

Someone has said that if you win the youth, you win the future. This truism has been perverted by the totalitarians and utilized for the attainment of their own sinister ends.

We, too, wish to win the youth—but not to a slavish and unquestioning devotion to any set of dogmas. On the contrary, we wish to win them over to the appreciation and recognition of the principle and spirit of free and intelligent inquiry.

This is the meaning of democratic education.

Today, we live in a divided world. Our survival in it depends on the kind of decisions that we make.

It is therefore imperative that we learn the issues in their correct light and that we make discriminations and choices among facts undistorted by bias or the desire to mislead.

Needless to say, democratic education must start from the ground up. An education which provides tools only to a self-constituted upper class elite is worthless. It encourages dangerous delusions among the “educated” and it promotes a grievous social cleavage in which the great majority are prevented from expressing their aspirations and therefore loses touch with the government which is supposed to represent them.

In a word, this kind of education hinders rather than promotes the growth of democracy.

We cannot—and we must not allow this to happen. Fifty years of training in the democratic principles have impressed on us the rightness and fitness of this way of life for our people. We cannot permit it to be endangered so easily.

The object of our national educational policy is not just to produce literate people—meaning people who can read and write—admirable as that is, but to produce people fully equipped to participate in the community activities. The object, in short, is to produce complete citizens—aware of their environment and able, through their training, to adjust themselves to it.

Only through this means can we hope to make democracy mean something to our people.

Through this means, too, we insure the perpetuation of those principles for which, many times in our history, we have given up our very lives.

Taken from:

OFFICIAL GAZETTE, May 1954

pp. 1961-1962

D7a:mga

Community Resources for Learning

By Gaudencio V. Aquino

The child's total education is not limited to his school experiences and learnings. Life out of school constitutes a great part of the child's social and natural environment. In the various areas of this environment the child encounters a great number of stimuli to learning. It is the teacher's ability to unify these stimuli that in no small degree determines the significance of school experiences for the child. If these learnings are not properly integrated, if they are allowed to remain unrelated and isolated, the full development of the child suffers.

Background of Community Life

The community provides a considerable portion of a child's first-hand experiential background and gives meaning to his vicarious experiences. It is essential to interpret a pupil's behavior and reactions against

a background of community life. The teacher, therefore, should understand and utilize the varied educational resources of the community in which the child lives. Today, more than ever before, the individual is greatly influenced by the larger provincial, national, and world communities. But the impact of many of the conditions and problems of these communities can best be understood by relating them to the conditions and problems obtaining in the immediate or local community.

Values Derived by Relating Community to School Program

Different educators have given a litany of values that are derived by relating the program of the school to the community. They agree that the community represents a significant aspect of the child's



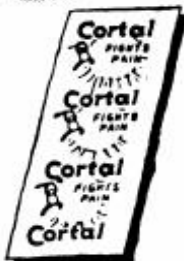
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total environment. These values may be summarized as follows:

1. Reading readiness may be developed in the first grade by use of signs in and near school.
2. The interests of the pupil in his immediate environment can be utilized to make school learning more meaningful to him.
3. Community study serves to vitalize and enrich the child's school experiences by practical application to actual situations.
4. Community study contributes to the realization of one of the school's major responsibilities, namely, that of introducing children to the life of their communities.
5. Community study contributes to habits of observation in children.
6. Community study develops pupil's appreciation and understanding of the social services of his community.
7. Community study counteracts isolation of the school from the realities of life, thereby enabling it to become a more effective agency of human welfare.
8. Study of community problems may become the antecedent for subsequent action to improve the quality of community life.
9. Community study provides opportunities for children to participate in socially useful, cooperative group endeavors.
10. Community study fosters cooperation of individuals and agencies interested in making community life more wholesome.

Evidently these values can be realized only through intelligent selection and utilization of community resources. In order to reduce the social lag of education, it is imperative that curricular materials be adapted to local community conditions. It is well to remember, however, that in the utilization of community resources and in having the children participate in community activities and projects a proper balance with other educative activities be maintained.

Successful Teaching and Community-Centered Education

There is a relationship between the principles of successful teaching and community-centered education. Olsen gives a summary of this relationship as follows:

HOW TEACHING PRINCIPLES ARE UTILIZED IN COMMUNITY-CENTERED EDUCATION

**Basic Principles of Successful Teaching
at Any Academic Level**

I

Educate the child. The child is not just a mind to be instructed: he is a physically, socially, emotional-



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ly, ethically, and intellectually growing person. If his powers are to develop in proper harmony, he needs learning activities which challenge his emerging interests and abilities in all areas of his growth.

