Child Development and Guidance in Rural Schools

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PREFACE

The basic aims of democracy and of personnel or guidance work are the same involving, as they both do, the obligation to help the individual develop his best capacities and to use them as a constructive forces in society. That this development gets its start and bent chiefly during the school years is of course an inescapable commonplace. And since, at least in America, it takes place, for slightly more than half of the nation's children, in rural schools, rural teachers are people of crucial importance—never more so than now.

This book is therefore addressed primarily to them, whether it finds them in training, in service, or seeking to combine these two experiences. A practical book on guiding rural boys and girls, such as this aims to be, should also have substantial values for the many teachers in urban and large town schools, who have in their care children of rural background. Obviously, too, this is especially true now when war industries are drawing thousands of rural and small-town families into congested cities and war boom towns. For parents, too, always and everywhere deeply basic in any school program of guidance, help should be found here in developing the closest cooperation with teachers in behalf of their children and for enriching and widening the scope of this cooperation.

The book builds on the assumption that rural teachers are already interested in children as individuals and want to give each one the best guidance service possible. It takes full account of the fact that, although both urban and rural schools show a wide range of difference in economic and cultural opportunities, vast numbers of rural elementary school teachers must grapple with isolation, meager school resources, community poverty, and other difficulties which the average city teacher could hardly visualize. Rural teachers still differ greatly in the amount of their exposure thus far to guidance instruction as such, although the real teacher has always "guided" as best she could, often unconsciously.

For meeting the different levels of guidance preparedness among possible readers, the book aims to interpret the ways and values of guidance simply enough for the least instructed and not too obvi-

ously for those who have made substantial beginnings. In this attempt, it is helped by the fact that rural teachers who are themselves on varying levels of guidance effort have contributed a wealth of illustrative experience showing the problems with which they have grappled and the degrees of their success in the effort. Wherever practicable, these experiences are cited here in the teachers' own words.

The authors have, in general, adhered to the following plan of work: Much time was given, at the beginning, to personal consultations for agreement upon the basic philosophy of education in relation to guidance on which the book was to rest and upon relative values and their integration within the scope of guidance. All resources, including relationships, of the Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth have been at the service of the book. A three-day conference was devoted in its Richmond offices to the selection of potential content. Later contacts have alternated correspondence and personal consultation during preparation. Except for the *Preface* in part and the *Wartime Foreword* as a whole and extracts from Alliance writings acknowledged as such, the book has been written entirely by the author whose name appears first on the title page, although all drafts have been examined and commented upon by the other author and many suggestions have led to changes of one sort or another, with a friendly margin allowed on both sides for differences of opinion or of emphasis. It is only fair for the other author to say that the book inevitably belongs primarily to the one who actually wrote it and that, allowing for a few directly quoted materials, all sections of the book which deal with high school guidance, community services, and national rural trends and agencies belong entirely to this author.

In general, the largest contribution to the content of the book has come from the experiences and files of the Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth gathered over a period of twenty-eight years. A large debt is owed also to many rural teachers for accounts of their individual and classroom guidance in counseling procedures, interviews with parents, and of other types of guidance in action. Especial appreciation of cooperation is due too, to Mr. James A. Cawood, Superintendent of the Schools of Harlan County, Kentucky, where many of these teachers are at work, although the source material for the book represents a wide geographical scope, as well as a wide variety of rural schools and teachers. To. Mr. Carl M. Horn the authors are indebted for insight into the state-wide

program of in-service and pre-service preparation of teachers in the rural counties of Michigan.

Of great value was the critical and constructive reading of the entire manuscript, in its several drafts, by Professor Fannie W. Dunn of Teachers College, Columbia University; and parts of the manuscript by Professor Edmund DeS. Brunner of Teachers College, Columbia University; Mrs. Sibylle K. Escalona, clinical worker; Miss Hattie Parrott, Associate, Division of Instructional Service, State Department of Education, North Carolina; Mr. James Hayford, teacher of English in Summit, New Jersey; and (the vocational guidance section only) by Dr. Robert Hoppock, Associate Professor of Education, New York University; Mrs. Anne Hoppock, Assistant in Elementary Education, State Department of Public Education, Trenton, New Jersey; and Professor John Brewer of Harvard University. The same is true of the reading of a later draft of the text by Dean Alice M. Baldwin of Duke University. Dr. Gertrude Hildreth, Psychologist at the Lincoln School of Teachers College, gave valuable advice on standardized tests. To all best thanks.

