
Secondary and Middle School Teaching Methods

FOURTH EDITION



Leonard H. Clark
& Irving S. Starr

secondary and middle school teaching methods

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Secondary and Middle School Teaching Methods

4th edition

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This is the fourth edition of this book. Since the publication of the first edition many pedagogical innovations and experiments have been launched. The authors have attempted to incorporate the important changes into this revision. Otherwise the purpose and treatment, except for minor reorganization to make the book more useful and cohesive, remain the same in this edition as in the first, for despite innovations and experiments, the basic pedagogical principles have not changed.

This book was written to help prospective teachers learn how to teach. It is designed as a college textbook for a single semester course in general methods of teaching in the secondary school, although it might serve well as a reference work for student teachers and teachers in service. The authors have attempted to make the book as practical and useful as possible. To achieve this end, they have tried to write from a middle-of-the-road point of view, and to describe methods suitable for use in the type of school in which the student is likely to teach when he goes to his first position. For this same reason, they have attempted to write simply and clearly, to use numerous examples, to point up important understandings by means of questions at appropriate places within the text itself, and to keep quotations and references to scholarly works to a minimum. In general, discussion of educational theory has been omitted except when it seemed necessary to explain the why of the methods advocated. Nevertheless, the emphasis is, of necessity, on principles rather than recipes. There are no surefire recipes in teaching.

Sexist expressions easily find their way into a manuscript. We have tried to avoid them and other marks of prejudice. We have, however, at times used the editorial pronoun "he" to refer to both men and women. This should not be taken as evidence of sexism, but as an effort to facilitate readability. The use of masculine nouns and pronouns makes the writing less awkward.

Preface

The authors wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to the many persons—students, teachers, and friends—who have helped them write this book. Grateful thanks are expressed to the students, teachers, superintendents, principals, and publishing houses who allowed the authors to reproduce their materials, and to the colleagues and readers who have made helpful criticisms and suggestions. We especially thank Maria A. Clark, who not only typed the manuscript for each of the editions innumerable times, but also read the copy and made suggestions for improving the wording, and without whose help the book could never have been finished.

Chatham, New Jersey
Hartford, Connecticut

L. H. C.
I. S. S.

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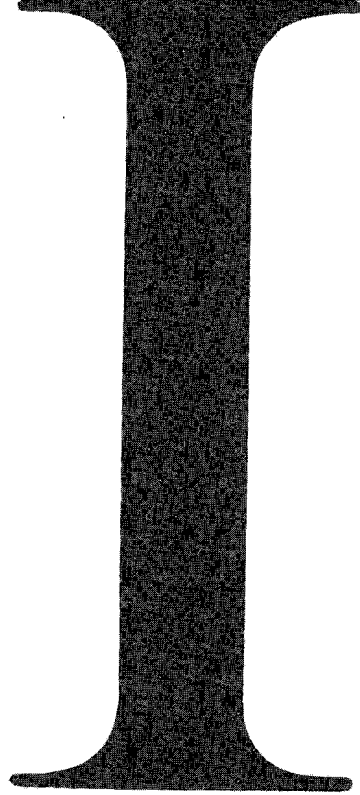
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foundations
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Summary

overview

Every country on earth has evolved a school system peculiar to its own traditions, needs and culture. The United States is no exception. The American school system, especially its middle and secondary schools, is unique in many respects. The system is particularly unique because the United States has been the first nation

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The School and the Pupils

to attempt to give all children both elementary and secondary education. This great experiment has, of course, been fraught with problems, disappointments, controversy and misunderstanding, but on the whole it has been surprisingly successful.

