

YOUTH EDUCATION TODAY



SIXTEENTH YEARBOOK



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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

A DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES
(formerly the Department of Superintendence)

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CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Foreword | 5 |
| CHAPTER | |
| I. A Preview | 9 |
| II. Youth Today | 24 |
| III. The Dynamic and Life-Centered Curriculum | 56 |
| IV. Personal Relationships | 79 |
| V. Creative Citizenship | 112 |
| VI. Education for Leisure | 139 |
| VII. The Adjustment and Guidance of Pupils in the Regular Day Schools | 169 |
| VIII. The School's Responsibility for the Adjustment and Guidance of Out-of-School Youth | 206 |
| IX. Leadership of Youth | 232 |
| X. Youth Organizations | 258 |
| XI. Unifying and Coordinating the Influences Affecting Youth | 281 |

APPENDIX

| | |
|--|-----|
| A. Text of Suggested Law for Community Centers | 309 |
| B. National Private and Governmental Organizations with Leisure-Time Services for Youth | 310 |
| C. Guidance Services for School Youth | 325 |
| D. Guidance Services for Out-of-School Youth | 331 |
| E. Youth-Adult Conferences | 336 |
| F. Purposes and Activities of Youth-Serving Organizations .. | 348 |

OFFICIAL RECORDS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Report of Executive Secretary | 361 |
| Constitution and Bylaws | 393 |
| Calendar of Meetings | 399 |
| Members of the American Association of School Administrators | 402 |
| Index of Persons | 503 |
| Subject Index | 505 |

GREETING HIS PUPILS, the master asked:

What would you learn of me?

And the reply came:

How shall we care for our bodies?

How shall we rear our children?

How shall we work together?

How shall we live with our fellowmen?

How shall we play?

For what ends shall we live? . . .

And the teacher pondered these words, and sorrow was in his heart, for his own learning touched not these things.

—*George S. Counts and J. Crosby Chapman in "Principles of Education"*

It is fit for serene days, and graceful gifts, and country rambles, but also for rough roads, and hard fare, shipwreck, poverty, and persecution.—Emerson's essay, "Friendship."

*Photograph by
Underwood and Underwood*



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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

The Commission on Youth Problems

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Foreword

WHERE has there ever been a civilization freed from the problems of youth? The story of the human race consists in no small part of the history of the efforts of the young to find places in the adult world. The obstacles have changed with every age, the goals have varied with the particular society—but the essential problem has remained the same. Nations and individuals have always had their growing pains.

One of the primary purposes of public education in America has been to help youth to find their places in our social and economic order. In a slowly developing agricultural culture this was a comparatively easy task. Industrialization, however, accelerated the speed of change and precipitated problems of extreme poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. Keeping pace was not an easy task for education. The situation became critical with the depression. Insecurity and lack of opportunity began to shackle youth as well as many of their elders. America became acutely aware of its “problems” of youth.

At its Cleveland convention in 1934, the Department of Superintendence took action with a view to coping with these conditions. At this time the Civilian Conservation Corps was in its formative stages and more than a year lay ahead before the National Youth Administration would be created. Few public or private agencies had taken a national outlook on the crisis. In the summer of 1934, Superintendent E. E. Oberholtzer, who was then president of the Department, called a conference of educational leaders in New York. The consensus of this group was that the Department should appoint a commission to outline a forward-looking program for the next decade; no hasty review of conditions could be considered constructive.

As an outcome of the New York conference, the Executive Committee of the Department of Superintendence continued to give active consideration to questions relating to the education and occupational adjustment of young people. At its Denver meeting, in July 1935, the Executive Committee voted to devote the 1938 yearbook to the study of youth problems. President A. J. Stoddard appointed the five original members of the Commission. Additional appointments were made later by his successor, Superintendent A. L. Threlkeld. At a meeting held in May 1936, at Washington, the Commis-

sion outlined the work and formulated policies. Three other meetings were held during 1936 and 1937 to review manuscripts and to plan the next steps. Revised chapters were circulated among members of the Commission for further criticism. The final report therefore represents the judgment of the entire Commission.

The present volume is not a commentary on the existing economic order. It sponsors no utopian policies or practises. It does review the facts and suggest the next steps, particularly those to be taken by educators. Many superintendents will find here suggestions which are already in operation in their own school systems. All will find new vistas and new challenges yet to be put into effective practise. Thruout the report there runs an optimistic note, a single hopeful theme but in no sense a completed pattern of melody. Educational leaders of each school system will need to blend the proposals into harmony with the needs of youth in their own communities.

So large a number of persons have assisted the Commission in preparing this yearbook that it is impractical to make specific acknowledgment to each one. Superintendents of schools, principals of high schools, and classroom teachers helped to circulate inquiry blanks among the youth in their school systems. Many young people supplied information thru questionnaires and thru interviews. Lay leaders and officials of various youth-serving groups have given freely of the resources at their disposal. To all these, the Commission wishes to express its sincere appreciation. Without this cooperation the yearbook would have been less realistic and informing.