Latham Hatcher
Ruth Strang

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A WARTIME FOREWORD

The impact of the war is heaviest of all upon rural schools, where in vast numbers of underprivileged communities many were just beginning to flower out into well-defined progress. Guidance can do much towards holding this progress even under the most adverse conditions now obtaining.

This war impact is devastating in vast numbers of rural elementary schools, where there now are either no teachers at all or none even approximately adequate for the significant responsibilities devolving upon them—whether their handicaps are, variously, inadequate training, lack of experience, being out of date, personal unfitness, difficult transportation and living conditions, or others of potentially wider variety. This, too, although with more rural than urban school children in our country, rural schools are in the largest sense of all "the cradle of American democracy," whether we think of them as releasing the largest numbers for military service or for needs on the home front, now and later.

Nor is it safe to answer that, aside from the grave problem of teacher shortage, rural elementary schools, because of the youth of their pupils, will not feel this direct impact of the war, although the wise U. S. Commissioner of Education has indicated that elementary schools having good basic peacetime programs should not be greatly concerned to make basic wartime changes in them. It is true, of course, that good school programs for the younger children are likely to need the fewest changes, since their programs represent the largest common denominator among schools in their education content. Even so, the war offers teachers there, for all their pupils, not only risks but opportunities for enriching and vitalizing their school programs if they can become fully alive to both, and can be helped to lay hold of and utilize the opportunities.

However, comparatively few rural elementary schools could have qualified even before the present teacher shortage as having really adequate peacetime programs, although many of them have, all along, marked the termination of general education, if not of training as well, for about three fourths of all school children of their

communities. There has been always, too, a premature exodus from these schools beginning perceptibly in the fifth grade, and increasing rapidly beyond that. With the draft calling younger and younger boys and with war industries offering the first chance for early earning, the elementary schools—as the high schools' only source of supply and as the prime sources of human supply for meeting war and postwar national and community needs—face an almost overwhelming necessity for wise teacher-counseling of individual boys and girls regarding going on to high school, regarding implications now of the early draft age, occupational fitness, and other questions soon to be met by them, especially by overaged boys.

But the average elementary rural schools have never had an encouraging outlook for trained counselors and so it is especially imperative that their teachers be helped in every possible way to develop the guidance approach and to utilize available wartime aids to guidance, so as to meet, as best they can, emergency needs as well as the permanent ones.

Vibrant, invigorating new forces are sweeping through most rural high schools today, along with such disintegrating ones as teacher shortage, bewilderment, rash self-guidance, misguidance by family and friends, and other serious mistakes which the lure of easy money and other war excitements bring to boys and girls These are interwoven, too, in their minds with the chance to become vividly alive in the vast effort to win freedom for the world. Shallow and confused personal and parental interpretations of patriotism link themselves to these possibilities, largely as a result of lack of counselors competent to hold the scales between short- and longer-time war considerations and to make them clear to the young people and their families. School-leaving of a more or less reckless sort has therefore abounded.

This situation has been intensified by the facts that so many high school teachers have suddenly resigned their jobs for better and needed earnings or for entering the Armed Forces, and this has naturally influenced student school-leaving in spite of early injunctions of Selective Service, and now of the War Manpower Commission as well, for boys to stay in school until called and so to prepare themselves best for whatever form of service is to be demanded of them. Thus the government itself is giving much thought to the long view, as well as to current world emergencies, and young people can be sure of government approval when they carry on efficiently in school until summoned. Counselors, if any,

should make themselves as nearly equal as possible to creating acceptance of this advice and, where there is no paid counselor, high school faculties should so divide and yet unify the task that the many-sided information needed as a basis for counseling now can be secured and coordinated for distribution and wise application to individual needs of students. In addition, boys who stay in school need to regard much more carefully Army and Navy injunctions to stress their basic subjects and to consider special war training courses as minors. The vividness of this need appears in the Navy's strong protest as to its present handicaps in the poor training of Navy men in mathematics. This admonition by no means applies, however, to abolishing pre-induction guidance, which is needed by all, as individuals, whatever division of the Service they may enter later.

Without informed, coordinating, and balanced guidance service, rural high schools will deteriorate rapidly now, falling apart at many strategic points and misturns, and leaving disastrous scars of backwardness on the community and upon postwar developments there. Moreover, unless we can hold, in such times as these, a flexible but reasonably firm understructure of educational effort to come back to in the postwar period, the problems of that period, sure to be heavy at best, will be at their worst when need of the best will be at its peak.