Integrated learning occurs. Well-planned community study projects necessarily involves not only intellectual understanding but, simultaneously, social poise, emotional control, physical activity, aesthetic response, and bodily skills. Pupils who explore a tenement house or a coal mine, for instance, develop all these aspects of the personality in unconscious integration.

II

Keep the program informal, flexible, and democratic. Children are restless and need confidence in their own powers and achievements. They therefore need every chance to ask questions freely, confer with other children informally, share in planning their individual and group activities, carry personal responsibility for group projects, and help to judge critically the results of their efforts. This requires that the entire classroom atmosphere be friendly and democratic as well as informal and flexible, and that children need not be held in unfair competition with standards of performance beyond their possible ability to achieve.

Informality, flexibility, and democracy are essentials of any program. Interviews, excursions, surveys, service projects, camping, work experiences, and extended field studies cannot be standardized from pupil to pupil, from class to class, or from year to year. Every child who participates can discover facts and report findings valuable to the group and hence build confidence in himself as he knowingly contributes to the advancement of the project. Group planning, shared responsibility, and mutual evaluation are possible in the highest degree.

III

Capitalize upon present pupil interests. It is of utmost importance that the teacher first discover what interests and purposes his students already have, and then use these drives as springboards to further desirable learning. Thus limited interests may develop into wider interests, undesirable purposes into praiseworthy purposes and the child's educational growth be best promoted.

Every child is interested in his own community. He may not be much concerned with irregular verbs or with the life cycle of *Bacillus typhosus*, but he is considerably interested in telling friends about his nextdoor playmate who is ill with typhoid fever. Beginning with these immediate interests, it is not hard for the alert teacher to stimulate class concern about the fact that the city does not inspect the milk supply, and that well-written letters of protest might be sent to the health commissioner and to the editor of the local newspaper.

IV

Let motivation be intrinsic. Most learners find few desirable incentives in the traditional system of school marks, honors, and penalties. Their most moving incentives are those of real life itself to explore the new and the interesting, to associate actively with other people, to manipulate and construct things, to compare opinions about matters which seem important, and to express one's self artistically.

The keynote is—"Let's find out!" Let's find out where that frog lives... what a police reporter does... how to interview an employer. Life-centered projects such as these, which actually develop out of student's interests, concerns and needs, require little artificial stimulation for their initiation and development. The operating incentives are those which are natural in people's lives and fundamental in their interest; they are definitely not artificial or academic.

V

Make learning experiences vivid and direct. Generalization will be mere verbalisms unless they are based upon meaningful personal experiences. That is why children need constant opportunity for motion pictures, radio programs, excursions, interviews, service projects, work experiences, and the like. Through such media the children receive more concrete, interesting, and meaningful educational experiences than they are likely to receive through the printed page alone.

Firsthand contact is ultimate realism. "We read about slum housing in our textbook," remarked one student as she stood in the back yard of a legally condemned but still-occupied tenement, "but I never believed anything could be as bad as this! Why doesn't somebody do something about it." Pupils who thus experience slum housing, or who watch a plasterer at work or who visit the morgue to see what a drunker driver do to himself are learning vivid lessons they will doubtless never forget.

VI

Stress problem solving, the basis of functional learning. Real education comes about when children intelligently attack real problems, think them through, and then do something to solve them. Every chance should therefore be given for pupils to discover, define, attack, solve, and interpret both personal and social problems within the limitations of their own abilities, interests, and needs.

Real life abounds in problems. These problems may be vast or trivial, personal or social, intimate or remote, but all of them are important to some persons in some degree. Pupils who visit a public health clinic to learn the truth about the symptoms, detection, and treatment of tuberculosis are gaining valuable experience in problem solving; so also are those who climb to the roof to visualize better the local village's transit development.

VII

Provide for the achievement of lasting pupil satisfactions. Students who dislike their work learn little from it, and retain that little briefly. Every effort should therefore be made to maintain learning situations wherein children will achieve genuine success, find satisfaction therein, and thus grow intellectually, emotionally, socially.

Possible satisfactions are many and varied. Children who discover for themselves how an elevator works, who aid in constructing a health exhibit for the country fair, or who help a neighboring farmer terrace his hillside can experience deep emotional satisfaction as well as increased intellectual understanding. Such projects bring feelings of success; success is satisfying; satisfaction brings increased enthusiasm; enthusiasm leads to further activity of the similarly creative and hence basically satisfying nature.