In this chapter, we shall briefly introduce both the system and the middle and secondary schools. After reading it, you will have at least a nodding acquaintance with schools, their aims, their pupils and their curricula. We hope that you will be able to draw some conclusions about what you believe the role and the scope of the schools' mission should be and how they can best serve the transescent and adolescents who attend them. We also hope that your conclusions will be tempered by the realization that today's schools are the product of more than three centuries of historical development and that they cannot be divorced from the traditional role of schools in our society and the traditional methods of fulfilling that role. Little in American schooling, other than modern electronic technology, is new. Problems concerning control of the curriculum, curriculum development, general versus specialized education, how to provide for differences in pupils, how to provide curricula with adequate scope and logical sequence, and curriculum content have always concerned educators. The traditional answers to these problems have varied from

the most conservative to the most progressive, and from the most subject centered to the most pupil centered. As you read about the history of the schools, their curricula and extra curricula, and the trends and developments of the present day, we hope you will become aware of the immensity and complexity of the educational enterprise and, while keeping an open mind, begin to examine your own beliefs about the schools and their curricula.

history of our middle and secondary schools

Every institution is a creature of its past. This is particularly true of American schools. Today's curriculum, especially in the high schools, is largely a result of historical accidents and the forces of tradition. Perhaps if we teachers better understood the history of our schools, we could free them from unnecessary baggage and also stop repeating the mistakes of the past.

Early American Secondary Schools

The first American secondary schools were copies of the European Latin grammar schools. Although in 1647 the legislature of Massachusetts required the towns to maintain Latin schools so that boys might prepare for college and train for the ministry, the Latin schools were never really popular because their Ciceronian Latin curriculum did not meet the practical needs of the people. Soon independent entrepreneurs attempted to meet these needs by setting up private venture schools in which boys could learn the practical skills and knowledge required in the trades and professions of the day. Thus teachers might advertise to teach for a fee subjects such as book-keeping, mathematics, astronomy and navigation to boys whose parents wanted them to become merchants, navigators, surveyors or practitioners of other businesses.

These private venture schools were successful enough to show the need for a new institution. In 1749 Benjamin Franklin proposed a plan for an academy that would provide a functional education for middle class children. In this school's curriculum, much attention would be given to English and practical studies. As Franklin stated, since the school could not teach everything, it would teach those things likely to be "most useful and or-

namental. Regard being had for the several Professions for which they are intended."

Much to Franklin's distress, the academy established in Pennsylvania did not develop into the functional school he had envisioned. Educators were conservative then, just as now, and did not accept this newfangled school. Still, the idea caught on after a bit and became the typical secondary school of the nineteenth century.

On the whole, the academy was a successful institution.¹ Because academies were private schools and needed students to exist, they tried to provide a suitable education for any boy or girl who could pay the cost. In many academies, the policy seemed to be that if enough students were willing to pay to study a subject, the academy would offer it.

The academy gave the students a good practical education, but parents found it too expensive, so in 1821 the Boston School Committee,² upset because the Latin schools did not give "a child an education that shall fit him for an active life and serve as a foundation for eminence in his profession" and so forced parents to send their children to private academies at "heavy expense,"³ founded the first American high school. This high school was to be a highly practical terminal institution for pupils who planned to enter mercantile or mechanical employment. Its curriculum was much like an academy's.

The public high school idea soon caught on and spread. After a while, the notion that the high school should be an extension of the common school system was generally accepted, although many people objected to paying taxes so that other people's children could go to high school. After considerable litigation in many communities, the right of school districts to establish public high schools was settled by numerous court decisions (notably a Pennsylvania case of 1851 and the Kalamazoo case of 1874).

Although the high schools were started as semivocational, terminal institutions, in the 1890s the curriculum had become largely college preparatory. This trend was

¹ In New England, some private academies still fulfill the role of local high schools.

² That is, Board of Education or School Board.

³ From subcommittee report on the basis of which the School Committee voted to establish the English Classical School. I. L. Kandel, *History of Secondary Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), pp. 426-427.

reinforced by the attempts to standardize and improve secondary education, which resulted in the creation of regional accrediting associations and the College Entrance Examination Board.

