

Paper for The Fulton Co.
Pediatric Assn -

It gives me much pleasure to be with
you tonight because it seems to me, that since all phases of child
life are so closely related, that
school must really be only an extension of
your professional interests. Of course it is
not to be expected that a physician study in
detail the organization and character of
educational systems, but, exercising as
much influence as he does, it seems to educators,
most important that he know the
best development in theory and practice.
This paper that I am reading, presents
no original theory or plan but is
an organization, in brief, of my thoughts
and educational convictions. Quoting
the laconic words of an old author
when he was accused of plagiarism,
my comment is
"I have milked a hundred cows
but the butter is mine".

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From the "little red school house" and the "old field" school of early American days to the gigantic system that ^{Today} provides educational facilities for ^{over} millions of children, there has been an immense development. The early schools were the result of the principle of division of labor and, whereas the home provided the large part of real child education the little school directed by one who had most knowledge of books ^{in the community}, and probably least ability in other lines of endeavor, helped to give skill in the three R's as supplemental tools for intelligent living.

The rapid growth of our country, the rise of industrialism and the development of large cities created the need for providing school facilities for the enormous number of children to whom our democracy had pledged equal educational opportunity. Our public school system was the answer to the demand. For economy of time and money, its organization

provided for large groups to be directed by one teacher. It set up a plan of semi-militaristic control in which regular conformity, order were the watch words. Its goal was the acquisition of a set of academic skills and the accumulation of a selected body of information.

The curriculum was a mass of material accepted by tradition as necessary and desirable - unrelated for the most part to the interests or needs of a child, derived from the history, the science of the past. The textbook was the measure of the knowledge to be acquired. Assigned lessons, recitations, examinations, competitive marks were the tools of the technique. Promotion was the test of the children to learn, of the teacher to teach.

The passing years have brought into the schools improvement of various kind.

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for the organizers and administrators
have been intelligent and earnest men,
deeply concerned in the growth and
development of their schools - They
have secured great financial support.
They have reorganized and improved
administration. They have constructed
convenient and attractive buildings. They
have developed systems of teacher training.
They have eliminated a great deal of obso-
lete material and improved the textbooks.
They have studied and measured the
abilities and achievement of children.
They have given elemental skills to
a very large percent of our population,
and they have fitted many boys and
girls for entrance into college halls - In
their modern programs of hygiene, they
have improved the health standard &
the living habits of a countless
number of children.

Within the systems of these traditional schools, there have been thousands of teachers of sympathy and understanding who have touched many of their boys and girls to stimulate, and inspire. The immense system has been and is today a source of national pride -

Yet always there have been some students of child life; some educators who have been rebels against the system - They have felt that there was no design behind its construction, no philosophy beneath its practice - That, like Topsy, "it just grew".

These rebels, first against European systems, then against our own, waged a struggle for a new philosophy of education, a new basis for the theory of child-training, a

different point of view of the needs in living, a changed technique in the development of the schools.

Among the earliest dissenters in Europe there were Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel & Herbart. The early leaders in our own country who struggled for educational reform met ridicule and failure for their theories and defeat for their leadership: but the torch of reform, though burning dimly in those difficult days, was passed along - held aloft by leaders with the flaming conviction that there was more to education than the conventional schools were dreaming of.

In the past thirty years the leadership for educational reform has been with a group of brilliant psychologists and educators - chief among whom have been William James

Jones, Francis Parker, John Dewey and
Wm H. Kilpatrick - Of these John Dewey and
W. H. Kilpatrick today wear the mantle of
high priests of educational reform -

Contributing greatly to this movement
on its practical side - there has
been a large number of thoughtful laymen
who realized the inadequacy of the educational
status quo and the failure of the conventional
school to meet the needs of childhood;
who ~~gladly~~ offered their children for experimental
schools and who provided the money to
carry them on -

This movement for Educational
change is described in several ways -
Frequently it is called the new education
which is certainly inappropriate since it
is at least as old as Pestalozzi -
Perhaps it is best described as "child
centered education" - This name is, how-
ever, unsatisfactory to some of our leaders because
to them it is static in its implication

and so contradictory to the very spirit
of this education which is essentially
dynamic -

The name of tenet used is Progressive
Education. When a group of leaders in
1918 organized themselves for the advancement
of the movement, they called themselves
the Progressive Education association -
so that this name seems rather to have
official sanction. It is not a particularly
good characterization but what single
word could be? ² It could be defined
in a hundred terms of progress but
when it is used to describe a type
of school it means education that
is based on the study of the child as a
unique individual, of his needs for the
period of his daily living, and of the needs that
adult life may bring him and that
aims at the development of all his
powers.

