

TELLS PLACE OF ART IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Winnetka Educator Stresses Value of Dramatics Among Small Children

Dramatic art has its own place in the life and training of every child, and does not need to be pushed into the school curriculum on the plea that it vitalizes history on any other subject, according to Willard S. Beatty, assistant superintendent of schools at Winnetka. At the weekly assembly last Wednesday, Mr. Beatty gave the students of the National Kindergarten and Elementary college, a most interesting glimpse of the possibilities of dramatic art in the school, and made practical suggestions as to the best way of developing the art with children.

In enumerating the various points on which the art may be justified, Mr. Beatty mentioned first of all the fact that it gives the children pleasure. Next, it stimulates the imagination. "The trouble with us is that we know too much. Our knowledge interferes with our belief. If people didn't have freedom of imagination there would be no inventions in the world. It is important, if we are to have any advance in the world, that we give people some experience in dramatics."

Makes People Natural

"Dramatic work helps to overcome self-consciousness. It is a privilege to be free to act naturally, to move gracefully, to be in control of the situation and let the situation move with you.

"It offers a great field for creative activity," continued Mr. Beatty. "The eight-hour day has come to be accepted in industry and in the world at large. We have gained four hours, and the next question is, 'What are

we going to do with them?' The average person doesn't know—so he goes to the movies.

"Dramatic art affords a study of practical psychology. A little study of people in connection with the impersonation of characters on the stage, is helpful in understanding people in any situation."

Should Create Own Plays

In speaking of the kind of plays to be given by children Mr. Beatty said that the least effective play that can be given is the one that somebody wrote. The most effective, on the other hand, is the one which grows up in the class-room after the children have read or heard a story until it has become part of them. "Playing is merely expressing the story, and the more fanciful, the more it calls for the use and development of the imagination, the better it is. If a play has any justification it starts in with the story and grows with the story until it acts itself out. The players live the play or story to the point where it becomes worth while to put the extra creative effort into it on the stage for other people."

"Stories and plays should be within the range of little children's experience and observation. Children imitate. They experiment. Very few words and very few gestures are necessary, and the best playing is most economical. The person who talks the most gracefully is the one who is most economical in his muscular response to the thing he wishes to do. The most dramatic stage settings are representative—the simplicity and beauty of the scenery is merely a suggestive setting for the story."

In speaking of stage technique, Mr. Beatty suggested that although much of the old technique of acting can be thrown away, there are certain things having to do with getting the speeches and acting across to the audience that it is well to know. Speaking with the face toward the audience is usually an economy in the effort to make the

sound carry—and economy is an important thing all the way through.

In summing up the place of dramatic art in the school, Mr. Beatty said that we must allow the children a great deal of freedom in putting together new and old situations. This freeing of the imagination opens up tremendously large fields, it affords creative activity

and gives the children beauty through teaching them the muscular economy which every person needs.

Caleb A. Busick, 1408 Asbury avenue, and his son, Paul, who have been in Kansas for a number of weeks on a business trip, have returned to their home.

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