

The Curriculum Commentator

Harold G. Shane

Progress in Parent Education

With this issue EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP introduces a new department. Each month this column, written by a member of the Association, will be concerned with curriculum development: recent trends, issues, conferences, publications, experimental studies, and learning materials. Editorial chairman for "The Curriculum Commentator" during the current publication year is this month's contributor, Harold G. Shane, professor of education at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

AT PRESENT there are a number of encouraging signs that distinct progress is being made in the field of parent education. Recent conferences and workshops, good materials for parents, and publications dealing with parent-school cooperation support this view.

The trend toward closer working relationships is the more desirable because it is long overdue. Educators have recognized for years that home and school should be a natural working unit if the growth and development of children is to proceed as favorably as possible. At the same time there has been too little well-organized effort on the part of the profession to move toward this widely recognized need for closer cooperation.

The Importance of Cooperation

A number of elements serve to emphasize the growing importance of parent education and closer cooperation with parent groups. The changing patterns of American family life have created problems with which it is difficult for parents to cope.¹ Mothers and fathers often are weary at the end of the day when there is a moment for the family to be together. Children no longer are economic assets and, as one consequence, have difficulty in finding the sense of responsibility and belonging which were commonly present in family living a few generations ago.

¹ See Carle C. Zimmerman, *The Family of Tomorrow*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949. 256 pp.

Life is more complicated and tensions and uncertainties are probably more widespread than in the past.

Some parents are too ambitious for their children, some bewilder their offspring with premature demands for adult standards, and some violate children's security with unreasonable pressure for academic achievement. Commercial entertainment competes with the simple home activities of yesterday and, even within the home, radio and television (particularly the latter) are creating new problems and disruptions.

The conditions suggested above are but a few of the considerations that demand a continuing effort to educate parents by broadening their understanding of the nature and needs of their children. Co-operative action in seeking common goals is another broad area. Legislation to improve education, community action for better health, safety programs, and real parent participation in curriculum planning are areas of cooperation that barely have been touched in most school districts. As long as slums breed social problems which trouble whole cities, or as long as state and federal aid to education require broad support, there will be a need for joint parent-school action. Schools also stand to gain a great deal through increased parent participation in planning the work of the school. Mothers and fathers, in many instances, have much to offer. Also, since simple misunderstanding is a genuine problem in the realm of the

schools' public relations, active parent participation affords a means of interpreting the work of the schools which should not be overlooked.

Some Recent Progress

During the present year there has been encouraging evidence of activity in parent education. Conferences and workshops concerned with parent education have been held in nearly all parts of the country during the current year. A sampling of these experiences is given in subsequent paragraphs.

► At each of the 1949 meetings of the American Association of School Administrators a major program devoted to parent education was featured. Discussion and planning was carried forward in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Philadelphia.

► The July, 1949, conference for administrators, sponsored jointly by the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, was planned so as to give an entire day to the topic, "Administrators and Parents Work for Improved Educational Opportunities for Teachers and Children." William Alexander, superintendent of the Winnetka, Illinois, schools and Mrs. J. J. Garland, vice-president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, made major addresses during the morning. Afternoon discussion groups dealt with practical problems of home-school relations.

► A July workshop was held at Indiana University in Bloomington and brought together parents, teachers, and administrators with a common interest in improving the cooperative efforts of all three.

► In August a three-week workshop was held on the campus of Northwestern University. Experiences were planned so that the participants learned ways in which local action could be initiated both to stimulate parents' participation in the work of the school and to further their education. E. T. McSwain served as coordinator and Herold C. Hunt, Chicago's general superintendent of schools, Ernest Osborne of Teachers College, Columbia University, and Arthur Rice of *The Nation's Schools*

were among the dozen participating consultants. Mesdames C. C. Clark and A. J. Nicely served as consultants from the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

► At the state level the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers has been demonstrating what can be done to develop local leadership. A program begun three years ago under the direction of Ethel Kawin of the University of Chicago staff has expanded to six population centers in Illinois: Chicago, Champaign, Urbana, Moline, Springfield, and Carbondale. Cooperating institutions include the University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University. Several hundred local leaders have been trained and a publications program has been launched. During 1949 packet material for parent leaders was prepared for use in discussion and study groups at the pre-school, elementary, and adolescent levels.

* * * * *

The activities mentioned above indicate that both parents and the profession seem to be recognizing more actively that parents are one of the greatest resources available both for insuring growing support for public education and in improving the curriculum.

Be Sure to Read . . .

Several recent publications mentioned here should prove of interest to educators in the growing group endeavor to make parent education a more vital part of the public school program.

FROM THE N. Y. TIMES. Not even the busiest person will be wasting his time in reading the 1949 edition of Catherine Mackenzie's *Parent and Child*. (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949. 341 pp.) The book contains carefully selected writings from Miss Mackenzie's column in the Sunday magazine section of the New York *Times* and has great appeal for anyone living and working with children. Fluent style and uncommon good sense are brought to bear on various levels

of child development from infancy through adolescence in the first six chapters. Interesting section headings such as "Tired, Sleepy Fathers" and "The Young Grandma" abound in the book. Chapters on such topics as discipline and delinquency conclude this authentic volume.