A School for All American Youth

Until the turn of the century, the number of pupils attending high schools was small, considerably less than 10 percent of the age group. But in the twentieth century, the school population grew rapidly. By World War I, the high schools enrolled one third of the fourteen to seventeen year olds, and by World War II this number had risen to almost three fourths of that age group. It soon became evident that academic college education was not enough to meet the needs of all these pupils. Consequently, educational leaders tried to reorganize secondary education to extend it into other areas of human life, and to make it suitable for "all the children of all the people."

So it was that the typical secondary schools in the United States became public, universal, and comprehensive. In this context *universal* means that the schools are open to all youths of the proper age group who have completed the elementary school program. Theoretically no one is denied admittance because of race, social status, wealth, intelligence, or class, although, in fact, the schools have not always lived up to this ideal. They are seldom selective in the sense of catering to an academic elite as many private and foreign schools are, however. *Public* means that the schools are financed by public funds. Theoretically pupils can attend without incurring any expense. Actually, in some instances, travel, materials, and incidentals make public secondary education fairly expensive. *Comprehensive* means that the school tries to provide for all the needs of all the youth in a single institution. Some school districts, however, provide specialized high schools for pupils with special talents or vocational goals. New York City, for instance, has high schools for the performing arts, needle trades, science, and other academic and vocational specialties. Actually few American high schools are truly comprehensive; rather they are academic high schools with other curricula added.

To this day, the secondary schools have not learned to cope with their popularity. At first the schools tried to

solve the problem by widening the curriculum to include manual training, home economics, business, art, music, and vocational programs. Later as the problems of universal secondary education became more acute, schools introduced general curricula that, all too often, turned out to be nothing but watered-down college preparatory courses, and established ability groups or curriculum tracks designed to provide different education for pupils with different academic abilities. At the end of World War II, many educators thought that the answer was life-adjustment education, a curriculum in citizenship, health, family living, and moral and social conduct for the 60 percent of the pupils who did not want to prepare for college or enter vocational education courses. Educators and lay critics rejected this movement, which they considered a watering down of the curriculum. They insisted that the schools stress basics. Again educators tried to solve the problem by attempting to make the school curricula more "relevant" to the real life of real people and more humane by introducing more and better vocational and career education courses and curricula, and by providing alternative schools and programs for pupils with special needs. None of these attempts has been totally successful. How to provide an effective educational program for all children at the secondary level remains unsolved.



What should be the mission of a school whose students come from all walks of life and whose academic goals range from completion of professional graduate programs, learning a skilled trade, to becoming an unskilled laborer or machine tender? Should it have programs for all these different goals? What are the basics in such a school? How can it deal fairly with all its pupils?

Should the middle and high schools try to teach all youth or should there be separate institutions for pupils with different aspirations? Is a comprehensive high school feasible and viable?

Life-adjustment education was an attempt to provide for pupils with nonacademic life goals. What do you think of that solution?



Progressive Education

The popularization of secondary education in the first four decades of the century was accompanied by the

growth of the often talked about (and sometimes practiced) but greatly misunderstood movement called progressive education. This program, which had its roots in the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau and other eighteenth and nineteenth century thinkers and was popularized by John Dewey and his followers, strove to make education lifelike and relevant to boys and girls. It emphasized pupil-centered education in which pupils developed naturally, planned and governed their own activities, engaged in lifelike rather than bookish activities, followed their own bents in individualized classes, and learned by thinking and doing rather than by lecture and rote memory. It fostered complete living and education for complete living.

Because of progressive education's popularity with theorists, it has had considerable influence on the school curriculum and methodology. One important innovation was the core curriculum which became popular in the junior high schools. The core curriculum was an attempt to make subject matter more meaningful and relevant to pupils' lives by integrating subject-matter content and doing away with artificial subject-matter boundaries. Believers in the sanctity of the academic disciplines and of the efficacy of formal academic study objected strenuously to core programs, and so they dropped from view in the decades following World War II, only to reappear again in the block programs of the contemporary middle schools.

