

be working together—doing creative work with handicrafts, colors or writing. Their discussions, their research, their committees, the teacher's talks or stories or demonstrations, the group singing, the creative dramatics, the excursions—all these will be social and stimulating opportunities to learn. Arithmetic will inevitably come in—those who can solve the harder problems that come up in connection with a discussion or a project will do so; the simpler problems will be solved by the ones on the earlier steps of the ladder. Spelling can't help coming in whenever there is anything to write; reading is equally inevitable.

The common core remains, it is true, temporarily isolated for the sake of individual mastery—just as one who plays in an orchestra gets off by himself and practices, temporarily out of context, a

difficult run until he masters it. Such temporary isolation of a part of a learning process is natural, universal and necessary. The harm comes when most work is so isolated and when the isolation is neither preceded nor followed by integration in a larger whole.

But to return to Miss Julian: At the end of the year her children have all progressed, in varying degrees, toward mastery of appropriate parts of the common skills. All have had a rich year of experience in many fields. If the children have got along fairly well together and can work and play as a team, she has no hesitancy about letting them continue their group experiences together the next year, knowing that her successor will carry each child on from where he left off in that fraction of the curriculum where common mastery is necessary.

Teaching the Individual Adolescent

ERWIN BRUNDAGE

Effective teaching of adolescents, this author maintains, depends upon making meaningful activities available in an atmosphere that assists discovery of and provision for individual differences.

IN THE light of all the new things we have learned about adolescents, it would be difficult to look upon a classroom of youngsters and not to see them as separate, unique individuals. Teachers today must consider each person as requiring certain subtle or, in some instances, drastic variations in the curriculum offered. Recognizing these individual differences is one thing, however, while actually meeting the differences is quite another.

What can we do to complete this

step more adequately? How can we actually offer students a meaningful curriculum which does something about individuals?

Within most classrooms we find a few students who are unhappy in their personal associations. Kay, for example, presented the teacher with such a problem. She was not accepted socially. In one instance, as the class spontaneously divided into small groups, the teacher made rather careful observations regarding Kay.

Most of the students quickly found people to work with. Amid some confusion they were laughingly taking their places. The people at Kay's table just seemed to fade away from her. Almost immediately she was alone. She half rose from her seat, and a look of panic came across her face. Her eyes darted from one group to another. Each group was engrossed in its own plans. Uninvited, she decided on a group and walked without confidence to the outer fringe. She stood with her hand on the back of one of the chairs. Her presence was not acknowledged; no one looked at her or spoke to her. The group proceeded as though she were not there.

Likes and Dislikes

This is a common scene. Almost any teacher can change the name and tell the same story. But what could the teacher do to meet this individual need? To bring about changes in the delicate facets of personality which make for acceptance or rejection is notoriously difficult. Many things might have been tried. The teacher could go to the group and say, "Pull your chair up here, Kay." Then he could try to see that some of Kay's talents were utilized in the group plans. He also might take other students aside and try to enlist their help in integrating Kay into the group. Or he could schedule conferences and talk over the problem personally with Kay and so try to help her form useful insights.

This time, however, the teacher and pupils took it up as a class problem. When the teacher felt the time was right the situation was presented in a frank manner:

"Some of us are better liked than

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others. Particularly at your age, this is often the cause of much unhappiness. I am wondering if there is anything that we can do about it?"

Following the discussion, they decided that each member of the class would describe, anonymously, the person he or she liked most and the person he or she liked least. These descriptions were written, and later we summarized all the statements about people that were liked and the statements about people that were disliked. These summaries provided us with personality characteristics which the students found acceptable and those which they considered unacceptable. We then duplicated the summaries and each person received a copy.

The results were gratifying. The written descriptions were frank and specific. They did not like dirtiness, bossiness, people who "hung on," poor sports, etc. They liked neatness, and some boldness. They liked pleasantness, and people who had ideas. In addition, some of the students received some possibly unexpected assurance. Least conforming students had previously seemed somewhat louder and more verbal. They sometimes did mean, daring things which they bragged about. More conforming individuals often felt cowed down from the abuse which might have been thrown at them. The results of our project, however, gave conforming individuals strength in numbers. It was discovered that most students disapproved of smoking and drinking at their ages. Destroying

things and maliciously incurring the wrath of authority were not generally condoned.

The results were discussed in class and the duplicated forms were read and talked about avidly after school and between classes. Later, the Parent-Teacher Association asked for a panel representation from this class to discuss, before a regular meeting of the PTA, the things that they had concluded from this activity.

Most important, however, were the actual changes that were observed in some of the students. Kay was not the only one to receive benefit. Many of the pupils picked up the cues. People who *were* dirty cleaned up and began to take pride in their clothes, hair, fingernails, etc. Voices for moderation in adolescent activities began to be heard. It was felt that there were more smiles and fewer temper flare-ups.

Problems of Growing Up

Great differences can be observed in the ability of these youngsters to handle the problems of growing up. Accepting the changes in their bodies and in their thinking is much easier for some of them than it is for others. Learning to accept and act under necessary authority, learning new skills with numbers and books and words, planning, listening, generalizing, and learning to work with one another effectively and happily would be a few of the hurdles they would be expected to be working on. To help them see themselves as they really are, we organized a unit of work which we entitled, "What 13-14 Year Olds Are Like." One objective of our work was to get at some of the causes of the frequently mentioned difficulties be-

tween the students and their parents. So we organized the entire class into a panel of experts who were to discover what some of the problems were. The panel was then to make recommendations for solutions.

