

# **PATHS TO BETTER SCHOOLS**



*Frontispiece by*  
*Rebecca Snyder, Washington, D. C.*

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★ *On far-flung battle fronts men by the millions have faced death and many have died with the faith that somehow we would do a better job in the future, that a way would be found to give their younger brothers and sisters and their unseen children the equal chance.*

# PATHS TO BETTER SCHOOLS



TWENTY-THIRD YEARBOOK



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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## FOREWORD

*Experience seems to be like the shining of a bright lantern. It suddenly makes clear in the mind what was already there, perhaps, but dim.*—Walter de la Mare.

As the end of World War I approached, both laymen and educators reviewed the lessons of the period and vowed that the future would be better. We promised ourselves that good citizenship should be an educational goal toward which we would strive with new energy. The physical defects found too frequently among young men of military age should never again deprive us of needed manpower. The hates and fears of international and intercultural conflicts were to be banished by enlightened world cooperation. Yes, indeed—in politics, home life, and schools we would be better citizens, better parents, and better teachers.

In the next two decades we made good on some of our vows. Opportunities for culture and social understanding increased. Schools made significant contributions, notably in such areas as education for family life, safety, physical fitness, work experience, community service, and civic responsibility. Government extended the range of its activities with respect to slums, health, social security, and employment. In terms of total national expenditures and emphasis upon the unusual, the record was good.

But too frequently we generalized on the basis of the best. We assumed from the newspaper headlines of athletic prowess that every American was physically fit. The miracles of medicine diverted us from the fact that thousands lacked either the financial ability or the incentive to prevent or correct their physical defects. Millions of children were permitted to attend obsolete schools—poorly equipped and presided over by inexperienced, untrained, and inadequately paid teachers. Other millions had little or no opportunity for education, health services, recreation, or civic preparation. Even where schools were first-class in every respect, the buildings remained dark at night and on week-ends. Thus we missed golden opportunities for developing community unity thru adult activities. Many of these failures were impeded further by conflicts among public agencies at all levels and between levels—local, state, and national.

The day of reckoning came with World War II. By heroic effort

we have overcome our disadvantages and struggled thru to the point where democracy more than meets the challenge of dictatorship. Yet our consciences are not clear. We are inclined to agree with Carlyle that "experience is the best of schoolmasters, only the school-fee is heavy." By tremendous expenditures we have bought our way out of the slough of indifference and carelessness of the 1920's and 1930's.

Is experience the best teacher? The answer will be given by what we do in the next decade. Perhaps if we consider now the defects and failures of the past, we shall indeed find the paths to a better future. This planning we need particularly in the field of education. It is not enough to expect educators to plot the course. Schools eventually are what the people as a whole want them to be. Thru membership on boards of education, participation in parent-teacher groups, activity in civic-minded organizations, and the ballot cast by forward-looking citizens—the schools can be made as effective as the American people want them to be.

No one will find any easy paths to better schools. Planning requires thinking, and thinking is an exhausting kind of work. Planning also must be based upon facts—either of the "rule of thumb" variety or those obtained by careful investigation. Planning must be followed by action. Action takes time, money, and qualified people both in its policy-making and administrative phases. After action comes evaluation and the willingness to change and improve in the light of progress.

The present yearbook is offered as a help to those who are seeking paths to better schools. It sets up no final list of goals, no infallible collection of procedures, no guarantee of success. Much of the content will not be new to those who have made the greatest strides in educational development. It should help many laymen and educators, however, to see more clearly "what was already there, perhaps, but dim."

The Yearbook Commission was appointed originally in 1942 by President Homer W. Anderson. Many wartime handicaps had to be met and overcome. Thru several meetings and at considerable individual sacrifice the Commission prepared and reviewed manuscripts. The present report represents the point of view of the Commission as a whole.

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IT IS FOR US, THE LIVING, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.—  
*Abraham Lincoln.*

## It Is for Us, the Living

FOR SEVERAL HOURS the Yearbook Commission had been engrossed in discussion. No one had noticed when the stranger slipped into an empty seat near the chairman. The stranger listened to the discussion, his chin resting on one hand, his eyes wandering around the table as each commission member spoke. The chairman finally noticed the stranger.

*Goslin:* "May I interrupt the Commission a minute? We seem to have a visitor. May I ask who you are and why we are honored with this visit?"

*Stranger:* "Well, it's a little difficult to explain. I'm just Mr. Skeptic—possibly a future skeptical reader of your yearbook. Would you mind now if I join in the discussion?"

*Goslin:* "Why not? But first let me warn you that our very competent reporter, Miss Beryl Evans, will take down every word. With that in mind, fire away!"

*Stranger:* "Whether 'on the record' or 'off the record,' I'm ready. Now my first question is, whom do you expect to read this document and what do you expect him to do about it?"

*Shankland:* "Mr. Chairman, may I take a crack at that one? Stranger, this yearbook will be read by superintendents of schools, board members, principals, and committees of teachers. Many of them will consider it 'gospel,' so it has to be as good as we can make it."