The new educational philosophy bases its theory on the principle that ^{the} educational process means the functioning of all the child's powers, the integration of all his learning experiences and the growth of the whole child - Gradually evolved from this philosophy there have come certain convictions to which all progressive educators subscribe.

I like the analysis of these convictions made by Horace Rugg in his book "The Child-centered School" when he calls them our articles of faith.

First among them is freedom. Freedom is supposed to be the breath of life but tradition reserves it for an adult world - It is the essential spirit of democracy but American children are trained in the rigid autocracy of the conventional school.

Progressive education sets the body free - It releases children from fixed seats, it gives them freedom to move about, it frees them from oppressive silence and restraint, labored compulsion and the stringent coercion of the old order. Certainly it does not offer absolute freedom - For freedom without the compelling force of consideration for others is licence and unbridled licence is anarchy - Freedom in school as elsewhere means freedom to do what one will - provided that it does not interfere with the rights of others. Violation of this, in school as well as out, brings as its consequence, isolation and ostracism.

An instrument in the hands of children for the constructive use of this

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Freedom is the practice of self-government to which progressive schools commit, in a large measure, the regulation of school life. On the theory that one learns to control himself only by the practice of self-control and that, if one is to keep in the government of others, he needs practice in such administration, progressive schools abandon the autocratic procedure of the conventional school and rely largely on the children for the direction of plans and the solution of school problems.

Generally the governing agency is a school council or school committee in which a child is chairman - A teacher is a member of a committee to suggest or advise if it may some wise or necessary - not to dominate or direct.

Ultimate authority must be vested in the teacher for childhood needs and wants an authority in which it may rest and feel secure. Some situations are of course too delicate and too difficult in their moral and social aspects to be entrusted to the judgment of children.

An accident or two will show the attitude of children towards their responsibility in administrative affairs.

A ten year old chairman was holding his first committee meeting. He explained what he thought were the duties of his committee. A bright little chap, just from a public school, rose with a glint in his eye to say "Yeah, I know what we've got to do. We've got to make the rules. Then we'll watch the children and catch 'em and punish 'em". The chairman answered with some surprise - "Oh, we don't want to make a lot of rules. Every body's just break 'em

All we want to do is just to have it so the children won't get hurt and so we can have a good time at recess."

Another day it happened that there wasn't such a good time at recess. A group of children guilty of teasing a younger boy, were brought before the playground committee, this time with an eleven year old girl for its chairman. The committee was agreed that the children deserved rather severe punishment. One member suggested that the children be not allowed to serve on their committees for two weeks. The young chairman thought that penalty not severe enough and with flushed cheeks and a break in her voice she asked that her best friend and the other guilty children be suspended for four weeks from their committees. It was a poignant experience but the total absence

of resentment, evident in the children's attitudes towards each other, no proof that the procedure was just and wise.

Freedom in the school means much more than physical freedom and self government. It means release from deadening routine; freedom to think for himself, to differ from the teacher's opinion or the textbook or any authority, to express one's thoughts in a tolerant atmosphere, to develop one's special interests and aptitudes, to discuss ideas, to shoulder responsibility, to make decisions, to accept the consequences of decisions.

Growing from this freedom that progressive education gives to the initiative and activity of the child. A teacher ^{of my acquaintance} attended during her post vacation the summer school of the Progressive Education Assn. at Syracuse university.

Part of her time every day was given to observation and study of the different groups, from kindergarten to fifth grade that formed the demonstration school. Her notes are very suggestive.

The kindergarten group of 5-year-olds came without previous school experience. They were eager, spontaneous, ready to work with various materials available, full of ideas. "various" to go

With the other groups, from the first grade just out of the conventional kindergarten through all the grades which were made up of children from public school classes, there was an increasing lack of spontaneity, less and less interest in asking questions, in thinking or planning for themselves, more waiting for the teacher's stimulation.

and suggestions and directions.

