

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

By Supt. Washburne

Q. Isn't there danger of over-emphasizing the mechanical side of education by the individual system?

A. Yes. But I believe we are all sufficiently aware of this danger to avoid it. The only subjects which are put on an individual basis are the mechanical processes and skills and the purely informational side of history and geography. Not less than one-third of the time of each day is spent on group and social activities, which are not measured and are not the basis of marks or promotion, but give both pupils and teacher a chance for the fullest possible expression of the more diving side of education

The mechanical side of education has a very real place, especially in the elementary schools. Children must learn to master their tools. They must be able to use them with dexterity. The elements of reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, capitalization and punctuation—these are tools. They are needed for all further work in education as well as for practical life in the world. To insist upon a real mastery of these tools is not being too mechanical. On the contrary, a child who has mastered these mechanical elements will not stumble over mechanical difficulties in doing more advanced work. His attention will not have to be on the mechanics of what he is doing, but he can be on the job itself.

There is a theory to the effect that man has developed his intelligence largely by the means of regulating many of the common acts of life to the unconscious part of his nervous system. His intellectual faculties are, therefore, left free for thinking about higher matters. In the same way, if we can bring automatic accuracy and efficiency in the tools of learning, children will be able to use their reasoning powers on the problems that call for reason. A child who has to stumble over his reading will never use reading for entering into the wide fields of other peoples' thoughts. A child who has hazy ideas of the main locations in the world's geography, will find himself handicapped in understanding the more important things of the world's industry and history. A child who has to count in order to add 8 and 9 will have a difficult time in solving real thought problems in arithmetic. The mechanical side of education occupies an important place.

I like to compare the mechanics of education with the skeleton. Without the skeleton the body loses all form and stamina, but the skeleton alone is dry and lifeless. It must be embodied in flesh and blood. The flesh and blood side of our education,

under the individual system, comes in our social periods. In these periods the life and customs of various people are dramatized, problems are discussed, special reports are made by children who have investigated those subjects in which they are interested, and every opportunity is given for the teacher to develop the interest and abilities of the pupils. These periods are in no sense recitations, wherein pupils are tested as to whether or not they have learned their lesson. The testing is all done through individual work. The periods are really social, in that they are group activities of interest to the children themselves.

The best answer to the question of whether we are over-machinizing our work in Winnetka is a visit to the schools. Any parent who will spend one day in visiting will, I believe, be entirely convinced that in our measuring of children's mechanical work and insisting upon efficiency in the mechanical side of education, we are not losing sight of what Edward Yeomans calls "that very holy ground which surrounds the soul of each child."

WEEK OF DECEMBER 27, 1920

During this week the usual afternoon gymnasium classes for boys and girls will be omitted, but the evening gymnasium activities for men and women will follow the old schedule.

There will be no motion pictures Friday evening, December 30 (New Years' Eve.)

MONDAY DECEMBER 27

Gymnasium activities as usual for men in the evening, beginning at 7:30 o'clock.

Camp reunion of boys and girls; dinner in the assembly room at 6:30.

TUESDAY

Gymnasium classes for young women at 7:30.

Meeting of Friendship Circle in gym at 8:30, followed by club meeting in the Neighborhood room at 9:30.

Young people's dancing class at 9 o'clock in the assembly room; Mr. Clarke, instructor.

Classes in English for both men and women at 8 o'clock, under Mr. and Mrs. Moulton and Miss Ruth Matz.

WEDNESDAY

Gymnasium activities for men in the evening at 8 o'clock.

THURSDAY

Scout meeting postponed until New Year's Eve.

FRIDAY

No motion pictures. Scout activities in evening in assembly room and gymnasium; New Year's party.

SATURDAY

Gymnasium — Kippy orchestra; dance, 8 p. m.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Vollman and son, John, left yesterday to spend Christmas with Mrs. Vollman's parents in Argos, Ind.

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