

THE CHARACTER EMPHASIS  
IN EDUCATION

# THE CHARACTER EMPHASIS IN EDUCATION

A COLLECTION OF MATERIALS  
AND METHODS

KENNETH L. HEATON, PH.D.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
CHICAGO · ILLINOIS

COPYRIGHT 1933 BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 1933

---

COMPOSED AND PRINTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, U.S.A.

## PREFACE

The past few years have seen a great interest among public-school teachers and administrators in the development of character. This emphasis in education has been expressed in many attempts to modify the program of classes, of schools, and of entire school systems in order that these might make a greater contribution to the growing child or youth. Some of these modifications seem good, others not so worth while. The chapters of this volume are written in the effort to bring together examples of some of the better methods and materials that have been used in elementary and secondary schools. The volume is written particularly with thought of the classroom teacher, the principal, and supervisor—those who are directly concerned with the educational activities of the classroom and the individual school unit. It is designed with the thought of the teacher in service, but with sufficient material to be used as a textbook for courses in normal schools and colleges.

The author is indebted to many for their contributions to this volume: Superintendent James H. Harris and the Board of Education that established, in the schools of Pontiac, Michigan, a department of character education which permitted the author over a period of years to devote his time to experimentation with the materials and methods of character development. The supervisors, principals, and teachers in Pontiac who have participated in this experiment. Two yearbook committees of the National Education Association which have clarified the aims and the principles of character building as they apply to the public schools. Those who have conducted the various experiments in the field which are reported in the following chapters. Authors and publishers of periodicals and books who have kindly granted permission to quote from their

publications. Certain individuals who have been particularly helpful in experimentation and in the preparation of this manuscript: of the personnel of the Pontiac public schools many people but particularly James H. Harris, superintendent; Harriett E. Ratliff, supervisor of kindergarten and primary grades; Kate H. Brown, supervisor of intermediate grades; John Thors, Jr., principal of Pontiac Senior High School, and other individuals and groups mentioned throughout the volume; Paul T. Rankin, director of research and adjustment of the Detroit public schools who has given much assistance in the planning and criticism of the chapters; my wife who has assisted both in the collection of materials and in the preparation of the manuscript.

K. L. H.

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROGRAM AND ITS OBJECTIVES . . . . .	3
PART I. HOW THE TEACHER MAY USE THE REGULAR CURRICULUM TO SECURE CHARACTER VALUES	
II. THE CHANGE OF THE CENTER OF INTEREST FROM "SUBJECT MATTER" TO "LIFE" . . . . .	19
III. THE CHANGE OF THE CENTER OF INTEREST FROM "SUBJECT MATTER" TO "LIFE" ( <i>continued</i> ) . . . . .	58
IV. UTILIZING LIFE-INTERESTS BROUGHT INTO CON- SCIOUSNESS IN THE ROUTINE OF TEACHING . . . . .	80
V. METHODS OF TEACHING WHICH PROVIDE CO-OPERA- TIVE GROUP EXPERIENCE . . . . .	91
VI. CONFLICTS AND PROBLEMS OF CONDUCT AS TEACH- ING OPPORTUNITIES . . . . .	114
PART II. UNITS OF INSTRUCTION WHICH HAVE CHARACTER EDUCATION AS THEIR MAJOR AIM	
VII. THE FUNCTION OF SPECIAL UNITS . . . . .	135
VIII. CASE-DISCUSSION APPROACH . . . . .	137
IX. INFORMAL CONVERSATION OR SOCIALIZED DISCUS- SION . . . . .	155
X. THE RESEARCH PROCESS AS A METHOD OF TEACHING	170
XI. UNITS WHICH INVOLVE PRACTICE IN DESIRABLE FORMS OF CONDUCT . . . . .	192