Of course, the recent law enforcing the drafting of the eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds will itself decide, for the duration, all questions regarding occupations of boys accepted under its provisions. But various types of pre-induction guidance are increasingly recognized by war officials as needed. Also, aside from meeting the needs, much can be done through high school counseling to give the individual draftee still in high school, as well as those outside in the community, some concept of his education as only temporarily interrupted or diverted, and to be continued later along whatever postwar lines are suited to him and to current conditions. Many colleges are managing to impart this concept to draftees by working out with them now special adjustments for the future. Girls, also, although denied participation in battles, are of course close behind the boys now in need for war and postwar guidance, especially as recruiting for Women's Reserves is increasing in intensity and the urgent needs of helpers in war industries and in many phases of civilian defense are brought home to them more and more strongly, too. Presumably they do not risk the

supreme sacrifice and therefore they are not given as drastic training as that given to the boys but, with due adjustment to their sex, they need many of the types of guidance which so many of the boys need without receiving it as pre-induction preparation.

Also, there are vast numbers of rural boys, within the wide gamut from high school graduation even down to illiteracy, who will be rejected for one deficiency or another and who may on that account be especially in need of heartening counsel and of constructive advice regarding further education and wise occupational choices and training, often regarding emotional disturbances and other personal problems. Many of those deferred for work in agriculture and other critical occupations will need their share of guidance service, too, whatever their individual areas of difficulty.

The High School Victory Corps program, wherever under wise local leadership and possessed of reasonably adequate physical facilities for development, can do much to provide high school boys and girls with the guidance service needed for their own best development and, as a part of that, in their efforts to be useful in war and postwar undertakings. This program is making sturdy progress now throughout the country where such aids can be had and where they are supplemented by adequate state assistance in clarifying the Corps' aims, in reorganizing the school program sufficiently to admit of meeting Corps' requirements, and in getting and using valuable information available through the U. S. Office of Education, the National Education Association, and other federal and private agencies. However, all of this is needed for a stable, ongoing program.

The 4-H Victory Corps program, open to all boys and girls between ten and twenty-one years of age, is also important in the thousands of rural communities where it is functioning through the Agricultural Extension Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Its large home army of young people trained and alert to help in food production for those out on the battlefront, as well as for those at home; its conservation program and its various other services contributed towards civilian defense, will acquire steadily increasing significance as the war goes on to its end and postwar needs develop.

Naturally, such rural forces as the schools, the Agricultural Extension Service, the Future Farmers of America, the Boy and Girl Scouts, and other such constructive groups must and will work closely together in order to achieve best results in any coordi-

nated county or community effort. Whether the coordination is effected through a county planning council, a Council of Civilian Defense, or through some other federation of agencies, such youth groups and youth-serving groups can do much to help draw in other needed agencies and to fuse them.

There is, of course, the further obligation to build in high school boys and girls, as well as in the younger ones down in the elementary school, the realization that they must soon be carrying the responsibilities for the brave new international world for which the war is being fought, and that, without due preparation, they cannot do their part in achieving it.

Thus the total need for wartime and postwar guidance of rural school boys and girls mounts to large proportions indeed if disastrous waste of youth manpower is to be avoided. It places upon every rural school, as well as upon every urban one, a profound obligation to provide in the best possible way wise counseling and other adjustment services for all boys and girls entrusted to their care in these superlatively critical times.

Latham Hatcher

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CHAPTER I

EDUCATION THROUGH GUIDANCE

You can interrupt the improving of a road and ten years later go on with it about where you left off, but if you interrupt decent care for children and ten years later begin again to feel responsible for them, you can by no means begin where you left off. You find them irreparably grown up, and grown up wrong—enemies and liabilities of their communities rather than friends and assets.

THIS quotation from Dorothy Canfield Fisher emphasizes the importance of good education now. Educational reforms after the war will be too late for this generation of children.

More than half these children live in the open country or in small towns. They feel the impact of war and want to share the burdens with adults. In the midst of disorganization of their homes and in their new freedom and responsibility, they naturally turn to teachers for continuity of relationship and guidance.

Our rural teachers are therefore people of critical importance, more so now than ever. Unless definitely called for some other special service, teachers should not desert their posts. There is no greater long-term service they can render than to bring up this generation of children in the ways of democracy. Whether in training or in service, they need help in understanding and developing the best potentialities of these rural boys and girls on whom so much of the nation's future depends.

Guidance is the process by which an individual's potentialities are discovered and developed, through his own efforts, for his personal happiness and social usefulness. It is the "more individual and developmental approach to education" and helps boys and girls to get the most out of their school years. Through the guidance process it may be possible to build a world of people who have no need to hate and dominate others, who find satisfaction in co-operative enterprises, and who have acquired the understanding and skill required to do their work in the world.

