

# EDUCATORS LAUD WINNETKA'S SYSTEM OF CHILD TRAINING

Editor's note: In accordance with the plan announced in the Education Week section of last week's issue of Winnetka Talk, we submit the following copies of addresses made by leading Winnetka educators at the Education Week mass meeting held at Skokie school, Monday evening, November 19. These articles are extremely interesting and comprise a most comprehensive presentation of Winnetka's system of elementary instruction, as well as an unclouded outlook into the future of our schools.

## Winnetka's School Situation

By ERNEST S. BALLARD  
(President, Board of Education)

Those of you who know your hymnal have heard of nations crowding to be born. Apparently that is what is now going on in Winnetka. A nation, or at least a respectable part of one, is crowding to be born right here and as soon as it succeeds, or shortly thereafter, it crowds into the schools. As if that were not enough, it is recruited from the outside by newcomers who are attracted here by our schools, our churches, our climate and our great personal charm. As a result the population of the Village is pursuing a sharp upward curve. Between 1910 and 1920 it doubled and more. Between 1920 and 1930 it will nearly double again. That is certainly a healthy growth, but it by no means equals the growth of the school population. As late as 1915 our total enrollment in the public schools was only five hundred; in 1920 it was nearly a thousand,—in 1925 it will be 1500; and by 1930 it will probably be more than 2200.

### Expect 17,000 in 1940

The reason for this rapid expansion is not far to seek. The most crowded part of the Village, just west of the Winnetka station, is less than three-quarters occupied, and by that I mean that less than three-quarters of the building lots have houses on them. North of that section, that is North of Pine street and just West of the tracks, it is about half occupied; South of Willow street and just West of the tracks it is less than half occupied; and in the Southeast section only a little more than half. Some of the outlying parts of town have scarcely been touched by the home builder. On the average the whole is not half occupied, so that in a decade or two we may expect to see our numbers doubled, or better. The figures I have given you are not the mere guess of the school board; they are the work of an expert employed by the board a year ago to make a thorough study of this problem. Furthermore, they assume a continuation of the building policy we are now pursuing as embraced in the zoning ordinance and they take no account of the possible invasion of the apartment house. The fact is that by 1935 or 1940 we may expect a total population of 17,000 or more.

### Need School Houses

To educate children requires more than school teachers and school books. It takes school houses, preferably little red school houses, but in any event school houses. I hope many of you have read, and I hope all of you will read Miss Dwyer's very interesting article in the Talk on "Early Education in Winnetka." She takes the story back before the Civil War, and I am not going to plagiarize from her. For many years the present Village Hall was used for school purposes. The first building especially erected for school use was the old Columbia School on North Avenue, which many of you remember. It was dedicated in 1893, and took its name from the World's Fair then in progress. The first of the present buildings was Horace Mann, which was built in 1899 and in that year housed 200 pupils. There were about twenty more in Columbia, making 220 in all. Happy was the School Board of that day. In 1904 Horace Mann was doubled in size. In 1912 the original Greeley School was built. In 1916 Hubbard Woods was built and in 1918 enlarged. Then came this building that we are gathered in tonight, the voluntary expression of Winnetka's concern for her children. Since that time the Greeley addition has been finished and this week we will open the second addition at Hubbard Woods.

For a few years more we can continue this process of enlarging existing buildings. Four new rooms can be provided at Hubbard Woods, five already built at Greeley can be finished, and twelve can be added in the South wing of this building. That will probably see us through the next half dozen years, but even now we must be looking beyond that. All the added rooms will house about 600 more children, but after they have been filled the only answer is additional schools. We will begin to need them by 1928 and by 1930 they will be a crying necessity. With the an-

nual increase now above 120 pupils and with a practical limit of 30 children to a room, it is as inevitable as the tides.

### Economy to Buy Now

Some of you may say that we are looking too far into the future, and that we should not spend your money today to provide for the education of the children of a future generation of tax payers. I hope you won't say that, but it is possible that some of you will. However, the question is not simply whether the money spent shall be spent then or now. A much more important question is—how much shall be spent. It is still possible to acquire additional property for school use at fairly reasonable prices, but within five years, or even two, it may double in value. The most striking illustration of that tendency is to be found in the property this building stands on. It is twelve acres in extent and was bought by the School Board in 1918 for \$18,000, \$1,500 an acre. Last spring when our books were audited it was worth \$54,000, just three times what it cost only five years ago. Our other school sites tell the same story and there is no reason to believe that the immediate future will be very different from the immediate past in this respect.