The Reaction

Progressive education as a whole was often condemned for being soft and antiintellectual. In 1957 the Russian launching of the first Sputnik satellite spurred the critics into greater action. They called for an increased emphasis on the disciplines and for intellectual rigor. Coupled with this call for a "return to basics" was an increased interest in the inquiry methods. These methods were essentially the old problem-solving and Socratic-questioning techniques in new guises. The major concern of the reformers was to raise standards. Among the measures they recommended were

Increased rigor in courses and assignments.

Elimination of all broad field courses and return to discrete subject courses.

Elimination of life adjustment education.

Elimination of the junior high school.

Abandonment of modern progressive methods of teaching.

Adoption of statewide or national systems of examinations.

As Alcorn, Kinder, and Schunert⁴ point out, most of these proposals represented "three positions on curriculum development: a return to the past, an emphasis on intellectualism, and an adoption of European patterns of education." One result of this movement has been the adoption of assessment programs at the national and state levels. Another result has been a movement to make teachers accountable for what pupils learn, although the movement is more directly the result of public disenchantment over the failure of city schools to cope with the educational problems of the inner city and a desire to put education on a business-like basis so that costs can be reduced and productivity increased. Many of these new intellectual programs and curricula failed because they did not fully consider the realities of youthful needs, abilities and inclinations. What is good for college students is not necessarily appropriate for seventh graders! Even so, the movement continues strong, although now it emphasizes that pupils become competent in their subject field. It has been strengthened by reports that students graduating from our high schools are not doing well on pre-college tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test, that many high school graduates are functionally illiterate, and that job applicants are unable to read, write and figure well enough to hold jobs. By the beginning of the present decade, citizens and legislators were demanding the adoption of minimum standards for graduation from high school and increased emphasis on the "basics" and the academic subjects. In short, the pursuit of academic excellence in the conservative tradition was fast becoming the law of the land.



To what extent do you believe you should be held responsible for the learning of your pupils?

Do you agree with the laypeople and administrators who say

⁴ Marvin D. Alcorn, James D. Kinder, and Jim R. Schunert, *Better Teaching in Secondary Schools*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, 1970), p. 396.

that if teachers wish to qualify for their pay they must ensure that pupils learn well enough to perform at their appropriate age level? If you do, would you make exceptions to the rule? What factors, beside teacher competence, do you feel influence pupil learning?



The New Technology

The educational developments of the 60s and 70s were accompanied by an astonishing growth in educational technology. Teaching machines, computer-assisted instruction and new instructional aids opened prospects of a new age in education. Enthusiasts predicted a development of educational systems in which the talents of specialist teachers and educational machines were combined to use both human and material resources most effectively and efficiently.

Whether we shall ever achieve the utopia that these dreamers visualize is still to be revealed. Not all the innovations have been accepted universally, some of them have been downright disappointing. Instruction by teaching machines can be boring! Some schools have rejected the language laboratories after a few years of trial. The real danger, in the eyes of many critics, is the fear that the new technology may lead to impersonal indoctrination. There is little doubt, however, that eventually technology will be able to overcome most of its present faults and that systems of teaching learning, much more effective than those of today, will be developed.



In what ways is the new technology affecting teaching method?

What types of teaching jobs are best done by teachers? What, if any, can be safely turned over to machines?

Investigate team teaching as one aspect of the movement towards a systems approach.



Humanizing the Schools

As one might expect, the conservatism of the 1950s and early 1960s brought on a reaction in the late 1960s and the 1970s. This new movement emphasized student freedom, "relevant" (by which the proponents sometimes meant nonacademic) education, pupil participation

in decision making, individualized instruction, and other progressive notions.

One facet of the attempt to make the schools more humane in the 60s and 70s was a movement to use the schools as media by which to effect social change. Many attempts were made to meet the needs of minority groups who presumably had been neglected, if not mistreated, in the traditional schools. Partly as a result of a Supreme Court decision, the schools have introduced programs in bilingual education, English as a second language, and ethnic and black studies. In attempts to solve problems of racial and ethnic separation, districts have set up magnet schools to attract youth of various ethnic backgrounds to programs of excellence. By law (PL94-142), handicapped boys and girls must be taught in regular classes insofar as their handicaps will allow them. Sexism in education is being fought by attempts to take all sex bias out of instructional materials, teaching and course selection. These attempts to eliminate sex bias from athletics, physical education, vocational education, mathematics, science and the like, have been fraught with controversy and emotion. So also have the many attempts to teach pupils the facts about sex and sexual behavior; family living; alcohol and drug abuse; ethics, morals, and values; consumerism; and health practices.