Opportunities for Guidance in Rural Schools

When a rural teacher goes to a new school, she is concerned, first of all, with meeting the needs of her pupils. If she does whatever task she finds at hand to the best of her ability, out of the exigencies of each situation will arise opportunities for guidance.[1] For her, difficulties will become educational opportunities. Thus, all through the day, the effective teacher is learning about her pupils and trying to provide the experiences each needs. In the following accounts of the first weeks which two teachers spent in their rural schools opportunities for indirect but effective guidance are illustrated.

"When school opened, I started teaching with bigger ideas and a head full of things to accomplish in my school this year. I was better equipped to do these things because I had just finished a course in guidance and had learned ways of meeting the needs of the individual children.

"The first thing the other teacher and I did was to clean the school building. We painted the inside of the building and made new curtains in our sewing club, which was composed of both boys and girls. The boys did the cutting and the girls did the sewing. This gave me an ideal chance to study the children the first week of school. We bought new window shades and pictures, the children brought flowers, and we had a real pretty schoolroom on the inside.

"Outside we had nothing but a hillside to keep clean. The children had no place to play, so our big problem was to find one. We got permission from one of the parents to clean off a piece of his ground. The children brought hoes and cleaned and grubbed until they had an excellent place to play. We certainly did have a nice group of willing workers. They enjoyed doing things that they thought were worth while.

"We knew that in order to get things going in a big way we must have the co-operation of the parents. So we organized our Parent-Teachers Association the last Friday in the third week of school. We served them ice-cold lemonade and cookies, and such a turnout I've never seen before. Every parent and every child

[1] The term *personnel work* is frequently used interchangeably with *guidance*. Both terms refer to the personal side of education. Because the term *guidance* seems to be more familiar to rural teachers it is used throughout this book instead of the term *personnel work*.

in the community was there. We organized our meeting and gave a short program with games and prizes for the parents. Everyone seemed to enjoy himself. During the year the parents made a workbench, repaired seats, made costumes for the school fair, made walk logs, cut weeds, and filled in mud holes. They co-operated 100 per cent at the Thanksgiving party. We always welcomed any parent to our school.

"We had interviews with each child, gave intelligence tests, and studied each child individually. Our county supervisor said we had one of the best sets of records he had seen this year.

"It took me over a month to get my children divided into active working groups.

"The second grade made a bird-and-tree frieze. Some of their drawings were not recognizable as birds and trees but we were working for self-expression and for unity and co-operation rather than perfection in drawing.

"The third grade undertook an Indian project. We had some books and magazines on the subject. Then we had our own ideas, too, and expressed them on paper, on cloth, in wood, or in clay. I also taught my children to do a simple kind of weaving. It was a little hard for them at first but, after practice, they made buffet sets, napkins, and centerpieces and sold them, using the money to buy things for our school.

"Our next project was a wood project. Each child in school made a set of book ends for his mother. We got our wood by begging for meat boxes, orange crates, or anything we could get. Then we cut it, sandpapered it, drew designs with water colors, and shellacked them. They were really pretty and made nice gifts. The school furnished everything except the sandpaper. The children bought that for two cents a sheet. They worked eagerly and we had to shoo them away from the workbench at noon and at recess.

"Through these projects I could tell who were my artists, weavers, good thinkers, alert-minded and industrious children.

"Through these activities the children learned new words—the names of things they worked with and other words they found in their reading. Simple problems in arithmetic also grew out of the activities. Oral English expression was stimulated by having children tell others how they had made certain things.

"The pupils had a free period every Friday afternoon from two o'clock on. At these times as well as at noon and recess periods we

had supervised play. When it was rainy, the children played inside games like Tin Pan and Blind Man's Buff. On a few occasions, instead of playing, they gathered our supply of wood for the winter.

"We supervised the lunch period and told our pupils what was best to bring for their lunch without making them feel that we were meddling.

"We by no means had a perfect school, but I do think we left it in a better condition and our pupils better equipped than we found them. I feel that if it had not been for my guidance training I would have made a failure of my year of teaching."[2]

This rural teacher obtained pupils' and parents' interest and co-operation in making the school safe, comfortable, and attractive. By working with them she learned about their abilities and interests, and established a friendly relationship which is the foundation of guidance. In the process both pupils and parents gained a feeling of accomplishment and pride in the school. The schoolroom became a place in which pupils were helped to discover what they were interested in and what they could do successfully. The slow-learning pupils experienced success in school, perhaps for the first time. They were disciplined by necessary and important tasks, not by fear of punishment. By doing these useful tasks with success and satisfaction, the children acquired a good attitude toward work.

