



# THE FORTY-SIXTH YEARBOOK

OF THE  
NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY  
OF EDUCATION

## PART II EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

*Prepared by the Society's Committee*

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The outline for the present yearbook was first prepared by the chairman of the yearbook committee at the request of the Board of Directors. At the meeting of October 21, 1944, in the course of a general discussion of types of yearbooks that might properly be developed for publication by the Society, the members of the Board were found to be in agreement on the question of the timeliness of a yearbook dealing with recent movements relating to the care and training of children younger than the traditional school-entering age. Accordingly, it was decided to seek advice concerning the appropriate contents and organization of a yearbook in this area. The request for such assistance was submitted to Mr. Light in view of his work as President of the National Association for Nursery Education. The suggested outline presented by Mr. Light was considered at the meeting of the Board in June, 1945, and approved with provision for review by a special committee consisting of Mr. Light, Miss Goodykoontz, and Mr. Stoddard. Following the meeting of this committee in September, 1945, the yearbook committee was organized under the chairmanship of Mr. Light. The preparation of the volume has been carried on in spite of many discouraging experiences, these involving interruptions to the undertakings of committee members themselves as a result of illness in some instances and of the claiming of other members for governmental services abroad. The editor vouches for the devoted interest and effort of "available" members of the committee at all stages of the exacting task of completing this volume for publication in 1947.

Among the noteworthy contributions of this volume are an enlightening interpretation of the sociological backgrounds of primary education and of the results of scientific studies of child development, the review of progress and present practices in the application of new knowledge to the developing procedures for institutional training in early childhood, and the description of facilities and resources needed for effective implementation of an organized system of education to serve the varying needs of all classes of children prior to their enrolment in the elementary school. It is not inappropriate in this connection to note the fact that the Society has repeatedly undertaken to stimulate professional interest in the educational needs of very young children. In 1907 and again in 1908, Part II of the yearbook was devoted to the consideration of kindergarten training for preschool children; the Twenty-eighth Yearbook, *Preschool and Parental Education*, and Part II of the Thirty-eighth Yearbook, *Child*

*Development and the Curriculum*, were widely recognized as distinctive contributions to the literature of this field; and the two volumes of the Forty-fourth Yearbook, *American Education in the Post-war Period*, gave significant emphasis to the need of substantial expansion of educational opportunities on behalf of children of nursery-school and kindergarten age.

NELSON B. HENRY

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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Early childhood education emerges from the tests of depression and war into peacemaking and the atomic age with perhaps fewer challenges to its basic principles, goals, and practices than any other level of education. The requirements for social adequacy and individual competence in an age of struggle to achieve a world brotherhood of man before new forces unlocked by science shall destroy man himself are singularly identical with the ends toward which early childhood education has been slowly moving.

In this new age, education in the exercise of freedom is imperative. Beginning in its simplest forms as soon as the child is capable of making a choice and of feeling responsibility for the outcomes of that choice, education in freedom must increase under intelligent guidance throughout the school years until the child shall have become a mature adult. It is only by appropriate education that acceptance of responsibility and self-reliance can be attained, and the only appropriate education consists of opportunities to make a choice between various courses of action and to accept responsibility for that choice and its outcomes. The child learns both from his successes and from his failures, and he learns, especially, to know and to accept himself as well as others.

Choice in courses of action implies choice in goals and that, in turn, implies an opportunity to consider the implications of learnings; and that, itself, can be a rewarding experience for children. Children should learn to set goals for themselves, goals which they can reasonably expect to achieve, goals they can measure as achieved, goals that are worth while. It is not merely that such goals furnish strong motivation but that ability to set them and to hold themselves to them is of life-long value, especially if it becomes a habitual practice.