In the older group there existed the common attitude of "putting things over" on the teacher, an unwillingness to cooperate and antagonism between boys and girls. Could six weeks of progressive education affect their attitudes? Of course the result of several years of inhibition and adult direction could ^{not} be cleared entirely away in so short a time but the observer's notes indicate that the growth in initiative, in independence, in cooperation and friendly fellowship were genuinely amazing.

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~~enlisted~~ ^{and stimulated} as a ~~powerful~~ educational force -

Perhaps the principle that is least understood in progressive education, least willingly accepted by the laymen is the belief in the child's interests and needs as a center around which the curriculum is organized -

In the traditional school - which includes the conventional school of today - the program is made up of school subjects - Its schedule allows for reading so many minutes, arithmetic so many more and so with history, geography, the arts &c through the day.

The new school organizes to work around a center of interest which pulses like a heart throbbing through most of the day's work.

This expression "center of interest" or as it is also called "a unit of work" means a large learning situation which draws upon many phases of experience and makes use of all kinds of subject matter.

To illustrate by the work of a single group: Ten year old children find fascination in the myths of early Greece, her hero legends, her literature and the history of those ancient days - so that Greece was chosen by this fifth grade as the subject for a period of six months work.

It held the children's deep interest. And what was developed from it in academic work - much independent reading in story, mythology, history, poetry was done. One grandmother was heard to remark that she spent a Sunday

morning reading European with her young grandson who belonged to this group - A great deal of history, geography and map work was accomplished. Written English of varying types was stimulated. Interest in certain Roman road to the children was so vivid that ~~that~~ the children adapted it and dramatized it for a guest assembly. They wrote the songs and choruses that they needed for their play.

Practical arithmetic was called for in the measurements for costumes and stage settings which the children made.

In addition to the work in school subjects that developed when the children needed it or wanted it, there were many occasions for industrial art including painting, drawing,

modeling, designing, dyeing, and simple carpentry.

Units of work are not always chosen from social studies as was this portion.

Sometimes every group has a job relating to the life of the school. A third grade may raise chickens, a sixth grade may run a school cafeteria, a fifth grade may have a school supply store.

Always there are secondary units - as for instance a school newspaper, an activity that is shared by all the groups, field trips and visits to local points of interest, a puppet show and plays for assembly programs & exhibits of various kinds. Although the organization of the school curriculum is centered around these units of work it is generally agreed that they do not furnish all the opportunity that is required for the attainment of certain standards of academic work. Therefore as much additional time as is needed is given to school subjects. But it is the purpose of the progressive school

to bring in the need for skill in such a dynamic way as to arouse a desire for it. Children are enormously interested in learning - The task of developing skill in arithmetic, in spelling, in oral or written language can in itself be of thrilling interest - Witness the six-year old who interrupted a general conversation on his second day of school to remark "I think we'd better get to work right away because I want to need the funny papers next Sunday" -

Inevitably, If freedom be given to children and their work be developed from their own needs and interests, their own initiative will surely enter in. ^{inevitable} Their activity will plan & propose, and ^{inevitable} their activity will follow. In a progressive school, learning is an active process and there is eliminated the passive pouring-in process. Pupils are on their feet, active, working, planning, assembling their materials in the library, or the school room, in shop

or out of doors, organizing and carrying out enterprises.

A young man who has frequent occasion to go into a progressive ^{school} said one day.

"When you come into this school you feel that the atmosphere is different from the other schools I know. The children look happy. They are busy at different things. You see them ^{working} in their rooms and you meet them in the halls. Always they seem to be at work, because they want to do the things and not because some one is making them". His conclusion ^{was} ~~was~~ ^{not} right that the children are happy in their learning because they were interested and active.

The richness of opportunity for individual choice of work in these centers of interests satisfies another demand of progressive education. These schools believe that every child has in himself ^{some} ~~some~~ ^{creative} ~~creative~~ ^{ability}.

some power of self expression - some ability to create - It may be with paint or clay, or hammer and saw; with music or the dance; with dramatic work or story or poem - Whatever be the medium, it is in the expression of these powers and frequently unsuspected abilities that there lies the chance for the greatest personal satisfaction.

Herein is offered also the opportunity to take care of and provide for that priceless asset of every generation - its gifted children - The ^{Hughes} conventional school undertakes to provide for the child of average ability - Special schools and institutions take care of the handicapped child - But the problem of adequate provision for our children of superior ability

and gifts seems provided for only ²³a
by the progressive school. In the
words of Hughes Mearns "The cultivation
of the creative spirit makes for great
artists, giant scholars and thinkers;
it is the recipe for distinction; The
story of the leaders of the race is the
story of those who cultivated the
creative spirit in spite of the schools.
The newer education is learning the
uses of the mysterious forces of the
spirit through which one may literally
educate oneself for all the important
needs of living."