VIII

Let the curriculum mirror the community. Learning situations must reflect life in the pupil's own community if they are to be most effective. Since little transfer of training between diverse situations can be expected, it is essential that the core of the required curriculum directly reflect the basic social processes and problems of the community, rather than the logical subject areas of the traditional school, or the socially insignificant interest units of many activity schools. Not otherwise will the curriculum relate functionally to the personal interests, experiences, and needs of children today.

The community is used as a living laboratory. Within every community, large or small, urban or rural, go on the basic social processes of getting a living, preserving health, sharing in citizenship, rearing children, seeking amusement, expressing religious impulses, and the like. When pupils study familiar through actually unknown processes, develop intellectual perspectives, improve emotional outlooks and serviceable personal skills as they observe and participate in these processes, they are discovering for themselves not only the problems they face, but also the resources they can utilize in attacking those problems. Thus life, as well as the school becomes truly educative in their eyes.

There is a significant relationship between the principles of successful teaching and community-centered education. In other words, the utilization of the community as an educational laboratory is in accord with principles of teaching which are basic to effective teaching procedures.

Five Levels of Pupil Participation

Utilizing community resources for learning does not involve merely the collection of the facts of community life by the pupils. It includes active, intelligent, and responsible participation in community ac-

tivities. We may identify five levels of pupil participation, as follows:

1. Study of community conditions and problems by means of excursions, field trips, and surveys for the purpose of obtaining first-hand information.
2. Programs of community action planned by adults and carried out by pupils.
3. Community activities in which adults and children share in planning and executing the plans.
4. Pupil study of community conditions resulting in identification of a problem for solution, consideration of methods of solution, and initiation of action among adults.
5. Rendering of a needed community service by pupils as a result of their study of community needs.

As to the methods of obtaining information about the community, several may be mentioned: community surveys, school excursions and field trips, interviews with local citizens and officials, school camps, study of local records, and informal observations.

Community Surveys

Community surveys may be divided into two classes: (1) broad, general surveys of community conditions to obtain a general overview of the community; and (2) study of some specific problem of major concern to the group. Both types of surveys, if properly planned and conducted, have great educational possibilities. The aim of the survey should not be limited to obtaining information. From the educational point of view, the survey is of value only as the information gathered is related to other significant learning activities.

For the elementary school the most suitable, in general, is the limited type of community survey in which data are obtained in regard to one community problem or area, such as health, recreation, food production, or traffic safety. It would be well if, after investigation of a definite problem or need, the pupils can take appropriate action resulting in visible community improvement.

In the general community survey the kinds of information and methods of obtaining it should be determined by a process of democratic planning. The pupils may be organized into various committees, and definite responsibility for some phase of the survey may be assigned to each committee. The committee findings should be reported to the entire class for evaluation and interpretation.

In regard to general community surveys, Kilpatrick has stated the following caution:

Community analysis must take one beneath the externals. It is not enough to know that there are farm children in the school; one must know the life of the farm. It is not enough to see the stores, factories, churches, and public buildings; the good teacher must understand what these mean for the lives of

the people. To the fact that 1,000 people work in a textile mill must be added personal acquaintance with the life struggles of some of those employees. That there are ten churches in a small town is a fact without much significance, but the history of those ten cults, their leaders, achievements, internal dissensions, and competitive activities may reveal pretty clearly the strength and weakness of that community today.

The School Excursion

The school excursion is an effective method of providing direct experiences with the realities of social living. The educational purposes which may be served by the school excursion are the clarification of concepts, the observation of objects and processes in their functional relationships, the development of new interests and the intensification of old ones, the illustration of abstract ideas, the development of keenness of observation in particular fields, the acquisition of certain social abilities such as acceptance of responsibility and willingness to cooperate in group undertakings.

The maximum education benefits can be derived from a school excursion only when:

1. The pupils and teacher recognize the need for firsthand information in regard to a problem they are studying.

2. An appropriate excursion is carefully selected.

3. The suitability of a proposed trip can be ascertained by a preliminary trip by the teacher and committee of the class in which its educational possibilities are surveyed.

4. On the basis of the information obtained on the preliminary trip, the details of the trip are planned by the class.

5. The class is given full and explicit information in regard to the plans formulated.

6. By means of class discussions, pupils formulate purposes of the trip.

7. Pupil orientation and motivation are provided in advance of the trip by study of its education significance.

8. Necessary arrangements are made with the proper school authorities.

9. Pupils formulate directions for observation and prepare a list of standards of pupil conduct.

10. The trip is followed by pupil appraisals, class reports, discussions, and the relation of information obtained on the trip to the problem being studied.