*Stranger:* "I shudder at your use of the word 'gospel' for I have seen much gospel that is read but not followed. What reason do you have for thinking that your readers will do anything about what you have written?"

*Shankland:* "We know that previous yearbooks have affected school practices. This one should also. Many superintendents are looking for suggestions on educational improvements that should be made after the war. They can't dig far in this yearbook without finding ideas that will keep them busy for some time to come. More than that, there are many suggestions here for principals and classroom teachers."

*Simpson*: "Don't forget, Shankland, that we expect parents and other laymen to read this volume. Many of them have ideas, too, as to necessary changes in education. Let's not overlook that."

*Stranger*: "I suppose you refer to 'the people.' I was under the impression that most people take the schools for granted, very much as they expect water to flow from the kitchen spigot. Of course, if the water doesn't flow, or if it is rusty or too bitter, they may squawk, but are they really much concerned about its quality or where it comes from?"

*Edwards*: "It seems to me that the people will be concerned about education and many related problems after this war. Someone has said that this is a 'people's war'; I think it is going to be a 'people's peace.' "

*Stranger*: "Assuming that you're right, what do you think are some of the educational problems that the people will be concerned about?"

*Edwards*: "Well, for one thing, this nation can't tolerate the educational inequalities that exist. There are too many children who are not getting a fair share of schooling. Giving them these opportunities is not only a matter of simple justice; it is really a question of whether or not democracy is to survive among us. But providing a minimum program for all is not enough—before the present war half of the youth of the nation were growing up in homes with an annual income of less than \$1000. As a consequence, many found themselves unable to take full advantage of the educational facilities their communities offered."

*Landis*: "The people are going to ask for a school program that is a lot more realistic in terms of community problems. Grownups are going to want to use school buildings for conferences, forums, study, and recreation. Thru these means they are going to keep up their interest in many social and economic issues. Our schools must become real community schools."

*Nash*: "They're going to expect their children to be organically and emotionally fit in order to cope with peacetime problems. A lot of folks have been shocked by the draft statistics of physical rejections. They're going to demand a program that really works—right from the first physical examination thru the corrective and developmental programs to a high level of fitness. We need fitness for the

tough problems of peace as well as those of the war period. We have been doing too much talking—and to the wrong people.”

*Falk*: “Also I’m sure we would agree that our teaching of citizenship must be improved. I don’t mean to say we haven’t done a good job on the whole. Anyone who doubts it can take a look at what our boys are doing in the armed forces. At the same time, we must do more to build a strong devotion to America’s goals and ways of doing things as well as an understanding of America’s role in a world society. Only thru the development of the capacity of working and living with others can we expect democratic and effective citizenship.”

*Stranger*: “Here now—wait a minute! You have mentioned educational opportunity, community schools, physical fitness, and citizenship, but what about work, earning a living? You know that the devil still finds mischief for idle hands to do.”

*Cressman*: “I have something to say on that. We’re suggesting that a complete education must include work experience. There must be a chance for more people to learn to be efficient economically. To do that will take a broader and better integrated program of vocational education.”

*Stranger*: “Well, you have covered most of the major areas—I might be so impolite as to say ‘some of the areas where the schools have been criticized recently.’ But you have been talking about program; what about teaching methods? I understand the Army has been showing you up.”

*Banks*: “We excuse your impoliteness and your inaccuracy. We agree that the military educational authorities have done a swell job. Let’s not forget, however, that the Army and Navy have used many civilian teachers, teaching a very definite, limited set of skills, with a life-or-death motivation, and rightly with unlimited funds to spend on teaching aids. We’re taking a look at all of that and will profit much, we hope. At the same time we shall continue to work out other promising methods, many of which we have known for years altho we lacked the funds to put them into operation.”

*Stranger*: “Ah—but it has been said that ‘money is the root of all evil.’ Why is it that teachers always come around to asking for more money?”

*Joyal*: "I guess the reason is because most worthwhile things in life aren't free. You probably know we have spent a lot of money on this war—and rightly so—in order to preserve our American way of life. It seems equally important to us to spend at least a fraction of our war expenditures to improve and to enrich life in peacetimes. The American people can afford to pay for what they really want. We think that they want an educational program which will help each individual to bring his capacities to the service of mankind."

*Stranger* (reaching for one of Shankland's cigars and smelling it cautiously): "You said quite a piece for a young man. I suppose you think that you and all the rest of the educators are qualified to swing the deal?"

*Goslin*: "For a chairman I have kept rather quiet. Apparently you and—if you will pardon me—a lot of folks like you have the idea that teachers think that they possess super-wisdom and a set of final blueprints. That is not true. We say in this yearbook that the American people deserve a lot better teachers. We want the best minds to go into teaching. All of us now in harness can and will do a better job. At the same time the American people are going to have to put a higher premium on teaching as a career. That means recognition of the teacher's importance in building a better America. It means decent salaries, a chance to participate in making and carrying out our educational plans; it means. . ."

