Teacher Training Series

RURAL SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

WILKINSON

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EDITED BY

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

FOR many years the graduates of normal schools and colleges of education have turned from the rural schools toward the more pleasant surroundings of the towns and cities. In the towns the salaries are usually better, the living conditions are more agreeable, the materials and equipment of education are more adequate, and the prestige of the teachers' positions is increased. With the unparalleled growth of city school systems demanding an increasing supply of teachers from year to year, the normal schools have been taxed to the limit of their ability in supplying the demand. As a natural outcome of these conditions the machinery of the institutions is directed primarily toward the training of students who will be able to work efficiently in graded school systems.

This has left the schools of the country and the village without an adequately trained teaching corps. At first, they depended upon those residents of the country, mature and immature, who could show evidence of knowledge chiefly gained in country schools, sufficient to obtain a teacher's certificate. Later, when the high schools, with the aid of the state and because of a quickening of interest among the citizens of towns and cities, grew in numbers, and became more accessible to children of the rural districts, high school graduates sought their teaching apprenticeship in country schools.

Soon, however, the glaring deficiencies of elementary and high school graduates became so apparent that the attention of educators was directed toward methods of improving the teaching abilities of those graduates

who were to go into rural school work. This led by logical steps to a movement, now nation wide in scope, for the training of high school students for the vocation of teaching.

Three forms have been developed. One is the so-called county normal school, which gives training to graduates of elementary schools in county institutions which are aided generously by appropriations from the revenues of the state. These schools are independent of the high school and are equipped and manned for the specific purpose of training teachers. A second agency for training rural school teachers is found in the development of courses and curriculums arranged primarily for this purpose in the normal schools. During the summer sessions these courses are crowded with rural teachers and during the regular sessions they are showing a gratifying increase in enrollment. The third type is the so-called teacher training department in the high school. The expenses of this department are usually paid by the state, which arranges the curriculums and passes upon the adequacy of the training by inspection of the departments and certification of the graduates.

When these schools and departments had once been established, the teachers engaged, and the curriculums organized, the textbook problem emerged. Schools cannot be taught without textbooks. The teacher either uses the one that best suits his purposes or he makes one composed of outlines and references. Some sort of text he must have. But the available texts, for the most part, possessed two fundamental weaknesses. They were written for mature students and, consequently, laid more stress upon principles than upon specific methods; and they were prepared for

students who were being trained to teach in graded schools.

Already, a few textbooks primarily intended for the use of prospective teachers in the schools of the country and the small villages have appeared. But the problem of providing suitable texts has not been completely solved, and further effort needs to be directed upon its solution.

This fact has led to the planning of a series of which the present volume is the first. Certainly, the task is one well worth undertaking and it is hoped by the publishers, the authors, and the editor that a definite contribution may be made to rural education and the training of teachers for rural schools.

The characteristic differences between textbooks for mature teachers of graded schools and young teachers in one-, two-, or three-roomed schools are three.

It may be true that mature students may be taught principles and expected to make the applications for themselves; but young students, while finding it easy to learn the principles, find it difficult if not impossible to make the applications of these principles to their practical work. Unless these young people are shown many and varied concrete and specific applications, they do not and cannot use the principles. They can only turn back to the specific methods which were used upon them when they were themselves in school. A textbook must be constructed for them which consists not of a statement of principles with a small number of illustrations, but which has many specific methods whose significance is illuminated by their reference to the principles upon which they are based. The exposition must be concrete.

It is obvious that since the problems of teaching in

rural and village schools are different in part from those of the towns and cities, the subject matter of textbooks dealing with these problems must, likewise, be different, in part. Identity of subject matter must, of course, be preserved when the methods of procedure are fundamental in the teaching process, though applications in this case may vary; but identity must not be sought for when the problems are different. Textbooks for rural teachers should be written for them.

The fundamental function of courses for such teachers and, therefore, of textbooks for these courses, is to prepare teachers to teach children who live in the country. There may be a difference of opinion about the advisability of training these children for country life, but there can be none about the necessity of utilizing their experience gained in the country in teaching them the procedure of successful living. It is the only language they know, and as in the days of Pentecost every child has the right to hear the gospel preached in his own tongue. It is, therefore, necessary for one reason or the other, or for both, to prepare textbooks breathing the spirit of the country as it centers around the rural school.