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. DRAMATIZATION AS A METHOD OF TEACHING . . .	206
XIII. STORIES AS THE BASIS FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION	222
PART III. CLUBS AND OTHER PUPIL ACTIVITIES	
XIV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OUT-OF-CLASS ACTIVITIES IN A PROGRAM OF CHARACTER EDUCATION . . . .	237
XV. TYPES OF CLUBS AND OTHER PUPIL ACTIVITIES WITH CHARACTER VALUE . . . . .	252
PART IV. INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE	
XVI. ORGANIZING THE SCHOOL FOR INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE	283
XVII. THE TEACHER AS COUNSELOR . . . . .	300
XVIII. THE SPECIALIST AS COUNSELOR . . . . .	321
PART V. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER	
XIX. SIGNIFICANT FACTORS IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION .	339
PART VI. HOME AND COMMUNITY INFLUENCES	
XX. THE CHILD AND HIS TOTAL ENVIRONMENT . . . .	361
APPENDIXES	
REFERENCES FOR ENGLISH COMPOSITION TOPICS WITH IMPLICATIONS IN THE FIELD OF CHARACTER . . . . .	375
REFERENCES FOR ENGLISH COMPOSITION TOPICS TO AID IN VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT . . . . .	378
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF REFERENCES ON CHILD GUIDANCE . . .	381

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
AN INDIAN LIFE PROJECT . . . . .	41
DRAMATIZATION OF THE "ANVIL CHORUS" AS AN INTERPRE- TATION OF THE WORK OF THE MANUAL LABORER . . .	75
RHEIMS CATHEDRAL IN THE SNOW . . . . .	78
EDUCATION AS A CO-OPERATIVE EXPERIENCE . . . . .	94
INFORMAL DRAMATICS . . . . .	209
PREPARING FOR THE CHRISTMAS TOY SHOP . . . . .	274
THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ADJUSTMENT, DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS . . . . .	288
THE STUDENT COUNCIL AT WORK . . . . .	347



## INTRODUCTION



## CHAPTER I

### THE PROGRAM AND ITS OBJECTIVES

Good character is perhaps the most generally accepted objective of the schools today. Scarcely an educational convention passes or an issue of an educational periodical is published without some reference to the securing of good character through the schools. Nor is the discussion limited to teachers; for parents, lawyers, judges, physicians, social workers, ministers, and many other types of persons are intensely interested in means of insuring good character.

The current emphasis upon education for character is due to a variety of factors, among them (1) the recognition that crime and delinquency constitute a challenge to education; (2) the growing appreciation of the importance of the emotional aspects of life as compared with the intellectual; (3) the general adoption of that philosophy of education which stresses the integration of all the experiences of child life through the provision of increasingly lifelike activities and interpretation in the school; and (4) the awakening among people generally of social-civic consciousness, of large-group-mindedness, of a concern for the welfare of all.

This volume is to be devoted primarily to materials and methods, to the reporting of procedures which are illustrative of what has been done and can be done in schools to provide the setting for the finest personal development in the child. A comprehensive discussion of why the current emphasis upon character has arisen, and of the philosophy of the movement, will not be included. Recent publications<sup>1</sup> have dealt exten-

<sup>1</sup> See particularly the following reference: National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, "Character Education," *Tenth Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1932), pp. 9-78.

sively with these aspects of the subject and have presented the basic assumptions and the conflicting theories of character education.

In the thought of the writer certain very definite principles are accepted and certain objectives considered as goals to be achieved by each pupil in the school. These objectives will be briefly presented as a part of this introduction and the principles which it is thought should be the foundation of the program will be referred to throughout the volume, but the primary interest will be in methodology, rather than in the field of philosophy.

#### OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED

What kind of character is to be developed? What changes in children and in youth are to be made? These questions have been answered in many different ways by educational workers and others interested in the problem. Thus the *Tenth Yearbook* of the Department of Superintendence lists and discusses seventeen types of major objectives presented in courses of study, books, and articles dealing with character:

1. Character as general goodness, something very vague but desirable.
2. Character as conformity to the conventional mores, doing what society expects.
3. Character as life in accord with the dogma of some religion.
4. Character as a composite of many specific conduct habits capable of determination by scientific analyses of life.
5. Character as the service of the state.
6. Character as social usefulness, personal self-sacrifice for the larger good.
7. Character as unselfish motives, love of fellowmen, desire to serve.
8. Character as the harmonious adjustment of the personality.
9. Character as a composite of desirable traits, virtues, and ideals.

10. Character as self-control; inhibition of impulses in accord with rational principles.
11. Character as self-expression; responsibility for getting as much as possible out of one's own life.
12. Character as emotional maturity, objectivity, disinterestedness, intelligent living, foresight, understanding and discrimination of consequences, fair-mindedness, scientific spirit.
13. Character as ways of living that are aesthetically preferable, beauty.
14. Character as sincere action, in accord with conscience.
15. Character as imitation of some ideal persons.
16. Character as creative experience; continuous reconstruction of life.
17. Character as the integration of values, doing the "best" thing in each situation.<sup>2</sup>

These expressions of the central objective reflect differences in the basic philosophy of life and education. At least, they betoken differences in emphasis placed upon various aspects of that philosophy. The discussion in the *Tenth Yearbook* points out the fact that each of the first sixteen mentioned is satisfactory to a degree,<sup>3</sup> but is partial and inadequate when considered alone. The statement concludes:

The good act is one which creates as many and as worthy satisfactions as possible for as many people as possible over as long a time as possible. The rule holds for every race and nation, every age of man. Whether child of three or maid of twenty or sage of sixty, the good character is one who continuously acts in such a way that from his actions flow the results which enrich the living of all those who are affected, over as long a time as the influence of his actions may persist.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-59.

<sup>3</sup> The reader should be familiar with these seventeen viewpoints and is referred to this *Yearbook* and other publications for a detailed discussion of the various goals and an evaluation of them.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Superintendence, National Education Association, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

## 6 CHARACTER EMPHASIS IN EDUCATION

All that need be maintained is that the endeavor to find, in each situation, the best and most inclusive solution, the one which comes nearest to bringing full satisfaction and increased zest to everyone, is the highest standard for character.<sup>5</sup>

The objective remains the discovery or creation of a way of living which conserves and produces as many values as possible for as many persons as possible over as long a time as possible. Character education is the facilitation of this way of life.<sup>6</sup>

When selecting illustrations of educational activities which contribute to the "integration of values," the writer has found it easier to interpret this objective in terms of certain more specific aims which seem to be a part of the whole. No list such as that given below is altogether satisfactory, for it is marked by duplication and possible chance for misunderstanding. It may serve, however, to clarify the trend of thought which has been basic in the preparation of this volume. It would seem that the type of personality which is to be cultivated as the ideal or the goal of the educational process should have such characteristics as the following:

1. A growing ability to meet daily situations and to make the choices in daily life in ways that are the most satisfying to the greatest number of people over the longest period of time.
2. Freedom from unnecessary emotional conflicts or disturbances.
3. Progressive ability to meet the temptations of life through the direction of energy into wholesome channels and by the inhibition of undesirable impulses.
4. Appreciation for the taken-for-granted things of life—the blessings of home, school and community, the service of parents, teachers and public servants, the beauties and necessities provided by nature.
5. Appreciation for the contributions of the past—the achievements, the ideals, the ways of living of the older generation and of the race as a whole.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