Other attempts to humanize the secondary school have been to make the schools more personal and responsive. To this end, educators have broken large schools into smaller schools-within-schools and initiated integrated humanities programs, continuous progress programs, modular schedules, middle schools, mini courses and other plans designed to make the schools more adaptive to pupils' educational and personal needs.

In spite of a tremendous drive in the late 1970s, particularly by the lay public, to focus education on the basics, the movement toward more humane education continues. After all, say its proponents, is not humaneness a basic? One key word in educational circles is "relevance." Educators, in their attempts to make schools more relevant, have tried numerous solutions. In the 70s, alternative schools that were the last word in student-centered progressivism became quite common, as did alternative schools and programs for "pupils with problems." "Action learning" or "learning in the community" and work-study programs, in which boys and girls spend part of their time working outside of school in

practical community improvement projects, businesses, industries or offices where they learn about vocations and working at first hand, have popped up all over the country. Numbers of districts have adopted school-without-walls programs in which boys and girls do the bulk of their learning in banks, museums, libraries, court houses, community centers and the like rather than in the classroom—all in an effort to make education more real to our young people.



What are the basics in education? If teachers are to be held accountable, for what should they be held accountable? Are *minimum essentials limited to reading, writing and arithmetic*, or are morals, ethics, values and good citizenship basic? And if they are, what are the minimum essentials in those areas? Should we refuse a high school diploma to any student who does not understand the responsibilities of citizenship or how to carry out a citizen's duties?

To what extent should middle and high school pupils' education be limited to in-school activities, and how much should they be encouraged to learn in the community?



The Middle School

One sign of this movement toward humaneness and relevance has been the growth of the middle school. At the turn of the century, junior high schools were formed to provide a school for young adolescents in which they would study a curriculum different from that of the elementary school but not as advanced as that of the high school. It was hoped that such a school would reduce the number of pupils dropping out of school by making the work more interesting and relevant to pupil needs than the elementary school work and also by enrolling pupils in a new school before the end of the compulsory attendance period.

Soon after the end of World War II, some educators realized that many junior high schools were not doing the job for which they had been created. Instead of being *schools for young adolescents*, these schools had become simply junior editions of the high school. Furthermore, it seemed that boys and girls were growing up more quickly than they had in the past. Pubescence was occurring earlier. Television and radio had given them at least the appearance of greater sophistication. Many ninth

grade boys and girls had become truly adolescent rather than transescent and so were more at home in the high school than in a middle school. Certainly, it was thought, seventh and eighth grade pupils were better off without being subjected to the domination of more mature ninth graders who were ready for the social life of teenagers. Similarly it was thought that the sixth graders and perhaps the fifth graders fit in better with the seventh and eighth graders than with elementary school children. Besides, the beginning of grade seven and the end of grade nine seemed to be unpropitious times to switch into and out of the middle school. Theoretically children learned the basic skills in reading in the first four grades and were ready to move on to the study of the content areas in grade five. Besides, high school curricula and college entrance requirements had long been built on the presumption that grade nine should be a high school grade. Consequently there developed a strong movement for the creation of schools for transescents (pubescents and young adolescents) housing grades 6–7–8, or perhaps grades 5–6–7–8, designed to meet the needs of transescents. This movement came to fruition in the middle schools of the 60s and the 70s.⁵

The functions of the middle school, as of the junior high school before it, were definitively stated by Gruhn and Douglas in 1947. These ideal functions have not changed. They include the following features.⁶

1. Because the middle school/junior high school student is in a period of concept development, the student is best served by a curriculum in which subject matter is integrated; that is, correlated both *within and among* subject areas.
2. Because beginning adolescence is accompanied by the awakening of new interests, the beginnings of concerns about one's vocational and avocational future and a need to understand one's own interests, talents, potentials and proclivities, middle and junior high schools should give pupils broad and varied programs that allow pupils to try, without penalty, a wide variety of experiences in order

⁵ Note that this arrangement is not a totally new idea. Intermediate schools having grades 7–8, 6–7–8, or 5–6–7–8 have existed in many districts prior to World War II.

