

Declares Parent-Teacher Must Learn to Cooperate

Principal Beatty of Skokie School Makes Appeal at School Opening

Editor's note: An unusually clear and straightforward statement of the purposes of elementary education as applied in the Winnetka schools—more particularly the Skokie school—is to be found in the accompanying copy of a letter directed to parents of Skokie pupils this week by Principal Willard W. Beatty. In it Mr. Beatty not only sets forth the general scheme of instruction but takes the parents into his confidence, emphasizing the thought that close co-operation of parent and teacher is not only highly desirable but actually essential to the well-rounded development of the child—physically, mentally and spiritually. The letter, we believe, will be of interest to all TALK readers, regardless of whether or not they are parents of school-age children, and it is with that thought in mind that Mr. Beatty's statement is published herewith in full.

September 8, 1925

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Parent:

We hope that you will take time to read these few pages, which we of the faculty are directing to you. We hope that you will also find time to read the longer letter which the children of Skokie are sending to your child. We want to establish a working understanding with you, because between us we are undertaking a very important obligation. We trust that this will be simply the first link between us, for we want you to be a regular visitor at our school. Each of us desires to know you personally so that our work with your child may be that much more successful. We will be glad to have you visit us at any time, and we count on your presence at the three parent-teacher evenings during the year when we make an especial attempt at mutual understanding.

One or two introductory remarks need to be made about the Junior high school curriculum. Details will be left for the goal card explanations, but these outstanding facts deserve your attention: We believe that certain subjects form the essential tools of education: reading, writing, spelling, simple English composition, and the fundamentals of arithmetic. Weakness in any of these handicap the child in more advanced work of any kind. You will, therefore, find that our first emphasis is upon a thorough mastery of these essentials, and other subjects may be temporarily suspended while this mastery is being achieved. The high school records of our Skokie graduates appear to justify this course, and we count on your cordial co-operation in making it effective with your own child.

Because the essential end of modern education is effective participation in the social group, we believe that the social studies (history, geography and civics) deserves to be the backbone of our curriculum. The material which we are using in social studies we believe to be superior to anything which has been prepared for children up to this time. It is the result of careful research, and is being prepared by a group of exceptionally competent people under the direction of Harold Rugg of Columbia university. We have reason to believe that the average graduate of Skokie school has a better understanding of the social problems of modern America than the average adult today. We hope that you will find it possible to encourage the children to discuss their problems with you, either at the dinner table or for short periods in the evening. In this way you will be gaining a clearer idea of what we are teaching, and at the same time you will be giving your children the invaluable advantage of your mature judgment and experience.

We want the atmosphere of our schools to be one of clean thinking and high ideals. We want the children to have that respect for their bodies and minds which is based upon knowledge and understanding. To achieve this is as much a matter of method as it is of the facts taught. Five years of the most careful teaching and observation of results have convinced us that our present seventh grade biology

course is actually accomplishing these results. In this work we are dealing frankly and yet idealistically with the facts of life and reproduction. The teachers who are handling this work we believe to be fitted by both training and personality to treat this subject as you would wish it treated. The school is not taking up this work with any desire to rob the home of its intimacies, but in order to give to all of our children a common basis of clean thinking. If you will make your son or daughter a warm confidant during the period of this instruction, our experience proves that both you and the children will be richer for the work of the school.

Creative Activity for Leisure Time

The time has come when the eight hour day is the standard of business and industry. With the shortened periods of labor has come a proportionate increase in leisure time. This gain in leisure has come to a generation with few creative interests, and has resulted in an acceptance of passive amusements, some of which are anti-social in nature. We believe, therefore, that the modern school should build up interests in creative activities, which may offer constructive avocations or hobbies. Skokie doesn't attempt to give vocational training, but we do try to supply many opportunities for creative and socialized activities. The 'electives' which are a part of every pupil's program are means of introducing the children to these avocational interests. To forward this program, the physical and biological laboratories, the various shops, the art rooms, the music rooms, the dramatic gymnasium and play-fields have been organized so as to offer more than thirty different types of creative and socialized experience.

We try to maintain the highest standards of workmanship of which our children are capable. By intelligent co-operation of the children, these standards are being raised each year. So that you may have comparative evidence of your own child's progress while at Skokie, we maintain in the children's work from time to time throughout the junior high school course. We shall be glad at any time six months after the child has first entered Skokie to make this comparison for you. In our courses which offer training in essential skills, we demand an accuracy of 100 per cent where that is humanly possible.

About Goal Cards

We hope that you will make an effort to understand and follow the goal card. We are trying to lay before you in as graphic a manner as is now possible, the "menu" for the two years at Skokie. We wish to show you step by step, the progress of your child through this work. If it all appears complicated to you at first, as it naturally will, visit your child's advisory teacher, and he or she will be glad to go over the card with you in detail if you will give your time to it at first, it should offer you a better opportunity for knowing exactly what your child is doing than has ever before been afforded parents. If, after a careful study of the goal card, it still seems clumsy, we shall be more than glad to receive suggestions from you for its improvement as a means of intelligent communication between the school and the home.

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We believe in the essential well meaning of children, and therefore we strive to have as few rules of conduct about the school as possible. What few rules we have are fundamental, and we expect implicit obedience and co-operation in making these effective. Such response is a matter of training—and is just as necessary a response as correct spelling or right knowledge of multiplication. Nearly all of our children wish to give us this co-operation, and with occasional slips (possible in all of us) make an effort to do so. Because of this fact we don't punish when slips occur.

Our most fundamental rule is that no individual may disturb the work of a group. We try to show clearly that this is founded upon justice to the majority, and after this explanation is made, a disturber is eliminated from group work. A child who has been eliminated from group work loses his school citizenship and may not participate in any of the activities of the school. This period of segregation is never of determined length but depends upon the attitude of the child. When he recognizes the nature of his fault, and shows a desire to exercise greater self-control, he may be re-admitted to his classes. This adjustment must be made with the teacher who was responsible for the original elimination. Our teachers are willing to discuss such matters at any reasonable time.

Treating Deliberate Disobedience
Where a child is deliberately disobedient or in a given situation deliberately constitutes himself a nuisance, we usually send him home. We do this because we desire in such a case to have your

co-operation in making a readjustment. We don't necessarily expect you to punish the child, but we are anxious to discuss the situation in detail with a view to helping the child. We will always notify you before the child is sent home.

When your child enters the doors of Skokie school, you automatically become one of our clients. We desire to give you and your child the most efficient service which it is possible for a school to render. We need to know any facts or experiences which may help us to understand and help your child. Such facts will be held in strictest confidence by the persons to whom they may be imparted. In re-

turn you are entitled to know from us, all that we as specialists in child training are able to tell you about your own child. Your child's advisor will attempt, soon after registration, to make this contact with you, and thereafter will try to keep you posted. You are welcome to the school office at any time. You may always have a personal interview with the principal by phoning a day in advance for an appointment. Don't hesitate to bring your child's problems to us—and don't always wait for us to take the initiative.

This is written to help bring into more intimate contact the school and the home. If it succeeds in but a few cases, it justifies the effort.

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