There is no more important
problem in education than

that which concerns the development of personality and social adjustment.

This, to progressive educators, is the paramount problem of the school, in closest cooperation with the home and is inseparably interwoven with the activities and achievements of each day - Abolishment of competitive marking and emphasis on examinations and promotion has eliminated several difficult factors both physical and mental, but there remain always, shyness and aggressiveness, weakness and strength, security and insecurity, ability and underdevelopment and so many more elements that involve academic progress as well as personality development.

One experience of ~~the little boy~~ illustrates the relation between one little chap's slowness in arithmetic development and

his emotional instability -

Through his first two years of generally slow progress, he seemed to have no understanding of the simplest arithmetical facts. He was quite mature in judgment, very dependable in undertaking a responsibility, unusually sensitive and very critical of his own school achievement. His teachers believed that his feeling about this particular inability was responsible for various behavior difficulties. He was impatient, resentful, very unhappy, bullying, often spiteful, and planned to omit arithmetic unless he asked for it, to give him all possible opportunity to succeed in other things. They were thrilled at an unexpected development of creative ability and his work was exhibited to the school for recognition & praise. But nothing permanently cleared the cloud from his eyes or the constant threat of storm.

Then come his third school year and with it, almost out of a clear sky, appeared the boy's ability to handle numbers as the other children did. Then followed such an emotional relief and social adjustment as makes a teacher's highest joy - the experience that was looked for, waited for and believed in for nearly three years.

Thus, as briefly as possible, I have tried to explain the theory of Progressive Education. There is, however, besides the inherent nature of children another factor that must enter into any educative process. That is the intricate composite of institutions which make the civilization of which the child is himself a part.

A sound theory of education must understand and provide for both factors - In our earlier days when there was little change in the conditions of life from one generation to another - when, as Christopher Morley said "we don't know we were a generation;" it was easier to justify the acceptance of the traditional in material and method. But in the last three decades, science has produced such changes as civilization has not before experienced. We have broken out tradition and the authority of the past, Our institutions, economic, political, social are unstable and world-wide

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evolution is in a state of
flux - This condition is the
heritage of our children. To them
will be committed the problems
we have not solved and many
that we cannot foresee.

Progressive education recog-
nizes the challenge of these
conditions and accepts its
responsibility to help meet
them. It believes that there
are two ways in which it
can help fit the child for life
in this changing world; on ^{the one hand} ~~the one~~ by
providing for the maximum
of individual development; on the
other by helping him to under-
stand his environment and
to adjust himself to its demands.

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Specifically its aims are to give him a mastery of the skills that are needed for intelligent living. to provide opportunity for drawing out to the fullest his creative capacities, to teach him to think for himself, to recognize a problem and "think it through" to develop his judgment, to teach him to decide for himself, to accept responsibility, to control himself, to plan and cooperate with his fellows, and to provide opportunities for drawing out to the fullest his creative capacities.

These intangible and immeasurable things which are the chief goal of Progressive education are subtle values, ~~not~~ easily demonstrable.

demonstrable.

It is difficult to interpret these
 their quality to those who have
 so long described educational goals
 in percentages. It is easy to
 measure achievement in reading,
 writing or arithmetic. But who
 is able to measure the love
 of reading? Who shall put a
rule to the growth of personality?
 As well try to "corral a comet"
 as to attempt to measure
 the human spirit.

The movement for Progressive
 Education is young - Throughout
 our country the old education
 still prevails but the leaven
 of reform is at work today with
 power through the spheres
 of all countries.

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Progressive education knows that there is yet much to learn but it is eager and open-minded and keeps its eyes always on the child. Its ideal is that he shall be, in relation to his school, "Like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth his fruit in his season"

In September of this year for the first time Bennington College in Vermont opened its doors to eighty freshmen. This was a unique and notable event for Bennington is the first institution that has "translated" into the college field the spirit and methods which in lower schools are identified by the term progressive. Progressive Education looks to the day when its philosophy will underlie the theory and practice of all schools from kindergarten to college - from the poorest country school to the wealthiest university of the land.