⁶ William Gruhn and Harl Douglas, *The Modern Junior High School*. (New York: Ronald Press, 1947. Revised edition, 1956.)

to discover their natural bents and most suitable future courses of action.

3. Because the middle and junior high school pupils are not adults, they need guidance and assistance. Middle and junior high schools should stress individual counselling and group guidance, emphasizing educational, health, prevocational and social-personal problems.
4. Because the growth rate is rapid and irregular in this age group, the middle and junior high school programs should differentiate learning experiences through individualized instructional programs and school activities. Differences in development make it impossible for one program to serve all pupils well. Provisions for individual differences must be built into the curriculum at this level.
5. Because at this age boys and girls are beginning to free themselves from the home and establish themselves as independent adults, the school, through its teachers and peer-group activities, must establish itself as a socialization agent that helps pupils establish their values and seek out their adult roles.
6. Because the middle/junior high school years are transitional between the elementary and high schools, the middle schools should strive to make the change from the relative simplicity of the elementary classroom to the complexities of the departmentalized high school as smooth as possible. To carry out this function successfully, the schools must pay particular attention to articulation at all three levels.

In short, the middle school should be a halfway station between the elementary and high schools. This is equally true of the ideal junior high school, although unfortunately too many of them have taken on characteristics that should be reserved for the high school.

Recommendations for Reform

During the 1970s, several groups studied the nation's secondary schools and found them wanting. The 1979 report of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, for example, says that the high schools are failing one third of American youth who

leave ill-educated and ill-equipped to make their way in society.⁷ In general, the reports of these groups all recommend major reforms in the education of adolescents and older youth. If their recommendations are followed, the schools will become more flexible, move out into the community, adopt more functional curricula, become less formally academic, provide more effectively for the differences in students, and provide for the needs of a much larger clientele. Truly they will become community schools that serve all age and ethnic groups, giving students experiences in such adult activities as work experience, action learning and service with adult groups and institutions. The mammoth, all-purpose high schools will be replaced by smaller institutions with more specialized education and training purposes. In short, education would become a living functional part of the community as a whole—no longer an ivory tower—in which youths have an opportunity to discover and exploit their talents freely in a natural environment.

Nevertheless, in spite of these and past recommendations, the middle and secondary schools are not changing as quickly and drastically as critics hoped. Just what direction education for adolescents will take in the future remains uncertain.



It is said that the history of education consists of constant swinging from action to reaction and back again. Do you see

⁷ Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, *Giving Youth a Better Chance: Options for Education, Work and Service* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979). See also B. Frank Brown, ed., *Education for Responsible Citizenship* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977); Frank B. Brown, (ed.) *The Reform of Secondary Education: A Report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); Philip A. Cusick, *Inside High School* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973); *The Education of Adolescents*, The Final Report and Recommendations of the National Recommendations on the High School and Adolescent Education. HEW Publication No. (OE) 76-00004. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare, 1976); Thomas E. Gatewood, *The Education of Youth in the Middle Years*. A Joint Position Paper of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals and the Michigan Department of Education, January, 1976; Maurice Gibbons, *The New Secondary Education*, A Phi Delta Kappa Task Force Report (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1976); Harry A. Passow, *Secondary Education Reform: Retrospect and Prospect* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1976); John W. Porter, Chairman, *The Adolescent, or Other Citizens and Their High Schools*, The Charles F. Kettering Foundation. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).