### Want Best Schools

Perhaps all this talk of finances is making some of you nervous, but you may calm yourselves on that score. I am not going to pass the hat, but I want you to know something about this problem that the school board faces. Napoleon said that most letters answer themselves in three days. This question is not of that kind; it will grow more difficult rather than less by being let alone. I also want to say this, the school board has very great faith in Mr. Washburne and Mr. Beatty, and it is our purpose to provide, so far as we are able, the physical equipment necessary to give Winnetka the best schools obtainable. That is our building program.

## Winnetka Leads

By PERRY DUNLAP SMITH  
(Headmaster, Country Day School)

President Coolidge has proclaimed this as National Education Week with the hope that every good citizen will do all that he can to improve the cause of public education in this country. There are two ways in which the parents and the school children may derive the most benefit and give the greatest amount of help to the schools in education week. The first is to visit the school, watch it, learn to know the teachers and the principal and to thoroughly understand its educational aims and purposes. But this alone is not enough. The parent must also discover the relation of his local school to the other schools of the country both past and present. In order to do this each parent must know somewhat of the various types of school in the country, what they are and how they came to exist. Some of you probably do not realize that education today is divided into two totally contrasted types and that your schools are committed very definitely to support one of them. In fact, we are maintaining a leading position in the country among the schools of this type and very much need your intelligent support.

### Decree of Learning

Education in America has always arisen in response to some definite need which had to be met, and our forefathers with characteristic boldness and originality did not hesitate to create new institutions to solve wholly new problems with which they were faced. In 1647 the Puritans decreed "that since it is one chief project of that old deluder Satan to keep mankind from the knowledge of the Scriptures, all villages and towns whom the Lord has increased to 50 householders" shall maintain at public expense at least one school teacher to instruct the youth in reading, writing and religion. A few years later we find the governor of Virginia thanking God "that we have no free schools nor printing, for learning has brought disobedience and heresy into the world and printing has divulged them." Here were two contrasting types of views. However, when our forefathers discovered that they had on their hands a new republic in which every man had the right to vote, the question decided itself for they could not afford to place the destinies of a nation in the hands of illiterate people, and universal education became a necessity. This need was met by the creation of the District School and the school district became the smallest and most important political unit of the nation. Someone has said that the creation of the District School which placed the education of the people in the people's own hands, was the high point of democracy but the low point of education. It assured everyone of some form of education but it is obvious that the unintelligent and backward districts, which stand in their own light and would not know how to provide the

highest type of education for its own children. Far too frequently these school boards elected that teacher who would come for the least money. But they taught the people to be keenly alive to the value of public schools and they formed the habit of coming to school constantly to see how the public money was being spent. They failed, however, to realize that teaching was an art and a science which could not be performed merely because the person was interested in it. It was for Horace Mann in 1840 to reveal this to the country. He pointed out that, while it might seem perfectly clear to anyone that the obvious way to teach was by beginning to memorize the alphabet and following that with words of one syllable, etc., nevertheless it had been discovered and was being put into practice in all the best European schools of the day that reading could not be taught that way and that knowledge of the alphabet was a positive interference to learning to read. He created the first normal schools for training teachers in the science of teaching and for his pains because he was not 100% American, or words to that effect. The district school boards vigorously resisted change, as 15 years after Horace Mann had pointed out these doctrines we find that the alphabet was still being memorized in Winnetka Public Schools as the first requirement to reading.

### Develop Home Arts

Horace Mann, however, started something. Soon a rapidly growing group of parents and teachers saw that the conditions of America were changing and that American education would have to change to meet those conditions unless it wished to meet the fate of the dinosaur and dodo, who have always maintained that "what was good enough for grandfather is good enough for me." American population was rapidly shifting from the rural to a city people. Practically all the household industries which had been carried on on the farm and which formed a large part of the education of every youth had been done away with, either by city life or by the invention of new machinery until today there are almost no home arts or industries left. It was necessary for the schools to supplant this lack of education outside of school by taking these industries into the school and at the same time this new group of thinkers felt that the whole point of view towards education must be changed. Instead of believing the ideal teacher was the person who could reduce his pupils to a state of passive obedience where he would offer little or no resistance to the information being poured into him, they felt that self-activity and interest are necessary for real growth, that a recitation where the majority of questions came from the pupils rather than from the teacher was a great advantage over the type of recitation where the teacher held her book in her hand and asked the children to repeat what was in the book. It was almost a case of the question of infant damnation, whether or not you believed that children are born bad and have to have the badness beaten out of them or whether there is a divine spark present in all children which, if given an opportunity to grow, will grow. These new thinkers felt that, "while it was true that as the twig is bent so the tree inclines, nevertheless bending twigs does not tend to create straight trees."