These three characteristics are well illustrated in the present volume. It is concrete and specific, and principles are used to illuminate and organize the procedure. It is written for the teachers of the country and the village. It recognizes the enlarging service of the school in rural life by the constant iteration of the fact that the matrix of the school is the community from which flows the life blood of the school and back to which the rejuvenated currents of throbbing life must pulsate.

W. W. CHARTERS.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE recent awakening in the study of rural life has given to the rural school a new task and a new responsibility. It is very generally conceded that the country school, because of its social nature, must be the chief means and factor in making country life richer in both a material and a spiritual sense. To the end that the school may meet more adequately the demands of the new ruralism, better trained teachers are needed — teachers who have a clear conception of the mission of the new rural school and an enthusiasm born of a knowledge of what ought to be done and how it may be accomplished. The present volume is an attempt to make some contribution to the supplying of this need. The book is meant primarily for intending teachers and those already in service. In its preparation the author has been guided by the problem: What ought the teacher to know regarding management in order that he may make his school serve, in the largest measure, the educational, economic, and social needs of a rural community? The treatment is an attempted elaboration of two central thoughts: (1) The school as an efficient agency in promoting the physical, mental, and moral welfare of country boys and girls, and (2) the school as a factor

in the economic and social improvement of the community at large. If the book serves to give teachers this conception of the twofold mission of the school and some knowledge of how these ends may be attained, the purpose of the author will have been realized.

The writer wishes to acknowledge here his indebtedness, first of all, to Dean W. W. Charters, upon whose suggestion the work was undertaken and under whose sympathetic guidance it has been prepared; secondly, to President T. A. Hillyer, Miss Lake G. Watson, and Professor C. R. Travis, of the Mayville State Normal School, for valuable assistance rendered, especially in the preparation of Chapters VIII and IX, the main features of which were first published as a normal school bulletin; and thirdly, to many state superintendents of schools and others too numerous to mention by name, for helpful literature bearing on the topics treated. However, none of these must be held accountable for any shortcomings the book may have. For the defects the author alone is responsible.

W. A. W.

MAYVILLE, NORTH DAKOTA,
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RURAL SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOL AND ITS PATRONS

I. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL

IN our study of school management we shall try to find out some of the things we ought to do to make the school serve its purposes most completely. It seems, then, that we should begin with an attempt to see just what these purposes are.

Relation of Teacher and Patrons. In the earliest times there were no schools, and each family had to educate or train its own children. But as the duties of home and family life increased, parents adopted the plan of employing some outside person to help in caring for the children. It was found that one person could take care of the children from several homes at the same time, so a group of parents would unite in employing this outside helper. In the course of time it came about that the person so employed spent all his time teaching the children the things they needed to know. Thus schools were first established to assist parents in the care and training of their children. From this simple, crude beginning our present system of public schools has developed.

The school, it is true, has undergone many changes since its early beginning; but the relation of teacher

and patron has not changed. The school is still a partnership affair; teacher and parents are colaborers, mutual helpers in the training of children. This relation exists in every phase of the school's work. It follows, therefore, that if the school is to attain to the highest success, if it is to accomplish the greatest amount of good for the community, the patrons must be interested in its work and willing to coöperate with the teacher in every possible way.

We are now ready to consider what the school of the present should, by right, undertake to do for the community in which it is located.

Special Function of the School. We have seen that the school originated as an aid to parents in educating their children. This is still its most important function.

Now, if we were to ask the patrons of the school what, in their opinion, the education of children should consist in, we should probably get a great many different answers. Some would tell us that it consists in giving children the kind of training that will enable them to earn a better living. Others would say that it consists in training them for the duties of citizenship. Still others would probably hold that education is primarily the developing of the physical, mental, and moral powers of the pupils. Each of these — training in moral character, preparation for earning a living, developing the powers of the pupil, making better citizens, imparting culture — would probably be named as the most important thing in education. And it must be admitted that there are some very good reasons for holding each one of these views. The truth is, education includes training along all these lines.

If we were to put the same questions to the leading educators of the country, they would probably say that

education consists in "training children for social efficiency." What they mean by this is that the child should be trained in such matters as moral character, care of the body, skill in earning a living, willingness to be of service to other people, ability to perform the duties of citizenship, appreciation of good music and literature and art. To train the pupil along these lines, to make him, as far as possible, a "socially efficient" individual, is the special function of the school.