For special assistance with Chapters VI and XI, the Commission has acknowledged in footnotes its indebtedness to experts in certain areas. Citations and references to published works have also been made thruout the yearbook. Many contributions have been listed not only to give proper credit but to suggest to readers other sources of practical and useful information. Special acknowledgment is made to the staff in Washington for successfully executing many of the responsibilities associated with the preparation of a volume of this character. S. D. Shankland, Executive Secretary of the American Association of School Administrators, not only efficiently handled the business details of the work but participated helpfully in all deliberations. Upon Frank W. Hubbard, Associate Director of Research of the National Education Association, fell the responsibility of collecting the statistical evidence, the coordination of the activities of the Commission, the preparation of basic materials, and the editing of the report for publication.

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Foreword | 5 |
| CHAPTER | |
| I. A Preview | 9 |
| II. Youth Today | 24 |
| III. The Dynamic and Life-Centered Curriculum | 56 |
| IV. Personal Relationships | 79 |
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| | |
|--|-----|
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—George S. Counts and J. Crosby Chapman in "*Principles of Education*"

CHAPTER I

A Preview

WE SHALL EXAMINE YOUTH in the social scene of today. We shall search for both the inner incentives and the social stimuli which affect daily activities. We shall examine the routes open toward the longed-for goals of growth, development, and achievement. From these bearings, we may help youth to chart a propitious course toward individual opportunity and social service.

The Realities of the Social Scene

From every quarter come conflicting reports as to the state of mind of the presentday youth of America. On the one hand, we are told that young people are courageous, optimistic, facing adverse conditions with chins up and a smile on their lips; that, in their healthy outlook on life and their acceptance of whatever may come to them, they represent a tremendous advance over the youth of the past; that they are independent, determined to make their own way in the world, accepting subsidies from no one.

On the other hand, we are told that the strongest indictment against the present economic system, with its booms and subsequent depressions, is what it has done to the youth of the land. It is said that most young people are discouraged, sick of pounding pavements in their search for employment, and all too ready to rely upon parental or government doles; that youth, from reading of the dishonorable methods by which certain exploiters have amassed wealth (with impunity!), have become cynical and are deterred from a career of racketeering only by fear and coercion; that youth have been either ignored by the present economic system, or exploited and then discarded.

Neither of these extremes accurately describes the majority of young people. Some are undoubtedly embittered while others are optimistic; some are well along the road to financial independence while others are recipients of charity. For the vast majority of youth the economic aspects of American life are not always constructive. Too frequently the prevailing slogan is "Nothing to hinder business," regardless of the effect upon the unformed character of youth. There have been instances where "more business" has justified the establish-

ment of profit-making forms of gambling. Let youth take their chances! When machines began to replace skilled workmen, youth rather than their elders were employed. Youthful vigor at low wages made for greater profits. When age slows down their production they are discarded, uneducated, unskilled, no longer young enough to learn a new trade, simply the debris of the drive for profits.

Many young people today, like their elders in their youth, act as if theirs is the last generation. For them Aristotle thought and Chaucer wrote; for them Bell and Marconi invented and Beethoven composed. They seem to assume that past generations strove, saved, and deprived themselves in order that youth might have all the advantages enjoyed today. Many young people need to be taught that they owe something to future generations. This human frailty of individuals should not condemn the entire generation.

Given a chance, a vast majority of the youth of America will find their proper role. Young people today have made tremendous advances over the youth of the past. They think more keenly, they are not easily fooled by the old platitudes, the old slogans, the hokum of commercial advertisements, and political speeches. They see thru shams and have the courage to expose them. Instead of giving blind adherence to one political party or the other, they refuse to believe that one aspirant for public office will cut government expenses in half, or that another will repudiate all those politicians who seek only their own advantage. The youth of today will not be satisfied with promises; even as high-school graduates, they are harder to satisfy than their fathers have been.

A General Program for Society and Youth

The American people should not think of youth as a group to be ignored, or as assets to be exploited, or as children to be pampered and indulged. The proper treatment of youth is a most important question for society to decide. It is not a problem solely for individual parents and schoolmasters. Any civilization that fails to conserve its human resources, particularly its children and its youth, is contributing to its own destruction.

America must plan to absorb its youth. There must be opportunities for young people to earn a decent living and to make provision for wholesome recreation. Youth should have the chance to make their own choices. We must not continue our haphazard economic and

social organization, with its alternating panics and booms and its dreadful waste in human lives. Thoughtful men everywhere realize that it is unthinkable to allow the few to exploit the many, thereby creating industrial wrecks and throwing aside jetsam that has to be cared for by society in general.

We are moving toward an ordered, better-planned society. In pioneer days a family needed only the things it could provide for itself. Today our wants have so multiplied that we must trade with every quarter of the globe. The price paid for this interdependence is the sacrifice, in some measure, of our independence. We are not willing to live as the pioneers did; therefore, we must live in part for the rest of the world.

