

School and Home Assist in Kindergarten Induction

Children and their parents make first visits to kindergarten as part of an effective program for orienting the boys and girls to school life.

“WHEN’S MY BROTHER going to visit kindergarten?” We hear that question in late January or February—and we know that next year’s children are literally approaching our doorsteps.

The induction of kindergarten children to Elm Place School is part of a broad three way program which extends from early spring to fall. It includes the child, his parents and the teacher. Under this plan the child begins to develop an understanding of school life, his parents become acquainted with the school and with other parents, and the teacher becomes acquainted with the child, his parents and his home.

Late in February a list of the next year’s kindergarten children is compiled. This list is gathered from our school census, newspaper publicity, and from older children in the school. Letters sent to the parents inform them of our visiting program for these children. We have always found the parents more than ready to cooperate in this program.

First Visits

Early in March the prospective kin-

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dergarten pupils are invited, two at a time, to visit kindergarten for two or three complete sessions. The emphasis is on visiting, not on starting school, and for that reason we rarely have an experience with an unhappy child. Children already acquainted with each other are invited to visit at the same time if possible. A regular kindergarten child is given protective charge of each visitor. Sometimes these children are already friends. The ease with which one child can help another feel at home in such a situation seldom fails in its effectiveness for the visitor. The arrangement is an important one, also, in the life of the regular kindergarten child. Through it he experiences the thrill of maturity at this level of development. The entire kindergarten group recognizes that these less experienced children are entitled to freedoms and privileges around the room which they as older children do not need. “It’s OK; he’s a visitor,” is a comment we frequently hear.

The addition of two visitors to a group at this time of the year has never constituted a problem. The extra time required for scheduling visits pays off in terms of better satisfied and more understanding children in the fall. Time and again throughout the kinder-

garten year we are reminded of some activity which took place "when I visited." Our visiting program for incoming children is completed by May first.

On an afternoon in May the mothers of the incoming group are invited to a tea prepared by mothers of the regular group. At this time official registration blanks are completed and necessary health and other printed materials are taken home. The mothers have an opportunity to meet each other, the administrators and members of the primary staff.

Early in August a developmental history form is sent to each home. The completed blanks are returned before the opening day of school. These forms give the teacher up to date information on each child as she begins the year's work with him.

Spring Visiting Pays Off

On the first day of school we receive a group of happy, expectant and ready children. If in this group we do find one or two who are experiencing difficulty in beginning the school year, we are certain that even this unhappiness has been lessened by the spring visiting program.

The contented beginning of the original group permits the teacher to give more attention to any children who have moved into the community

during the summer and who are confronted with the twofold problem of new home and school.

For the first two weeks of school there are half day sessions only, with the two groups taking turns attending the morning session. In keeping with a general plan in the primary and intermediate grades, teachers visit parents and children in their homes during the afternoons. These visits, purely social in nature, are intended to help the teacher see the child in his home. They also make it possible for the parents and teacher to know each other as people before they start their joint problem of guiding the children in this their first year in an elementary school. Visits not completed during this period of time are scheduled in out of school hours.

Early in October the mothers and fathers are invited to visit school for an evening. At this time an explanation of some of the purposes of the year's work is made and there is an opportunity for questions about school procedures. After the group meeting parents and teachers visit informally over a cup of coffee or cider served by a committee from the Parent Teacher Association. With the close of this meeting there is a definite feeling that a solid basis for understanding and guiding a certain group of youngsters is well under way.



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