

MISS MCCRACKEN GIVES ADDRESS BEFORE P.-T. A.

The following address was delivered before the March meeting of the Parent-Teachers association by Miss Dair McCracken, of the Murphy faculty:

The school is an institution for social efficiency and the one institution that reaches all persons regardless of race or age, or color, and at an impressionable age.

Because of changing social conditions the school is constantly being forced to assume a greater part of the training of youth each year. Therefore its aim must be high if the child is to be prepared for the activities which will make a well rounded adult as a contributing citizen. One of the major aims of the school should be to develop character growth.

The purpose of the school is to bring about desirable changes in conduct through wholesome and complete living of the higher type, and to develop an ability to adjust oneself satisfactorily to a constantly changing world. Recognizing that a great portion of the juvenile delinquency is directly or indirectly traceable to the nature of the school of their day, it becomes the business of the schools of today to better meet the needs of the children; to guide them so that they will live together, play together, work together in mutual helpfulness.

Ideals Are Set

The schools both consciously and unconsciously set standards of conduct, and ideals toward which the individual moves. Thus the function of the schools should be to guide and

to control the formation of habits and character of the individuals as well as to develop their capacities and powers for efficient citizenship. Not only the curriculum and the administration but also the school plant affects character growth, and all should be used to the best possible advantage.

The largest part of the teacher's day is devoted to the regular curriculum of the school. If there is going to be a growing emphasis upon character in the total school experience, then the first interest of the teacher should be to use the regular curriculum to secure character values. The majority of teachers have at least dared to hope that their pupils have found their total personality enriched as they have shared in the various units of the curriculum, and many of them have very definitely planned their classroom work with this aim in mind. English, social science, modern and classical languages—there is no department but what has attempted to take its place in the movement.

Outlines Activities

I shall mention four different trends which tend to make the daily activities of the teacher increasingly significant and productive of character values:

1. The center of interest is changing from subject matter to life, so that the curriculum is taking on great meaning for the pupil in relationship to his daily experiences and problems of adjustment.

2. Teachers are learning to utilize significant life interests and marginal problems not directly related to the course of study but which are brought into consciousness in the routine of teaching.

3. The methods of teaching are changing so that participation in classroom activities is becoming a significant social experience.

4. Teachers are learning to consider the conflicts and problem of conduct which arise in the classroom as teaching possibilities to be used rather than avoided.

Character is developed when boys and girls have an opportunity to cooperate with one another and with teachers in the initiation of their unit work, when they have an opportunity to execute plans which they themselves made, when they experience success and failure in their own plans. It is possible to develop character in almost any type of classroom activities which involves group cooperation in some enterprise, which gives the pupils practice in working together; practice in making decisions; practice in solving differences; and conflicts, practice in making adjustments to the interest of the group.

Describes Method

If a visitor should ask me what my method of character education was I should like to be able to answer this:

"You can see for yourself that these children are lawabiding; not through fear or compulsion, not as an act of submission, but through convictions and habits that are being born within happy cooperation with one another and their teacher. When a fault is committed, or a conflict occurs, they face their situation and study a way out. They are having the experience of guiding conduct by thought, and therefore of both making rules and obeying them. When a

job is undertaken they stick to it until either it is finished or a real reason arises for not finishing it. They are not governed by their whims; they even impose necessary drill upon themselves.

This or that child attains a position of leadership because his fellows believe he has merit. Here is a healthy public spirit here are rudimentary merit systems; here is a social unity, but along with it individual self expression. This is my character education; it should be within the whole school process—it is identical with the process.

I hardly think it necessary to give many illustrations of the method of teaching which give to the pupil this valuable form of experience. But since I am to discuss character training through cooperativeness I shall mention some of the avenues of approach: assemblies, athletics, clubs, student government, home organizations, the school library, the social studies, dramatics, school publications, and in our case, the county paper, music, other arts and literature.

Avenues Of Approach

(a) The assembly is the school's opportunity for integrating the life of the school, developing group consciousness, cultivating appreciation for music and drama, and standards of conduct and judging as well as emotional outlet for children.

(b) Athletics should be a student teacher development and include a large number of children, in fact all children should take part in some form of athletics every day. All children can't be basketball or football players but all children can play some game, and under the proper guidance will become fond of playing together. In playing games many situations will arise which will call for cooperation, self control, team work.

(c) Clubs widen and deepen the interest of the individual children, integrate life in the school, and help to relate school to leisure time activities.

(d) Student government should be a cooperative service of the students and faculty working together for the good of the school. The student council for such should be a relatively small group of members elected by students and representatives of all classes working together.

Cites Examples

Examples of activities: Daily inspection of building by a special committee, school grounds committee, Lunch room committee, Program committee, Health inspection committee and Social committee.

(e) The library furnishes valuable experience in reading, and the social life of the students.

The social studies contribute to character formation, because from these student gets the struggle of primitive man down to the present. A few well-patterned and why examples should be se-

lected for special study. Biography offers valuable examples.

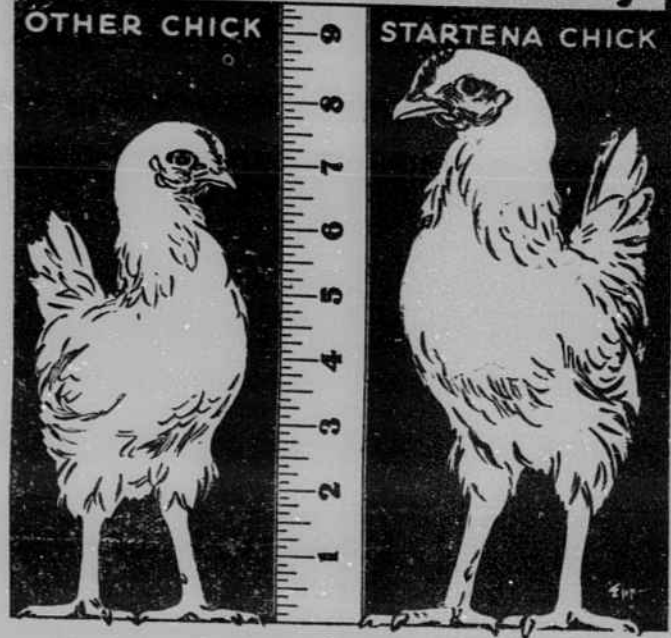
(g) Dramatics offers valuable training in character because: It enriches the curriculum for the bright pupil, stimulates those with less ability, provides profitable use of leisure time, creates sympathy for a wide variety of human types, trains in good manners and a knowledge of social customs and dramatizes to the pupil the conflict between right and wrong, and brings a realization of their consequences.

(h) School publications offer still another center of interest, and splendid opportunity for character formation, especially in ethics. Even if they are managed by a few students the whole school is generally represented in the publication.

(i) Music gives spirit of harmony and joy. There should be much group singing, and orchestra, and band if possible.

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