

TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE STUDY

A PRACTICAL DISCUSSION OF EFFECTIVE METHODS
FOR TRAINING SCHOOL PUPILS TO ORGANIZE
THEIR STUDY PROCEDURE

BY

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**TO
MY MOTHER
THROUGH WHOSE INFLUENCE
AND ENCOURAGEMENT I FIRST
LEARNED THE PLEASURE OF
STUDY**

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THIS volume gives emphasis, in a very practical form, to a relatively new and a very important aspect of the problem of teacher training. Up to at least very recently, and in altogether too many cases still, our normal schools and teacher-training institutions have placed the main emphasis on special methods and practice in teaching. The so-called special-methods courses in the various elementary-school subjects have been given an emphasis clearly beyond their importance in the training of a teacher, and practice in classroom instruction, often without much careful guidance as to means and ends, has been depended on, along with a little psychology, to transform the beginner into a trained and accomplished teacher.

The author of the present volume in the *Riverside Textbooks in Education* has taken an entirely different view of the process of teacher training, and has placed the emphasis on training pupils to organize their study procedure in an effective manner and to learn to think. Instead of training teachers to assign lessons, control discipline, and hear recitations from textbooks which the pupils have been directed to memorize, he would have teachers trained to direct pupils in study habits, and thus emancipate them from a dependence on both textbooks and teachers. He would make the

children do the thinking and most of the talking in the recitation, the teacher merely directing the process and stimulating the pupils to further activity. To do this, though, involves that the teacher be trained to look after the preparation of the conditions for study, think out in advance and direct the pupils as to what they are to do, properly motivate the work to be done, cause the pupils to erect standards for their work, develop in them effective methods for attacking problems, and out of such work train the pupils to think for themselves and direct their conduct in a democratic society such as our own.

Such work he rightly holds to be a far more fundamental function of the teacher than the assignment of lessons, the hearing of recitations, and the testing for the memorization of facts. In other words, he shifts the main emphasis from the recitation itself to the preparation for the recitation, from the accumulation of knowledge to learning how to find and use knowledge, from the gathering of information to learning how to use it and hence stand on one's own feet, from drill to appreciation and expression, from learning facts to fitting for responsibilities, and from discipline by rules to training for rational self-control. The function of the teacher then changes from that of hearing recitations to that of guiding and directing pupils, from that of teaching them the accumulated knowledge of the past to widening their horizons, and to that of training pupils, through the medium of the directed

work of the school, for a life of intelligent self-direction amid the real problems of our political and industrial society.

The careful study of such a volume by the students in training in our normal schools and teacher-training classes, based as it is on the psychology of the instincts and of thinking, could displace, with advantage, much of the special-methods work now given to intending teachers. It deals with the fundamental underlying methods for training pupils to think and to acquire and use needed information, whereas much of the special-methods work still taught in our teacher-training institutions deals only with the presentation, by the teacher to the child, of traditional courses of study material.

This volume ought also to find an extensive use in Teachers' Reading Circles, as, by reason of its simple style, its logical organization, and its many practical applications to classroom situations, it is especially well calculated to stimulate teachers in service to new thinking along the lines here presented, and tend in consequence to develop a more intelligent classroom procedure.

ELLWOOD P. CUBBERLEY

PREFACE

THIS book has been written from a conviction that the study period is as important a factor in the child's education as the recitation period, and that it is therefore quite as much the business of the recitation to prepare for the subsequent study as it is for the study period to prepare for the subsequent recitation.