In another school the problem of securing safe drinking water presented itself on the first day. The first step toward a solution was to clean out the well. This did not supply the necessary drinking water, however, because the summer had been too dry. The next step was to get permission from one of the neighbors to bring water to the school from his well. Fortunately, the school had a good water cooler. The final step was to divide the large boys into groups, each group assuming for a week the responsibility of keeping plenty of water in the cooler. Successfully providing this service for about ninety pupils gave these boys a genuine sense of satisfaction.

In the same school the larger boys stayed after school on Friday of the first week to clean the schoolhouse and to oil the floor. By Monday morning the oil was dry, and the pleasure expressed by the other children in finding the school so nice and clean was very gratifying to the workers.

[2] Reported by Pauline Bach, Breathitt County, Kentucky.

The next task was to improve the playground. Pupils and teachers first discussed the problem—what needed to be done, how it could be accomplished, who were the best persons to do it. After they had made their plans, they got wheelbarrows, hoes, and shovels and went to work. They made equipment and built badminton, deck tennis, and handball courts.

These examples suggest a few ways in which the concrete and practical tasks in a rural school offer opportunities for guidance. Real work that needs to be done enlists the interest and effort of children of all ages. While working on tasks which they recognize as important, they acquire fundamental knowledge and skills. While working together, they gain a sense of belonging to the group. Older boys and girls may learn to enjoy smaller children instead of ignoring or bullying them. *What* is done, however, is not so important as *how* it is done and the relationship between teacher and pupils as they solve practical rural problems.

Rural Children and Their Need for Guidance

Rural children have basic needs common to children everywhere. They need physical conditions conducive to health and growth. They need opportunities to talk and play with other boys and girls. They need parents' affection. They need inspiration in seeing the beauty in the world about them. They need to share, according to their ability, in work and play that will give them a sense of adventure and of belonging to groups: the home, the school, and the community. They need counsel in times of crises and when they have important decisions to make. They need faith in the future. In brief, each child needs to do the kind of work he has the capacity to do and to be the best kind of person he is capable of becoming.

Any two children may react differently to the same environment. For that reason and also because of the variation in rural environments, there is no such person as *the rural child.* Rather, there are children growing up in rural homes, showing varied patterns of human characteristics and needs.

JIM, WHO HAD WISE GUIDANCE IN HIS EARLY YEARS

Jim was fortunate in that his mother was able to obtain medical supervision before his birth. Thus, the baby was protected from possible blindness, poor teeth, and other serious defects. After he

was born, this supervision was continued until the mother had learned from the nurse how to feed, clothe, bathe, and otherwise care for his physical needs. In this way the discomfort of the baby's first months was lessened and his attitude toward life was not distorted by unnecessary pain and difficulty. The nurse's demonstrations and instructions were supplemented by the mother's reading of recent pamphlets on infant care and feeding,[3] issued by the Children's Bureau, United States Department of Labor.

During his preschool years Jim's mother showed skill in helping him, gradually, as he showed readiness, to acquire the routines of civilized life. He learned to eat at regular mealtimes, gained bladder and bowel control, and came to realize that everything and everyone would not always bend to his will. When a baby sister arrived, the mother made four-year-old Jim feel that he was more important to her than ever by encouraging him to take an active part in helping her care for and protect the new baby. As a result of this sympathetic home guidance, Jim reached school age without stored-up resentment, jealousy, or feelings of insecurity.

Jim had wise guidance in the widest meaning of the term. There was an anticipation and understanding of his basic needs, physical, social, and emotional. The story of his early years shows the way in which all these phases or aspects of development are interrelated and how his experiences helped to make him the kind of boy he became.

MARY, WHO WAS HANDICAPPED BY SHYNESS AND AWKWARDNESS

Mary presented a marked contrast to Jim. Her poor health, embarrassment in the presence of strangers, inability to get along with other children and to participate spontaneously in school activities seemed to be due to her mother's lack of contact with community resources as well as to heavy home duties. Moreover, Mary was seldom away from her own home, unless accompanied by some member of the family. Thus she reached her sixth year without having had to hold her own in a group of children. She shied away from other children, lowered her eyes when the teacher turned to her, and spoke almost inaudibly. Even granting that she lacked varied social contacts, as so often happens with farm children, one would look for deeper causes than mere lack of experience to explain her shyness. Very likely she doubted her adequacy as a

[3] Obtained from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.