teacher relationship is an important factor in any classroom activity.

In Conclusion

Running through the foregoing illustrations is an element of intimate and understanding guidance exercised by the teacher as she works with a child or group of children. Learning to plan, work, play, and live together is, like all things, an individual matter. It comes more easily to some children and teachers than to others.

In the process of working together, the teacher comes to know which children are able to plan and work with relative thoroughness, to recognize those who plan enthusiastically but fail to carry through, to give special consideration to those who feel "lost" or overwhelmed when placed in a position where they are expected to contribute ideas, make decisions, and carry through responsibility.

As the teacher and children work together, the "wordy" ones learn how to organize their thinking so that they can make pertinent remarks; the "shy" develop confidence; the overambitious, the aggressive, and the overconfident become more cooperative; the "lazy" are challenged. All learn the importance of using foresight in planning, the need for finding information from

many sources that will help increase their understanding, the value of making decisions based on information that seems to be sound, and the necessity for constant evaluation. They learn that as they evaluate, their plans may change.

In such an atmosphere of day-to-day thoughtful planning, children have opportunities to increase their ability to plan their lives well and to acquire those learnings which will enable them to get along well with other children and with adults.