6. Open-mindedness or the ability to modify one's attitudes and ways of living in harmony with new truths and new experiences.
7. Ability to see new problems in old situations. A scientific, critical attitude that does not assume that "all that is, is right" but is sensitive to social and personal defect or error.
8. Independence in thought and action, ability to direct one's life with a decreasing amount of supervision and a maximum of inner control and motivation.
9. A constantly growing consciousness of membership in more and ever larger groups of society—a sense of belonging not only to the family group but to the school group; not only to an economic class and a religious sect, but to the community group, to the national group, and to the world-society.
10. Skill in human relations—the ability to co-operate with other people and to gain the maximum of satisfaction from association with them. Skill in living with those with whom one is thrown in close contact from day to day.
11. Preparation for the social adjustments required in adult life—adjustments to vocation, adjustments to leisure time, adjustments to married life, adjustments to the community group with its civic requirements.
12. A feeling of obligation to make one's contribution to every group to which he belongs. Responsibility to render any possible service to the home, school, community, nation, and world-society.
13. A desire for social improvement. Sensitiveness to social ills. An interest in the continuous progress of industrial, economic, and political life toward the end that all people may profit increasingly from their participation in the social scheme.
14. Integration or organization of the individual's life increasingly about larger and more worthwhile purposes. A feeling of adoption of or consecration to great causes and movements.

In the selection of materials for this volume these fourteen points have been a basis for selection. They have served as criteria for the evaluation of educational processes. Activities have been judged as effective for character education in so far as they have achieved such aims as these. In each instance the

purpose has been to facilitate that way of life which "conserves or produces as many values as possible for as many persons as possible over as long a time as possible."

#### A PROGRAM OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

This volume has been called *The Character Emphasis in Education* with the thought that character education at its best must be an integral part of the total process of education. It cannot be isolated or limited to special classes and programs and hope to make its maximum contribution to the development of the pupil. The total school experience must be a unity in which personality or character can have its full growth.

A few years ago in a certain well-known city there was a nine-year-old boy who was a poor student, was irritable, was disinterested in school and play, and personally unattractive. Even his parents had about decided that he was feeble-minded. The school physician decided that it would help if his tonsils were removed. The operation was performed. The boy could breathe more freely and was less bothered by colds and sore throats. His system threw off the accumulated poison and he began to feel energetic and interested in life. He was now able to do good work in school. In fact, he was a "new" boy. His mother was, of course, very enthusiastic in her appreciation. She happened to be a rather prominent club woman so she called together her influential friends and told them of the marvelous transformation in her son. Then she proposed to them that they go out and raise enough money to have the tonsils of every pupil in all of the schools in the city removed. Unfortunately we cannot find any panacea that will assure to all children the finest development of personality. The educational process and character itself are far too complex for that. Of one thing we can be certain: character education should be a synthesis of many approaches. It is true that "all education at its best is character education" and also true that character education at its best is a pervading emphasis in all education.



Glimpses of utopia are stimulating, especially when the imaginary picture is not too far removed from the efforts and aspirations of those who are actually engaged in the task of educating boys and girls. We raise the question, therefore, "What would be the nature of a school that considered character as the central aim of education and was trying to do the maximum to realize this aim?"

*Using the Regular Program of Instruction to Realize Character Values.*

If we should visit such an ideal, imaginary school, our first desire would be to visit the teacher at work. We would want to walk into the classroom in the middle of the teaching schedule to see whether the emphasis upon character had really pervaded the school. We would undoubtedly find that the curriculum itself was undergoing a change in which the daily life and experience of the pupil was replacing sections of textbooks on history, English, arithmetic, and other units of traditional subject matter, as the center of interest. It would be found that the class period did not consist of hour after hour of question-and-answer recitations but children would be sharing in creative group-activities in which they would not only be gathering significant facts about life but would also be learning to live co-operatively. It would undoubtedly be found that the teacher was sensitive to marginal interests which if explored would be of significant value to the child in making his life-adjustments. And, lastly, the teacher would be tremendously interested in the inner life and the personal problems of each pupil and would be alert to see the needs for personal guidance that might arise in the process of classroom activity.

*Units of Instruction Which Have Character Education as Their Major Aim.*

At least until this school which we are surveying has achieved a complete reorganization of its curriculum it would