Society must organize for greater cooperation. There must be a nationwide effort to eliminate ignorance and squalid conditions surrounding the upbringing of youth. If our youth are to preserve the fundamental principles of a progressing democracy, they must be convinced that they are living in a society which has their true welfare at heart, and that they will not be exploited in the interest of the comfort and wealth of their elders.

The schools and contributing social agencies must continuously emphasize the responsibility of society to its youth, to the end that young people shall truly have the right to earn a living, and shall be protected against those selfish interests which would ignore them or exploit them. On the other hand, youth must be taught to use the opportunities afforded by society for constructive work in the interest of general welfare thru the practise of active citizenship and participation in an evolving democratic society. To these ends is submitted the "Declaration of Interdependence" for youth and society as printed on pages 12 and 13.

Using this suggested compact between youth and society as a philosophical approach, the Commission has organized its study of youth on the basis of certain searching inquiries, investigations, field studies, and other authentic sources of information which could be obtained within the limitations of time and finance available. The Commission believes that the study will awaken public interest in the welfare of youth and will stimulate educational leaders to reexamine and reorganize cooperatively for more effective work among the agencies that contribute to the upbuilding of youth. More especially will the study serve as a handbook for guidance of the educational leaders

DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE

A suggested compact between *YOUTH* and *SOCIETY* in the interest of the general welfare of the people of the United States of America.

*SOCIETY is to provide
opportunities for*

I. Growth under living conditions which consistently and continuously provide for normal physical and mental development; adequate medical service; a social environment in which youth is spared unnecessary stresses and strains caused by domestic unhappiness, poverty, crime, political corruption, and community conflicts.

II. Guidance toward wholesome personal satisfactions and social usefulness; training needed for the particular job; assured opportunity for employment, guaranteeing the economic security which will enable youth to live happily, to support a family, and to face without anxiety the financial exigencies of life.

*YOUTH is to assume
responsibility for*

I. Helping to plan and to execute a program of healthful living and worthy endeavor; the conservation and improvement of the home that has nurtured him, the schools that have sponsored his education, and the community, the state, and the nation that have fostered and protected his growth.

II. Conscientious use of the opportunities offered by society for guidance and training; determined efforts to make good on the job; the practise of personal foresight, but at the same time, constructive work for the welfare of the group, avoidance of unnecessary waste and of exploitation of others.

III. Competent leadership during the years of growth; assurance of contacts with the leaders of thought and action; training in the technics and obligations of leadership.

IV. Self-expression thru recreation and companionships; acquaintance with nature, science, philosophical, and religious thought.

V. Freedom of thought and action—including freedom of speech, a free press, and the right to free assembly; protection from misleading propaganda by ready access to the sources of truth and by training in straight thinking.

VI. Participation in the affairs of a democratic state; active promotion of individual and social justice; realistic approaches to the establishment of the ideal of a world at peace.

III. Acceptance of the services of those competent to lead; increasing exercise of initiative and acceptance of responsibility in accordance with capacities.

IV. Development of individual talents; the pursuit of worthwhile leisure activities; and appreciation of the racial inheritance.

V. A steadfast determination to think for himself, to uphold that which is good, to respect the opinions of others, to act with the courage of a free man, and to share the truth with others.

VI. Acceptance of the privileges and obligations of citizenship in an ever-advancing society; loyalty to basic values of democracy; courageous activity in promoting goodwill.

YOUTH and *SOCIETY* do enter into this compact to work cooperatively for the realization of the foregoing ideals to the end that, thru the opportunities and responsibilities afforded *YOUTH*, democratic ideals may be perfected and perpetuated in the United States of America.



who bear the responsibility of promoting and directing the schools of our nation.

Summary of the Suggestions of the Commission

This yearbook presents the discussions and findings of the Commission as a composite of its efforts—the result of both individual and group participation. The reader should find, therefore, in the several chapters the best thought and suggestions which the Commission has been able to produce.

The Status of Youth Today

Chapter II gives a cross-section of the status of youth, verified by certain objective data and findings. It helps to answer such questions as: Who are the youth? How many are there? How are they distributed with respect to age, nativity, sex, and marital status? How are youth occupied? Under what environmental conditions do they strive and live? In what way do poverty and plenty influence the lives of our youth group? How is society aiding youth to find their places in the field of work? What are the youth problems as seen from the viewpoint of the youth themselves? Some of these questions may be answered by a study of the complexity of social and economic conditions of the present day. The schools as agencies for helping to educate youth must face critically these issues, in order that social and economic turmoil and other frustrations of the highest adjustments in life may increasingly vanish under intelligent planning and guidance.

A Dynamic Life-Centered Curriculum

Chapter III is written for the educational leaders who believe that youth are entitled to have a school life in which worthwhile experiences are centered in the actual problems and opportunities of modern life. The dynamic and life-centered curriculum should help to harmonize youth's educational development with his fundamental needs and interests, with his social environment, and with his whole life career. Six organizing principles are used as criteria for setting up this curriculum. These principles are highly interrelated, each working best when properly balanced and integrated with the other five. These principles are as follows:

- (1) *Individuation*—the development of the individual in harmony with his fundamental needs and best interests.