Documentary Materials

Documentary materials are good sources of information which supplement information obtained by firsthand investigation. The records of national, provincial, and municipal agencies contain specific information relating to past and present community conditions. Newspaper and magazine files contain

interesting accounts of community activities. Social service and public health agencies may have records which are of value in the study of juvenile delinquency and health conditions in the community. The values gained by pupils from the use of documentary materials are twofold, namely, the information obtained and experience in the elementary techniques of research.

Interviews

Interviews with local citizens are also worthwhile for obtaining information. Pupils may interview early inhabitants of the community who may provide human interest materials for a study of local history. Persons engaged in various community occupation may be interviewed to obtain information in regard to general working conditions, duties and training of workers, and the like. Similarly, local public officials may be interviewed to obtain information with regards to current community issues and problems.

Accuracy and keenness of observation can be developed and enhanced in elementary school children by careful firsthand studies of many features of their local community environment. Valuable insight can be acquired by pupils into many of their classroom learning activities by informal observations of processes in their homes and other community situations in the immediate vicinity of the school.

Social Sensitivity Achieved

While the value of relating the work of the school to community life as a method of enriching the curriculum and motivating pupils has been recognized, it must be said that the use of community resources has a broader implication; if, through contact with the community, teachers are able to instill in pupils the recognition of community problems along with a desire and plan to improve conditions, one of the major objectives of education, namely, social sensitivity, will be achieved.

The first requisite for the successful utilization of community resources is for the teacher to know interests, activities, and resource materials of the local community. The teacher can obtain information in regard to these matters through conversations with citizens, observation of community activities, and participations in community life.

The teacher will be handicapped if there are no readily available suggestions of resources which can be used in constructing school activities around community topics. It is the teacher's concern to become acquainted with the local environment and to compile a list of resources which could be utilized in various areas of learning activities.

Types of Community Resources

The following list illustrates the types of resources

to be found in many communities. Few communities provide all those suggested.

1. Business

- a. banks
- b. business officers
- c. food markets—retail and wholesale
- d. hotels
- e. laundries
- f. lumber yards
- g. restaurants
- h. service stations
- i. shops
- j. stores

2. Civic Organizations

- a. P.T.A.
- b. patriotic groups
- c. service clubs
- d. women's clubs
- e. youth organizations

3. Communications

- a. telegraph office
- b. telephone office
- c. newspaper office

4. Cultural

- a. churches, public buildings
- b. art studio
- c. bookstores
- d. newspaper and magazine stores
- e. public schools
- f. schools and colleges
- g. libraries

5. Governmental Agencies

- a. city or municipal hall
- b. local court house
- c. police department
- d. post office
- e. school supervisor's office

6. Health Service

- a. puericulture center
- b. hospitals
- c. health clinics

7. Historical Resources

- a. old landmarks
- b. printed documents and records
- c. local persons available as speakers
- d. memorial markers and buildings
- e. historical museum

8. Housing

- a. private homes
- b. public housing projects

9. Industries

- a. bakeries
- b. bottling plants

- c. factories
- d. farms
- e. public utilities, power and light

10. Labor

- a. headquarters labor organization
- b. regional offices Bureau of Labor

11. Nature

- a. aquariums
- b. birds
- c. farm animals
- d. florists shops
- e. insects
- f. plants
 - (1) land
 - (2) water
- g. public parks
- h. rivers, brooks
- i. rock formation, hills, mountains, etc.
- j. soil
- k. water fowl
- l. zoo

12. Public Welfare

- a. child welfare centers
- b. local Red Cross offices
- c. social welfare agencies

13. Recreation

- a. motion picture theater
- b. public park system
- c. public recreational activities
- d. private recreational activities

14. Transportation

- a. automobile service stations
- b. bus station
- c. garages
- d. harbors, docks, bridges
- e. railroad stations
- f. streets, traffic signs
- g. tourist services, trips to places of local interest

Concluding Statement

Utilizing community resources for learning is a good way of making learning significant to the child and of making his experiences meaningful and truly educative. It is the responsibility of both the classroom teacher and school administrator to seek ways and means of providing that kind of learning and those types of experiences to the end that they will contribute to the child's optimum growth and wholesome development.

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