Other Functions of the School. There was a time when it was thought that the school's only function was to teach the children the usual school subjects. It was not supposed that the teacher had any duties outside of the school or that the school could serve the community in any way except to instruct the children. But this view is no longer very common. There are three other ways in which the school can be of service to the community. *First.* It should encourage and direct certain out-of-school activities among the young people of the district. Boys' and girls' clubs, literary societies, debating contests, musical organizations, offer excellent opportunities for this sort of service. *Second.* The school can help the patrons themselves in various practical ways. Opportunities for such service are found, for instance, in testing seed grain for the farmers, improving health conditions in the homes, which may result in the saving of doctors' bills, lending from the school library books and bulletins which deal with matters of practical importance in the home or on the farm, testing milk from the dairy herds, helping patrons to keep more systematic accounts of household receipts and expenses, estimating the cost of new buildings or other improvements. *Third.* It should strive to make the conditions of

life more satisfying, more enjoyable for the entire community — for adults as well as for young people. This it can do by arranging for educative meetings and wholesome social gatherings in the schoolhouse.

We now see that the school is not limited in its functions to the training of the children of the district. It has a wider mission in the community, and a great many schools are now performing these other functions in a highly satisfactory manner.

SUMMARY. Schools were first established to aid parents in training their children. Teachers and parents were partners in the task. This relation between teacher and parent still exists, hence the necessity of their working together for the highest success of the shool. The special function of the school is to educate children, but it has other important functions; namely, to direct educative out-of-school activities of young people, to render practical aid to patrons, and to provide educative and enjoyable entertainments for the community at large.

II. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

It was pointed out in the last section that the success of the school depends in a large measure on the active interest and coöperation of its patrons. Now, as a matter of fact, this relation of mutual helpfulness between teacher and parents does not exist in all schools. There are, no doubt, a few instances here and there where all of the patrons of the school give it the hearty support it ought to have. But such cases are at present the exception rather than the rule. A great majority of teachers, especially in rural schools, are laboring under serious difficulties, obstacles which must be removed before the schools can do all they should, either in the training of children or in the improvement of community life in general. The purpose of this section is to point out some of

the difficulties due to lack of understanding and coöperation on the part of patrons which the teacher sometimes encounters in his efforts to make the school serve its purposes in the fullest measure.

Indifference of Patrons. In every school district there are a few patrons who are deeply interested in the work of the school. These interested parents are the teacher's best helpers. They send their children to school regularly. They are loyal to the teacher and show a willingness to help him at any time when they can be of service. They look after the needs of the school as best they can, even, in some instances, taking time from their own affairs to do so. They are, as a rule, in favor of levying taxes sufficient to get good teachers and provide the school with the necessary equipment and supplies.

On the other hand, in almost every district are found some patrons who have very little or no interest in the school. Unfortunately, in many instances, especially in rural communities, these outnumber those who are interested. Indifference on the part of the patrons may be traced to two main causes.

Causes of Indifference. *First.* The poor results obtained from the school are no doubt partly responsible for the lack of interest in its work. Some parents think that their children do not always get as much benefit from the school as they should. Two shortcomings of the school are pointed out in this connection: (1) It fails to ground the pupils thoroughly in the fundamentals of an elementary education. Instances of this failure are found in the case of pupils who, after spending several years in the study of arithmetic and spelling, are still unable to solve accurately simple practical problems or to spell correctly the words most used in every-

day life. (2) It spends too much time on things that are of little value to the pupil to the neglect of other things much more valuable. An instance of this defect may be cited in the case of the rural teacher who refused to teach elementary agriculture in order that the class might have extra time for the study of technical grammar. Where such shortcomings as these exist, there is very likely to be found a lack of genuine interest in the school on the part of some patrons.

Second. A lack of knowledge of what the school is actually doing is, perhaps, the most common cause of indifference among patrons. Many parents never visit the school. In the country districts there is usually very little opportunity to hear about school affairs from other people, and the information which parents get from their children is generally too meager to give them a correct notion of the actual work of the school. No matter how excellent this work may be, if patrons have no knowledge of it they cannot be expected to be very deeply interested in it.

Results of Indifference. Indifference on the part of patrons, if it is very widespread, hinders the work of the school in at least three important ways. *First.* It interferes with attendance. Parents who are not interested in the school are less likely to see that their children attend regularly than are parents who are interested. *Second.* It frequently results in a tax levy which is inadequate for the support of the school. Indifferent patrons can hardly be expected to provide the funds necessary to employ good teachers and procure the equipment needed. This matter is discussed more fully in a later paragraph. *Third.* It tends to make school discipline more difficult. Undoubtedly a great many of the more "troublesome cases" in