Inherent in this process is the development of self-discipline. It is only by increasingly effective discipline of self that the child, then the youth, and then the adult can learn to accept responsibility for his actions. External discipline imposed by the school has its ultimate purpose beyond the maintenance of order and safety—the purpose of developing self-disciplined individuals. That it is not generally so conceived or administered is quite apparent. The educational purpose of school discipline is too frequently sacrificed to the practical demands of the immediate. Discipline is something essential in order to educate. We have yet to accept in practice the concept that discipline is an inseparable factor of education in democratic living.

Children are not born with the ability to use freedom wisely. They have to learn what freedom means and what it entails for one who would have it and keep it. They have to learn self-discipline. They have to learn to subordinate their own interests to the good of the group and, thereby, learn something of their obligations in a democratic society. Children have to learn “to think for themselves but to act for the group,” and, as they do so, they gain in understanding of present-day associational living.

In any educational program of this order, children will be confronted with a succession of situations which present problems, sometimes simple, but inevitably of growing complexity as they penetrate further and further into life activities about them. This is bound to happen because the learnings under consideration here are not to be had from books. They come only from real experience in association with others in and about the school and in the community, and they can be assured, even then, only when there is understanding guidance which assists them in interpreting their experiences. The reading of books and other materials may illuminate and enrich their experiences and may help in the solution of problems, but it is no substitute for them. Skill in attacking a real problem, knowledge of sources and how to use them, skill in organizing materials, and the ability to come to a decision are not the least of the values to be gained from this program.

The programming of worth-while experiences to further and guide development into effective citizenship in this atomic age is no simple matter, but it is of the greatest importance. Any discussion of this problem in this introductory chapter would be quite out of place. Its importance in the period immediately ahead does need to be stressed and not overlooked in the long list of urgent tasks for education.

Along with concern for the social and intellectual development of the child should go concern for his emotional development. Perhaps



the words "mature adult" suggest emotional stability to more people more often than any other personality characteristic. Certainly the emotional development of the child is of the greatest importance to him and to society, and yet, educationally, little is known about it and still less is done about it. That children have emotions and that they express them vigorously when free to do so, nobody will deny. Possibly nobody will deny that, in general, the tendency in schools has been to suppress expressions of emotion. In some quarters, any real expression of emotion is not good form. To be sure, expressions of hostility and aggression have recently attracted much attention, with marked differences in opinion resulting. Are acts of aggression or expressions of hostility ever acceptable? If so, when? Under what conditions? Within what limits? Here is a field of active controversy. Must the incorporation of positive programs of emotional development in the schools await still further research, or is there is a sufficient basis in the vast literature of this field for going further than outlining measures for the prevention, control, or cure of certain emotional responses commonly considered to be behavior problems? It may be that teachers and psychologists should pool their resources in a concerted attack on this problem. A beginning on a program of emotional development is what is needed now.

Significant to the emotional well-being of the child has been the recent trend in medicine away from adult-imposed schedules and routines to programs largely regulated by the child. Here is recognition of individual differences in infancy and encouragement to similar trends in education at higher age levels. One of the causes of emotional insecurity in the child is a sense of unmet personal needs. Correspondingly, security comes to the child when his needs are met. This is the justification for the steps early childhood education has taken in recent years to give the child a feeling that he is wanted, to provide expressions of affection for him, and to satisfy other basic needs of the child.

While much of what has been written here may seem somewhat remote from early childhood education and more the concern of education at later stages, it is all pertinent. The beginnings are of the greatest importance; they are the business of early childhood education and have, in many ways, been accepted as such. Practice has, however, lagged far behind, partly because of administrative hindrances, partly because of inadequately trained teachers, but not because of public opinion. Public opinion has, in general, supported changes in recognition of children as persons, each with his own potentialities and characteristics.

The problems of early childhood education are those of improving practices which utilize more fully the fruits of research upon children in a variety of fields. A vast amount of research is already available, and more becomes available every year. This yearbook opens with a consideration of the social scene and the pressures upon the individual child, upon selected groups of children, and those that impinge upon all children. Implications for education, and for curriculum-making in particular, are numerous. As the social picture changes, the implications change; and curriculum changes should follow if they do not anticipate social changes. With curriculum changes should come changes in organization, in administrative procedures, in school plant and equipment, in teacher education, and in record-making and reporting—for these are the means of making teaching effective.

