

A HANDBOOK FOR RURAL SCHOOL OFFICERS

BY

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CHENEY, WASHINGTON



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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE district form of school organization and control goes back to the beginnings of education at public expense in America, and, despite the many recent changes which have tended to evolve a larger unit for rural school administration, it still remains to-day the most commonly used form found in our American States. There are in the United States at present approximately 215,000 one-room rural schools under the district form of organization and control, and for these approximately 250,000 citizens are called upon to serve each year as school trustees. In addition, other trustees are required to direct the organization of the two-room and three-room and four-room village schools found in many places in our land. Though the smallest administrative unit under our political system to which any large powers are entrusted, the school trustees, or school directors as they are called in some of our States, nevertheless exercise very important functions under our laws. Each little school district has been created by law a body corporate and politic, and has the powers of a public corporation under the laws of the State. To the board of school trustees certain important legal powers have been given. These include the right to enter into contracts, to act in the name of the district, to sue and be sued, to purchase and hold title to property necessary for school purposes, and to employ teachers and supervise a school.

For the teacher in such a school much has been written, especially in recent years, and teachers' institutes have for long been provided with a view to instructing teachers better as to their work. For the school trustee little or nothing of

a helpful nature has so far appeared, and only in very recent years have trustees' institutes begun to be held with a view to instructing trustees as to the proper handling of their important duties. The need for some simple book that would serve to help trustees to understand their work has recently come to be felt, and the present *Handbook* is an attempt to minister to this new need. The author of the volume, a former county superintendent of schools, and for many years past president of a State normal school that has taken a prominent part in the movement in his State to improve rural school conditions, is familiar with the many efforts which have been attempted with a view to improving the rural school. The *Handbook* which he has prepared, and which is now offered to the public, ought to prove of large usefulness to school trustees and school directors in helping them to a more intelligent understanding of the important work which they have been called upon to perform.

ELLWOOD P. CUBBERLEY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS is intended as a handbook for rural school trustees, and has for its purpose the stimulation of these officers in their interest in education to the extent that they will put forth the greatest personal effort to accomplish the most possible for their respective districts. It is intended that all information given herein shall be authentic, and that all suggestions shall be based upon the best methods and practices now used in administering the common schools of our country. The volume is a result of personal investigation of plans and practices now in use in the best rural communities of the United States.

Our educational system has grown out of the rural unit organized during our early history. At its very beginning, it was vital to our stability as a free government, it has persisted to the present, and its improvement as a national institution is now of great public importance. Each rural community has in it the vital elements necessary to a great America, and the public school must become the coördinating organization necessary to fuse these elements into a living force. The better the school the more vitalized the community must be. The greater the development provided for each individual, the more important and the more powerful our Nation will surely become. May each school officer recognize the fact that he holds the keys to American progress, which can only become the sum total of the combined thinking of all of the people.

It is not intended that this volume should represent some original plan for school organization and administration, worked out wholly differently from that now found in our

best schools. On the other hand, it is purposely intended to point out the proven way to the best success through the means which have been tried in actual practice. The author has called upon many teachers and educators for suggestions, many of which have been freely used with the hope of making the contents of greatest practical value.

The author especially wishes to acknowledge the help which came directly from the members of his own faculty, who either offered suggestions which have been freely used or gave assistance in preparing one or more of the chapters. In this connection the following names should specifically be mentioned: F. E. Barr, George E. Craig, Alma A. Dobbs, Mary Ensfield, Josephine FitzGerald, George W. Frasier, Frances Johnston, Curtis Merriman, Bertha Most, and George H. Yost.

I also wish to make especial acknowledgment of the help received from Mr. Earl W. Morrison, a school architect with offices in Spokane, Washington, for his assistance in preparing the plans and drawings for most of the type-schools given in this volume.

N. D. SHOWALTER

CHENEY, WASHINGTON
January, 1920

A FOREWORD

CREED FOR THE SCHOOL TRUSTEE OR THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR

I BELIEVE in the directors, the devoted men of to-day and yesterday; that whatever they sow the community will reap.

I BELIEVE the director should visit the school often, consult with the teacher, advise with the parents, and coöperate with any power that will advance the cause of education in his school.

I BELIEVE the teacher makes the school; that no minted coin is small enough to pay for the services of a poor one, and none too rich for the real teacher.

I BELIEVE in the hopes and ideals of the efficient teacher; in her sympathy and power for good; in her enthusiasm and good cheer that leads her on.

I BELIEVE in the innocence of childhood, in sunshine, in laughter, in the castles that fancy rears; in the purity of child life, in the removal of temptation; in the suppression of vice and crime.

I BELIEVE there is a problem for every day I live; that opportunity knocks at my door continually; that progress and good citizenship demand that I stay at my post of duty.

I BELIEVE that ignorance is a tax; that the unskilled represent lost opportunity; that lack of training and proper development represent waste.

I BELIEVE that our greatest problem is the proper training of our generation; that interest and dollar marks will not weigh in the balance with our ideals of worth and character; that our hopes and fears must still center around the fountains of love and laughter.