There is nothing unique in the writer's insistence upon the importance of having pupils learn how to study. As numerous quotations appearing in the book show, the best-known modern educators have often emphasized its value and deplored the lack of general improvement. Some books already published deal with phases of the problem in a very helpful way, especially in defining what real study should mean, and in presenting plans for supervising study periods. The thing which still seems to be needed is a recognition that but little general improvement in study is possible so long as it is considered merely as a problem apart from the recitation. The traditional assumption that the chief and almost exclusive concern of the recitation is with material previously assigned for study has been responsible for establishing practices in conducting the recitation that still persist very generally, and that handicap improvement in study. For example, a complaint often heard regarding most

pupils is that their conception of study is limited chiefly to memorizing. But that style of study was the kind demanded by the schools of a generation or two ago. In the meantime our conceptions have changed both regarding teaching and the meaning of study without sufficient general revision of procedure to establish correspondingly new methods of study. The modern belief that growth in independent self-direction and skill in study should be emphasized as among the most important aims of the school calls for a critical consideration of all practices that influence such attainment.

In attempting such a consideration the writer has included in the first chapter an enumeration of factors that influence study, with detailed discussion of the more general conditions that have vital bearing on its improvement. The second, third, and fourth chapters deal with those essentials to good study for which the recitation period is primarily responsible. In the remaining chapters are taken up the special phases belonging largely or wholly to the study period itself. In the upper grades and high school these are frequently directed by some teacher other than the one conducting the recitation.

It is recognized that the value of a book in which is undertaken such a task as this will depend upon how well it connects with conditions as they actually exist. With this in mind, the writer has made liberal use of illustrative material drawn from the actual classroom

use, under ordinary conditions, of various features of organization and practice which have been found effective in bringing about better methods and results in study. Not only may some of the most common present difficulties be relieved by helping pupils toward an intelligent, self-reliant use of textbooks, instead of an inane servility to them, but at the same time the way is also being best prepared for progress in all phases of educational practice. Experience shows that a safe and successful transition to the project method of school instruction is dependent upon the facility developed in pupils for handling effectively their independent undertakings and investigations. This book is put forth in the earnest hope that it may prove helpful in making such a transition to the wider use of all practices that call forth greater initiative and responsibility on the part of pupils.

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TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE STUDY

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CHAPTER I

THE MEANING, IMPORTANCE, AND CONDITIONS OF STUDY

THE importance of having children acquire the power of effective study has often been emphasized. Proficiency in this respect not only ensures their successful progress in school, but increases in value after school days are past. There is nothing more essential to the best citizenship than the ability to investigate intelligently and reach an independent conclusion on public questions. Especially now in the reconstruction period following the war, when former facts and principles are being revised or discarded, the thing of greatest permanent value is the power to master new principles as they arise and grasp the new facts necessary to the readjustments demanded. As Bagley has said, "To teach a child to study effectively is to do the most valuable thing that could be done to help him adjust himself to any environment of modern civilized life into which he may be thrown."

No general improvement. In spite of frequent complaints regarding the failure of pupils to learn how to

study, and the occasional examples of good work in the right direction to be found in the best schools, there has been very little general improvement. In 1885 G. Stanley Hall declared: "At least three fourths of all the time spent by a boy of twelve in trying to learn a hard lesson out of a book is time thrown away. Perhaps one fourth of the time is devoted to more or less desperate and conscientious effort, but the large remaining portion is dwindled away in thinking of the last game of ball or longing for the next game of tag." In 1905 Bagley said: "This phase of schoolroom activity or inactivity is beyond doubt responsible for much more than one half of the serious waste of time that our American system involves. The time spent by the average child in 'preparing lessons' is very largely time thrown away." In 1909 F. M. McMurry, in commenting upon the pupils' lack of ability to study as revealed in an investigation conducted by Earhart, asserted: "It is, perhaps, unnecessary to collect proofs that pupils do not learn how to study, because teachers admit the fact very generally. Parents who supervise their children's studies, or who otherwise know about their habits of work, observe the same fact with sorrow." In 1917 Strayer and Norsworthy declared: "Many teachers have taught subjects, but not how to study subjects. The latter is more important." These comments, extending over a period of thirty-two years, and expressing the judgment of such well-known educators, indicate that there is still a general need for