### Winnetka Leads Way

This group of men and women were met again, as Horace Mann had been, by a storm of protest. They were driven from the public schools but were able to continue teaching the new doctrines in various institutions maintained by private capital given by citizens who were high-minded enough to see the value of this work. These private schools existing, as all private schools exist, solely for the purpose of making the public schools better were able to save this type of education for the public schools until today it is not possible to send your child to a school in Winnetka or New Trier township which does not subscribe heartily to the principles laid down by these leaders. In fact, Winnetka is justly proud in having a public school system with a superintendent of schools at its head, who enjoys a national reputation for being one of the outstanding leaders in the most advanced of this group.

And yet I hear on all sides today citizens of Winnetka who attack the public schools because they say these are new and untried ideas and that they do not wish their children experimented on. All child training is experimental. Every thinking father and mother must realize that no two children will react the same way to any one method or scheme of discipline. And as for these ideas being new they have been in the minds of all great educators for literally hundreds of years. William Penn, speaking of the faults of the schools in his day said "We press their memory too soon and puzzle, strain and load them with words and rules; to know grammar and rhetoric and a strange tongue or two, that it is ten to one may never be useful to them; leaving their natural genius for mechanical, physical or natural knowledge uncultivated or neglected; which would be of exceeding use and pleasure to them through the whole course of their life. To be sure

languages are not despised or neglected. But things are still to be preferred." I find that Benjamin Franklin at the time of his founding the University of Pennsylvania pointed out that Latin and Greek were put into the Medieval Schools because all science, law and theology were to be obtained only in those languages but he said: "They have become the chapeau-bras of modern literature, once useful but now degenerated into an honorific appendage." This might easily have been said by Mr. Washburne in one of his speeches yesterday to the Parents' association, in fact, I can remember distinctly hearing him say something very similar to this in his first talk to the parents several years ago. And yet people say these ideas are new and untried. Franklin founded the University of Pennsylvania in 1749 on principles which are contained in "the proposals relating to education of youth in Pennsylvania," and printed in pamphlet form. These principles were that learning comes by doing, that the concrete should precede the abstract, that individual abilities should be early recognized and that the time to take up a particular study was when the desire for it had been awakened in the pupil. These are all principles now recognized in the Winnetka Public Schools.

### All Should Help

I do not see how anyone can fail to use every means in his power to help and encourage the work in the public schools of America today, especially when he remembers the enormity of the task that America lays upon her public school teachers. No other country is forced to educate children in such vast numbers, children a large part of whom come from foreign countries with traditions, backgrounds often totally un-American, with the handicap of interference from ignorant political bodies on all sides and with the hope of almost no recognition for their labors. In the face of these obstacles, it is remarkable that the public schools have done anything at all and all public-spirited citizens should wonder at the remarkable work they have done.

Winnetka is to be congratulated on the good fortune in having such men as leaders as you see among the others on the platform before you tonight, the names of Washburne, Beatty and Clerk are well-known throughout the country. The force of their personality you can judge for yourselves for after all the most vital thing in a school is the personality of its head. "An educational institution is merely the lengthened shadow of the man at its head."

## Developing the Individual

By CARLETON W. WASHBURNE  
(Superintendent Winnetka Schools)

For centuries there has been a wintry dreariness about going to school. Sometimes looking back at school days adults laugh at their own childish tribulations and throw a glamour around days which were often really unhappy. But there is a breath of spring in the educational work today, there is a budding forth of new ideals and a quickening of the pulse of school life.

My visit to schools in different parts of Europe last winter brought the contrast between the new and the old most forcibly to my attention. In Europe, as here, there are signs of an educational springtime, there is a blossoming forth of new things in education that give promise of rich fruition, and on the other hand there are the cold, lifeless old ways of schooling, making a sombre background for these first green buddings.

Here in Winnetka the strong community spirit, one of the strongest in America, has expressed itself in the selection of School Boards of various kinds, which demand that the schools respond to the early spring breezes that are blowing in the school world. Whether it be the board of governors at the Country Day School, or the Winnetka board of Education, or the Winnetka representation on the high school board, the same ideals manifest themselves, and for that reason, in response to the progressive, forward-looking tendency of Winnetka, all of the schools are striving toward common ideals.