From psychology, from child development centers and from medicine, notably pediatrics and child psychiatry, the flow of research materials upon young children increases rapidly. This flow of reports of research presents a problem of synthesis for educational purposes. Is this the exclusive function of education, or is it a problem of cooperation and articulation? In this yearbook, examinations of research reports on a few selected problems of educational guidance are presented. Among the problems discussed is that of making research in child development more useful to teachers. A suggested remedy is collaboration of research personnel and teachers in planning, conducting, reporting, and evaluating research studies. One of the advantages of the suggested procedure is that it would be one step toward a synthesis of educational and child development research on the operational level.

But this sort of approach is not enough. No teacher or parent today can keep abreast of publications in his field. Worse than that, both are frequently the victims of garbled and distorted versions of reports. Some way must be found for synthesizing the results of research, for selecting that which is of importance to those interested in guiding the development of children, and for making the results available quickly and in an authoritative form.

This is to suggest, also, that research teams should be more generally used in planning and conducting research on projects which have potential values for education. The presence of a qualified teacher on the research team would tend to enhance the educational value of projects.

The team technique is a logical outcome of a situation in which research on any phase of life is more and more dependent upon re-

search on other phases. The biologist, studying the problems of cell growth in the body, associates with himself the chemist and physicist for the sake of their knowledge of the cell, the molecule, and the atom.

While the research specialist, following the pattern of the natural sciences, attempts to isolate a phase of child behavior for study, the teaching concept of the child is that of a living organism capable of thinking and willing, an organism that acts and reacts as a unit. Anything that happens to the child affects the organism as a whole. Guidance of the development of children to maturity is a function of education exercised chiefly by the teacher and parent. Research in child development must have improvement in child guidance as one of its objectives, if not its chief objective. It would seem to follow that the qualified teacher should play an important role in many child development research projects at all stages.

Curriculum-making is, quite evidently, becoming a more and more difficult problem even with the very young child. If it ever was simple, it certainly is not so now. It was for this reason that this yearbook is devoted chiefly to that field with its implications for organization, administration, teacher education, and other phases of the educational program. It is in no sense a teacher's handbook. It is addressed, rather, to leaders in the field of education and research as a critical interpretation with a restrained projection into the future.

## CHAPTER II

### YOUNG CHILDREN AT THE TURN OF THIS ERA

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#### FAR HORIZONS AND HOME-FRONT EFFECTS

This is a period of awesome change. Within the span of a few years all earth-bound means of protection of man and nations from invasion by aggressive forces and ideas have been swept aside. We now quiver with consternation as we discover ourselves as world neighbors bereft of sheltering national boundaries and compelled to chisel out an enduring peace. We cannot beg for time to catch our breath and unify our home front; we cannot ask for a cessation of international communication until we educate ourselves for more adequate understanding; we cannot nullify these last years with their devastating effects and "go back to normal times." No, we must face the todays and the tomorrows and summon our intellectual and moral resources to aid in building a world solidarity, free from the threat of momentary destruction.

How do such considerations relate to young children? Our obvious answer is to indicate the importance of educating them so that they are able to take hold of affairs in judicious manner once their turn comes, assuming with all the hope our hearts can hold that affairs can be righted so their turn will come. But, like the present complexity of world affairs, our ideas on how to meet the needs of young children have become more involved and complex. This is readily appreciated when one takes the time to consider how these changes which have put a whole world in such terrifying flux leave their mark upon the day-to-day life of children. It is the intention of the committee who planned this yearbook to contribute to this essential area of understanding. Although the yearbook may appeal primarily to the leaders in the field of education of young children, it is of real importance to those in the field of public school education and to welfare and service groups working closely with the family.