PARENT EDUCATION. Particularly useful for parents and the beginning student of child development is *These Are Your Children* by Gladys G. Jenkins, Helen Shacter, and William W. Bauer. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1949. 192 pp.) The authors have backgrounds in family service, psychology, and medicine, respectively, and their writing is illustrated by one of the most delightful collections of children's photographs to be found in any recent professional publication. Sprightly chapter headings such as "Five Is a Comfortable Age" introduce a well-prepared text which provides accurate information in a highly readable style. The book should help appreciably to meet the need for readings in connection with parent education and child study groups.

BACKGROUND OF FAMILY LIFE. Carle C. Zimmerman's *Family of Tomorrow* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949. 256 pp.) brings the reader excellent background information on the family. The author shows unusual skill in combining interesting, well-documented information and a quality of readability which make it difficult to leave the text until the last page has been read. The intellectually curious will be stimulated by the way Zimmerman traces the influence of nine personages who, over a 2000-year period, have shaped Western civilization's family system: Augustus and his wife Livia, Theodora, the prostitute who became Justinian's Empress, Erasmus, St. Augustine, Luther, and John Milton among them. The volume provides a fine foundation for developing insight into parent education, broadly conceived.

A NEW OLSON BOOK. The simple title of Willard Olson's *Child Develop-*

ment (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1949. 417 pp.) introduces an important addition to the literature. The carefully documented text Olson has prepared will be of value to serious-minded parents and students of a wide range of maturity. It is organized in terms of research areas including the child's growth and development, his classroom and community role, affective life, and school achievement.

And Don't Miss . . .

A REVISED LIST. The new edition of *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1949. 115 pp.) proves to be a useful revision. It consists of lists of books to help older children begin better to understand "Belonging to Groups," "How It Feels to Grow Up," "Economic Differences," and so forth. A number of the entries are annotated.

ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPLES. Many readers have awaited a book like Harold Spears' recent *Some Principles of Teaching*. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1949. 147 pp.) He has selected 89 principles for comment under such headings as "The School's Purposes," "The Learning Process," and "The Individual Pupil." Each principle is explored briefly and with a refreshing lack of pedagogue. Spears' familiar cartoons enliven the text.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY. A useful addition to the literature is Edward G. Olsen's recent compilation with the descriptive title, *School and Community Programs*. (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949. 510 pp.) It is, perhaps, the most extensive and satisfying collection to date of ways in which schools can "function to improve the quality of human living."

INTERGROUP EDUCATION. For the interculturally and world-minded educator, new publications on the market include: The Educational Policies Commission's *American Education and Interna-*

tional Tensions presents "lines of strategy for American education" in a period of ideological conflict. Leonard Kenworthy's bibliography, *Free and Inexpensive Materials on World Affairs for Teachers* (New York: International House, 500 Riverside Drive, 1949, 100 pp.) is one of the best yet, and conveniently organized for use. Within the last few months the "Freedom Pamphlet" series (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 212 Fifth Avenue) has grown to ten titles, either available or in press, and considers civil rights, intercultural relations, UNESCO, and similar topics of current importance. Edward J. Sparling, William H. Kilpatrick, and Gordon W. Allport are among the contributors.

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN. *You and Atomic Energy* (Chicago: Childrens Press, Inc., 1949. Unpaged.) is a primer on atomic energy for use with children in grades five-eight. Some of the illustrations are misleading (e.g., personification of atoms) and there are a few errors in facts. But the book is of some value be-

cause of the limited material on atomic energy available for use with children.

For the younger child, two imaginative little volumes, *I'll Show You How It Happens* and *If You Could See Inside*, (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1949) help the young reader to "see the unseen" through attractive pictures and simple prose. Cut-away drawings depict the insides of volcanoes, lighthouses, houses, coal mines, and wasps' nests in the latter book. The former touches on steam engines, insect life-cycles, seed migration, eclipse, and similar items of interest to most children. The drawings seem superior to both the text and the binding.

Mary Reely's *Seamates* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1949, 237 pp.) merits mention because the narrative is simply written so that children who do not read well in the intermediate grades can follow it, yet it has a plot sufficiently mature for many ten- to twelve-year-olds. There are too few books that meet these specifications. The author writes of her own experiences as a child and captures an authentic flavor of times past.



The other half of your reading program
WOODLAND FROLICS SERIES

Basic readers *teach* skills, but supplementary readers such as the *Woodland Frolics* must be used to introduce the child to recreative reading for sheer fun—that vital *other half* of any reading program. This series has appealing animal stories, a two-way controlled vocabulary, and over 700 full-color illustrations.

Who Are You?—preprimer
 (paper) \$.40 (boards) \$.75
Watch Me—primer \$1.04
Downy Duck Grows Up—1st reader \$1.12
Little Lost BoBo—2nd reader \$1.28
Chippy Chipmunk's Vacation—
 3rd reader \$1.36

Usual school and library discounts
 Order your needs now or write for complete information

THE STECK Company
 Publishers - AUSTIN, TEXAS



Copyright © 1949 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.