

*curriculum*

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL FOR THE SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE CHILD

Educators have begun to realize that physical development and social adjustment are as important phases in the training of young children as curriculum teaching. The progressive schools even place social adjustment above all else. This is justifiable, and is coming to be the practice in all schools.

What is social maladjustment? What are its causes, and what can the school do to remedy such a situation?

A child is poorly adjusted to his group if he does not feel at ease within the group, if he does not have a sense of security, of "belonging". Poor social adjustment isolates the individual and emphasizes his individuality rather than his experiences common to the group. The badly adjusted child may feel himself inferior for some reason, and have actual fear of the group or certain members within it. He may suffer embarrassment from the ridicule of the group, be afraid to express himself before others, or actually turn antagonistic. A sense of inferiority sometimes makes the child entirely reticent and self-effacing, or it may make him abnormally aggressive and hostile to the group. In the latter case, the child may pick quarrels and start fights. In either case he does not enter into the harmonious functioning of the group in work or in play. Poor adjustment sometimes comes, on the other hand, from a sense of superiority. In every group there is likely to be a bully, or a snob, or both. These because of age, size, or ability, or perhaps family background or wealth feel themselves above the others in the group. This type of complex leads the child to isolate himself from the group, feeling that he is exclusive and better than the others, or to dominate the group and give orders to others. Either reaction is equally unsocial.

The causes of poor social adjustment are many and varied. Some of the more common are: physical handicaps, lameness, deafness, lack of strength, lack of good muscular coordination, speech defects; mental weaknesses; physical unattractiveness; awkwardness; undesirable personality traits-dishonesty, bad temper, unfriendliness etc.; foreign parentage; regional differences in speech, customs etc.; social class differences; differences in wealth; improper clothing; lack of advantages; poor home training; poor health; over indulgence in attention or money; too rapid advancement for age; too rapid or too slow physical growth. Home training and background perhaps has more to do with the social adjustment of the child than any other factor.

There is a great deal that the school can do to insure good social adjustment for all pupils, and it is the vital responsibility of the school to assume this task. Informal recitations do a great deal to help pupils who are timid and afraid to express themselves. The new type of curriculum with contract assignments and group work develops individual responsibility and gives self confidence and poise to pupils. Each child should be carefully analyzed by the teacher and a record kept of his history through school with notations of physical or social handicaps and improvements made from time to time. If special exercises are required, these should be adapted to develop the physically handicapped child to the highest degree possible. The outside curricula should furnish an outlet for all pupils, not for the few outstanding students, the best athletes, or the most aggressive members of the group. Debating, dramatics, sports, public speaking, clubs etc. should not only be open to all students, but the backward and more timid should be coaxed into participation. Playground supervision should include participation in games and group play for all pupils. The teacher can facilitate the making of friends among timid pupils, and can do much to develop a poorly adjusted child by her own friendship and well planned praise and encouragement. Contacts with the home are absolutely indispensable in order to insure good adjustment of the child. Where home conditions can be improved by suggestions from the teacher this should be done, and where social work from other agencies than the school is necessary the case should be reported to the proper authorities. Records of home conditions should be kept, and the teacher should attempt to counterbalance bad home influences where they exist by a rigid program of school training. For example, if a child is not receiving the proper training in good manners, the teacher must attempt to overcome the bad manners already developed and supplement with desirable habits of conduct. If a child is over age and rather slow mentally for his age, he should not be kept in a grade where the children are all younger; he should be allowed to progress with the group of his age where he can make the best progress.

of which he is capable. The social handicap will outweigh the disadvantage of being in a group where the work is slightly too advanced; there will be more incentive to learn in this group than in one where he is badly adjusted. Children who are naturally inclined to be followers should be encouraged in initiative, and those who are too inclined to dominate should be held back a little by tactful action on the part of the teacher.

The fundamental principle in social adjustment is for the teacher to see that the individual is a worthwhile member of society only as he is well adjusted to the groups in which he will have to live--the home, the church, the school, the community, and later on the business world and his immediate office. A child's individual worth is determined by his contribution to the groups of which he is a part. If a child has not learned to contribute to the group it is largely the fault of the school that has failed to provide opportunities for self-expression. The causes may have been physical handicaps and bad home environment, but these can be overcome by good school environment if the teacher is willing to assume the responsibility.

The above material was secured from the Research Bureau in Richmond and serves as a summary for countywide problems on upper grade level.

The reports of individual teachers will be available for inspection at the office.

(Mrs.) Mary Hutcon  
(Miss) Mildred Orrison  
(Miss) Dorothy Rollins, Chairman