I BELIEVE in civic pride; in community life; and in the responsibility of the individual; in public opinion; in the open forum; in the rule of the people; and that their voice is the voice of God.
Amen.

Author unknown

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CHAPTER I

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL AS A NATIONAL ASSET

OUR Government recently made an inventory of all of its assets. Public school education was placed near the top of the list. While this is the first time that definite recognition has been given to public school education nationally, the people have given evidence of its worth by placing larger and larger responsibilities upon it with complete faith in its ability to respond. They have committed to it their children, knowing full well that it would stamp upon their young minds indelible impressions which would characterize them through life. Parents, too, have recognized the organized school as a means of securing a better understanding of the Nation's requirements. The Nation in turn has used the public school, because of its vast organization, to send propaganda broadcast to its millions of people. The school has shown itself to be the open portal to the home life. It has already been proved to be the greatest influence in securing the coöperation of community life with that of the Nation's needs.

It was clearly recognized by the founders of our free Republic that the maintenance of such a government must depend upon intelligent citizenship. If the ruling power be inherent in the people, then an educated citizenship is necessary to progress. "Education" here is used in its broadest sense, meaning a clear comprehension of life's needs with an

earnest desire to give this in full measure to all of the people. In order to attain this end, each one must be rounded out to his highest development. Each one must be prepared to assume his portion of responsibility. If mistakes are made, all must suffer the consequences alike. Of great importance, then, is the thinking of each individual citizen. Good judgment and careful reasoning are essential requisites of each person. A democratic form of government can rest safe only with a people thus endowed, and can progress only to the extent that this conception, and the understanding of its own general welfare, prevail.

If each person has civic responsibilities, there must be some means of determining just what these are. Each one must not only know the principles upon which our Government is based, but must be given the ability to help maintain those principles and to assist in carrying them to their highest development. This civic responsibility must be reinforced by a clearer conception of social relationship and of moral obligations. The word "government" represents an association of peoples, and the determining influences must carry out the idea of happiness and welfare for the entire group. Social intercourse of the right character means racial development of the highest order. Moral ideals form the basis for both civic and social improvement. Upon this rests the honor of the Nation. Conceptions of right and wrong, of truth and honesty, of honor and virtue, govern our actions and influence all of our decisions. In a democracy, then, there must be national conscience and national responsibility — all of which turns back to the people themselves, upon whom all responsibility falls and in whom all conscience exists.

In order to insure universal education of the right sort our public schools were inaugurated. Through this means personal development is guaranteed and the basis for independ-

ent government is maintained. Faith in public education as an enterprise is evidenced by the growing interest which the people have shown in it through the years, by the fact that greater financial aid has been given each year, and by the further fact that it has been extended to include all the different types of human development, offering opportunity for technical and research study as well as providing a recognized general training. The school has often been called "the birthright of the children," and it is not an uncommon thing for parents to make sacrifices in order that their children may have the full benefit of the school direction. The State has shown a determination to protect this right of the child by enacting compulsory educational laws. These laws vary in strictness in the different States, but usually require children to attend school until they shall have had at least a common school education and until they are sixteen years of age. Some States also require that all children be required to continue even after this age or attainment unless profitably employed. Through such laws the State aims to protect the children and at the same time to foster independent citizenship for all its people.

The public school was first organized to supplement the teachings of the home and the church. It was maintained during the winter months when the children could really be of little help to the parents. Children were required to work at an early age because of the difficulties surrounding pioneer life, and because little machinery, which in recent years has saved both time and labor, had come into use. The schools at first represented very elementary work, and the teaching in many cases was imperfect. However, this institution proved its adaptation to the ever-changing conditions and won for itself universal approval and the unqualified support of the people.

The few short months allotted the school at first have been

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extended until now the "all-year school" is being advocated. Many city communities are now offering such advantages to their children, and the plan is sure to be generally adopted in time. As the three months' school grew into the six months' term, and the six months' term was extended to the nine and ten months' requirement, so also is the all-year school most certain to become an organized necessity in our final plan for educational work. This does not mean, of course, that each child must go during the entire year, but rather it offers the opportunity for continuous educational development, wherever that is possible, and also it offers a varied educational opportunity, suitable to different kinds of training and development, in addition to the civic, the social, and the moral training which has usually been recognized as a first requirement.

New subject-matter has been injected into the curricula from year to year, until school work now represents a workshop of the most practical character, in addition to the mental development which was once thought to be the only requirement. The three H's, representing the head, the hand, and the heart, have supplanted the old idea of the three R's which first formed the required elements. To discover a child's personal characteristics and to develop him so that he may become a useful member of society, is now considered as important as to direct his thinking and reasoning powers. Or, putting it in another way, we may say that the application of knowledge is now made a part of the school's work.

Education has its rootlets centered deep in the public school system, and depends in a large measure upon this institution to formulate the basic elements which develop into the larger, fuller, and more complete life needs and possibilities.

Since the whole child, mental, physical, and moral, must