*Stranger*: "You mean that teachers are people? You suggest that they want a chance to do an important job well and to have a fair share of the satisfactions all Americans expect to get from useful work. It's a good theory but can it be attained in this world? After all, you work within a social framework with its many human limitations."

*Grace*: "Part of the framework that you are talking about is the organization of local school districts, the relationships between school districts and local government, and how both types of local agencies get along with the state government. We recognize many problems in these areas. The solution lies first in the recognition by people of the unique role of the school district as an agency of the state. In the second place, the solution requires trained and skilful leadership on both the state and local levels."

*Simpson*: "But don't stop there, Grace. There is the federal

government's role in education that cannot be overlooked. Education is a function of the states and we are sure the American people do not want their schools run from Washington. Yet the nation as a whole must have educated citizens. To do this the federal government must help education by the efficiency of its relationships with the states, by the extension of federal grants of money, and by the quality of its educational leadership."

*Stranger*: "Now you're getting near to something that will crack up your unity. How about federal control?"

*Simpson*: "There is some federal control in almost every aspect of American life. How could it be otherwise in our form of social organization? The real question is, 'What *kind* of federal control is education to have?' Thru proper legislation and organization at the federal level we can have federal participation of a constructive type."

*Stranger*: "So you would sell your souls for a mess of pottage? Well, it has been done before."

*Grace*: "Our souls are already sold if 'federal aid' means selling out. Since the early days of the Republic there has been federal aid. Right now in dozens of ways the national government is supplying money and influencing public education. We want the federal program systematized and placed in professional hands. And I repeat—if we develop strong local and state leadership, we shall not need to worry about any adverse effects of federal control."

*Stranger* (turning toward Hubbard): "Your face is familiar. Haven't I seen you in Washington, D. C.?"

*Hubbard*: "I have lived there a number of years. Just where were you working?"

*Stranger*: "Never mind that. Mr. Chairman, this discussion has been a painful experience, but I still think all of you have avoided one of my first questions. I repeat, who is going to do something about your bright ideas?"

*Banks*: "The classroom teachers in their schools and communities and thru professional associations."

*Goslin*: "The school administrators in their official and civic capacities."



• *Landis*: "The boards of education, parent-teacher associations, and other local groups."

*Grace*: "The state departments of education, governors, and state legislatures."

*Simpson*: "The Congress of the United States, the U. S. Office of Education, and all interested federal agencies."

*Joyal*: "The taxpayers, including the parents who give their children opportunities thru the taxes they pay for education."

*Cressman*: "The business and labor groups, who are coming to realize that without more and better education America cannot meet the economic challenge of Russia, China, and other emerging countries."

*Falk*: "The youth in our schools who are now learning the ways of democracy."

*Nash*: "The generations yet unborn—the healthy, alert sons and daughters of a more physically fit next generation."

*Edwards*: "The reawakened force of all the American people working together to guarantee the survival in peacetimes of the democratic values for which we are willing to die in wartimes."

*Goslin*: "Today the American people are engaged in total war. Our way of life is being tested. Strains and stresses have shown grave weaknesses—hundreds of thousands so illiterate and unfit as to be unable to defend their country; many lacking in decent educational and occupational opportunity; destructive prejudices and class conflicts; widespread ignorance of the bases for international understanding. Individually many Americans are facing the threat or actuality of the personal loss of loved ones. The times call for a rededication to America's ideals—to the values for which our young men are fighting.

"Fundamental in this renewal of faith is the need for enlarged purposes and accelerated effort with respect to education. Here is a challenge to all teachers and laymen but especially to superintendents of schools. Upon them will fall the task of arousing the people of America to the activity that these years demand.

"The purpose of this yearbook has been to indicate some of the next steps in educational progress. It does indeed show 'paths

to better schools.' Its message should be clear—even tho not written in the somber rhythm of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or the searing flashes of Thomas Paine's *Crisis*. Is this yearbook just another volume for the bookshelf—or will it become the handbook of those who have *rededicated* themselves to America's future?"

All members of the Commission turned to hear what Mr. Skeptic might have to say—but he was gone.

## We Believe . . .

★ *The ideal of equal opportunity is fundamental in American democracy, and action needs to be taken to translate this ideal into reality.*

★ *A program of education adequately conceived and carried out is the most effective means society can employ to make real the ideal of the equal chance.*

★ *Individual need and the public interest make imperative a national policy of equal and universal access to an adequate education.*

★ *The existing inequalities in educational opportunity in the United States constitute a threat to the whole fabric of democratic institutions.*

★ *Education is a national interest, and it is an obligation of the federal government to provide the financial support necessary to insure a reasonable equality of educational opportunity.*

★ *Equal access to education will remain an unrealized ideal unless means are provided whereby individuals in families with low incomes can take advantage of the educational facilities which the nation affords.*

★ *The conditions of American life require the extension of education upward and downward: upward, to prepare for competent citizenship, for vocational efficiency, and for creative and satisfying use of leisure time; downward, to meet the needs of early childhood.*

★ *The experience of the past ten years lays at the door of educational statesmanship, both lay and professional, the problem of working out an educational program that will serve more adequately both individual and social needs.*