Opinions of the students themselves were first surveyed as to the real causes of friction. Each student wrote on the topic, "The Things My Parents and I Argue About Most." These statements were then summarized, and we discovered that items such as "staying out late," "sassing," "household chores," "baby sitting," etc., occurred again and again. So the panel sat in a circle about the room and frankly discussed causes and solutions. The solutions were then organized and were set aside to send home to the parents for their information and comments. We then composed an announcement of the existence of the panel. Including with it some of the results of our discussion, we sent a duplicated copy of the announcement home to all the parents. At the bottom of this first "letter," we asked all parents to submit questions for the panel to consider. Many parents responded. They sent in questions such as: "What makes my daughter think she knows more than I do?" "How can I get my son to stop teasing his little brother?" "How late should junior high school students be allowed to stay out at night?" and "How much money should junior high school students be allowed to spend each week?"

The panel met once a week. One question was handled at each sitting, and responses were carefully recorded. Then all the parents received a copy of the conclusions arrived at concerning the question chosen for consideration

that week. Answers and conclusions were very specific and in some instances showed real insight. The students listed exact times for being home and for being in bed. They averaged the allowances that were received, discussed the results, and then came up with a recommended figure. They made it plain that they felt that they were not given proportional credit for being thirteen or fourteen years old. Some felt that they were still being treated like babies and listed specific examples of such treatment. In turn the parents received the information with enthusiasm and followed up with more active participation. The panel was visited by parents who heard the discussion, submitted themselves to questioning, and likewise asked questions of the panel.

Growing in Self-Understanding

Other activities in connection with this unit of work were likewise rewarding. When our lunchroom participation fell to the extent that we feared the lunchroom would have to close, our group decided to do something about it. The class took upon itself the job of learning something about advertising, and then proceeded to sponsor a campaign to remedy the situation. Learning the techniques for effective advertising, preparing and carrying out an effective promotional campaign, keeping graphs which showed steadily increasing lunchroom participation, were fun for the students. In addition, the teacher had in mind other objectives. For instance, one afternoon we had a visitor from one of the local advertising firms come to talk to the class and tell us some of the techniques of

advertising. His presentation failed to reach the students. The day was warm. They had just finished eating and their apathy was obvious. Some of them lounged on the chairs and tables. They looked at magazine pictures. They yawned loudly and would not respond to questions. When his talk was over, the visitor told the embarrassed teacher, "I guess I have a lot to learn about eighth graders." Next day the teacher discussed the incident with the class and then asked them to write a paper on, "How Did Mr. Brown Feel Yesterday?" The results, summarized, were an excellent picture of social sensitivity. Students who had not been good listeners were helped to see one of the reasons why they should be more attentive. The increased interest which they showed to the next speaker proved the value of this experience.

The teacher was also especially interested in seeing if he could improve the ability of some of the members of the class to work with one another. The committee work on the advertising unit provided an excellent means of approaching this problem. Students hear the rules and axioms for good group work throughout the grades. Obviously, however, some of them had never succeeded in putting them into practice. When we advertised, small groups were allowed to choose their media of advertisement, plan their particular campaign, and then to measure its effectiveness. Part of the evaluation of the effectiveness of their work was their own personal appraisal. The teacher sat with each group and asked its members to tell him how well they had functioned. In addition every individual was asked to write a personal evalua-

tion of the effectiveness of each member of the committee he worked with. The following was written about Sammy by the members of his committee:

"During our work, Sammy was always trying to mess things up.

"All Sammy did was stick people with pins and tacks. He didn't do any work at all.

"Sammy was no help at all. Every day we went to work on it, but all he did was throw pins at us and bother us.

"Sammy did everything he could to wreck the committee."

About himself, Sammy wrote:

"Did a pretty good job, but could have done better."

In private conference the teacher discussed group roles with Sammy and showed him how the other members of his group felt about his contribution. Further investigation revealed some of the reasons for his ineffectiveness.

Providing a classroom atmosphere wherein students can feel at home and can be themselves is important. Then when the teacher makes meaningful activities available within this atmosphere he is setting the stage so as best to discover and treat individual differences. If the teacher will *look* for individual needs he will discover many of them. If he will make an effort to meet these needs he will benefit many young people under his care.

The Challenge of the Slow Learning Child

ANNA M. ENGEL

"The plight of the slow learner," says the author of this article, "is a challenge to teachers who believe that all children need a chance to succeed." She makes a realistic appraisal of the problem of the slow learning child and suggests a positive approach to its solution.

IN EVERY schoolroom there are children that vary in learning ability. Just as no two pupils look exactly alike, so they differ in their attitudes, in their learning and in their adjustment. When these differences are extreme, the pupil requires special consideration and attention.

The slow learner is of special concern to the teacher. He has great difficulty when he is expected to perform in the same way and at the same rate

as do the brighter pupils. He does respond to teaching if some modifications are made in the program, if he is given more time to complete a task and if he receives sympathetic understanding rather than pressure and disapproval.

Usually the teacher has no difficulty in identifying the slow learning child, but various objective tests will give additional insight into the child's learning problems. The slow learning child

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