### Cleavage Disappears

There once was a cleavage between public school and private school and a cleavage between elementary and high. Those lines are fast disappearing as distinction between the new and old type of education becomes more evident.

There is far more in common between the North Shore Country Day school and the Winnetka Public Schools, than there is between the Winnetka Public Schools and the public schools of cities which have not yet awakened. Heading the high school now we have a man who made a national reputation as a superintendent of elementary schools before he came to us. Mr. Clerk's elementary schools in Winchester, Virginia, respond to the same urgings that the North Shore Country Day school and the Winnetka Public Schools have been answering. His sympathy and understanding of our elementary work gives promise for an easy transition from elementary school to high school.

There is a constant interchange of

stimulation and ideas between the Winnetka Public Schools and Country Day. Our teachers visit each other, our children participate in common activities. There are not two or three kinds of education in Winnetka. There is one kind. There are not several divergent educational ideals. There is one common ideal. There are not competitive efforts working one against the other. There is a common effort. That effort is to develop fully every individual child.

How we are attempting this full development of each individual I can illustrate more readily from the work of my own schools. The same type of effort, the same ideals exist in both the North Shore Country Day School and New Trier under Mr. Clerk, but I naturally am more intimately acquainted with the detailed working out of these ideals in the schools which are under my direct supervision.

### Process of Development

To develop each individual fully involves at least three phases of work. The child must be given a mastery of those skills and knowledges which are commonly used; he must be given an opportunity to express his own individuality to do creative work; and he must be made to feel himself a part of the social structure.

The science of education is so new that it sheds light clearly on only certain parts of the first of these three efforts—that of giving children a mastery of the common essentials. Obviously, in order to give a child a mastery of the common essentials, we must know what the common essentials are, and we must know how to present them effectively to children. By a common essential we mean a knowledge or skill which is essential to every one, a knowledge or skill which is used by practically every one who possesses it. The knowledge of square root is not a common essential, because only a few people use it. The knowledge that 7 and 8 are 15 is a common essential in arithmetic, language and spelling. Recently, partly through the efforts of the Winnetka teachers, we have come to the knowledge of what constitute some of the common essentials in history and geography.

In our effort to find out how to teach these essentials, the science of education is less advanced. Nevertheless, progress is being made. At the University of Chicago, for example, elaborate moving pictures have been taken of children's eye movements when reading. These have enabled us to determine the type of subject matter and the type of drill exercises most effective in teaching children to read.

### Common Essentials Identical

Common essentials by their very nature are the same for all children. The fact that 7 and 8 are 15 is one which is as necessary for the child with a dull brain as it is for the genius. Some children will learn this fact much more quickly than others. The Winnetka Public Schools have adapted themselves to the varying rates at which children learn the common essentials. If one child needs three weeks and another three months to learn the same thing, the Winnetka Public Schools allow the one who has finished in three weeks to go on to something else. At the same time they allow the child who requires three months to take that full three months and to master the facts or the process thoroughly. Since children differ in their mental ability either you must let the slow ones set the pace, holding the more rapid children back, or you must let the more rapid children set the pace, pulling the slow ones so fast that they cannot do thorough work, or you must allow each individual to progress at his own natural rate. This last is what the Winnetka Public Schools are doing. The essence of individual instruction is that each child shall master completely one step before he goes on to the next.

### Developing the Individual

When it comes to the development of individual capacities—the self-expressive type of activity—the science of education throws less light on our problems than in giving children the mastery of commonly used tools of knowledge. Here we have to rely more upon intuition and personal judgment. We must stumble along rather blindly. Fortunately, however, in the very nature of self-expression, there is no particular subject matter to be mastered, no particular method to be followed. Clearly, for self-expression, children must have freedom and opportunity to express what is within themselves. The teacher's job, the job of the schools, is to provide such opportunities and to stimulate children to make use of them. In the children's written compositions, in such activities as our school paper—the Journalist—in our art work, in the hand work of the lower grades, and the shop work at Skokie, we are striving to give children an opportunity to create, an opportunity to express what is in them. In music too, Mrs. Khlisaat is working toward this same ideal, she wants to give the children such a range of songs that they can express any mood through music.

For the social development of children, the training of them in co-operation, we again have to rely upon the personal skill of teachers and our own