

ASSEMBLY AND AUDITORIUM ACTIVITIES

BY

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PREFACE

One of the most significant and promising developments in the rapidly expanding field of the so-called "extracurricular activities" is that concerned with the use of the school assembly. While there has been a school meeting or chapel for many years, it is only within the past decade or two that serious attention has been devoted to making the use of this period educationally valuable. The growth of the idea of the platoon school with its emphasis upon the use of the auditorium and the consequent development of the position of "auditorium teacher" is convincing proof that this school, at least, is giving earnest consideration to the educational possibilities of this activity. And the development of this position in the platoon school is being paralleled with a corresponding emphasis upon the assembly program in the junior and senior high school, as well as in elementary schools not organized according to the platoon plan.

A writer recently distinguished between the auditorium period of the platoon school and the assembly period of the typical non-platoon school by characterizing the first as a "work" period and the second, a "play" period. The author fails to see this distinction. While it is probably true that many of the auditorium periods represent "work" and many of the assembly periods represent "play," yet it is just as reasonable to suppose that frequently the reverse may be equally true. What this writer meant was that serious efforts are being put forth to make the auditorium pay an educational profit which has rarely if ever been attempted in all of the preceding ages of the assembly's history.

There may be a difference between the two in that the auditorium has been definitely included as a part of the regular

“curricular” work of the platoon school, while no similar correlation has been attempted in the other types of schools. The daily, or almost daily, use of the period by the platoon school is, of course, another difference. However, the present day emphasis upon the proper use of the assembly period, the disappearance of the pseudo-religious and entertainment and amusement material, and the growth of the practice of developing programs out of curricular activities prove that in the non-platoon school, there is also an increasingly successful attempt to capitalize this period for educational profit.

In short, while the auditorium period of the platoon school, because of its specialized facilities and teaching, is probably conducted more intelligently and effectively than the assembly period of the average high school, yet the latter, especially in the junior high school, is being capitalized very promisingly. As this development continues in the high school, and as students from the platoon school become the students of the high school, these assembly programs will continue to be the more intelligently developed and directed.

The author presents this book with the hope that it will assist, by concrete and definite material, administrators, teachers, and students who are interested in and responsible for assembly programs. Its emphasis is upon practical material, and only basic theories are included. The programs and program material are appropriate for all kinds and sizes of schools and all grades within these schools. And while a great deal of it concerns the upper grades and the high school, yet much of it is suitable for the lower grades. Naturally, the material selected should be appropriate for the age and experience of those presenting the program and those witnessing it.

The material of this book came from many sources: analyses of school newspapers, magazines, and yearbooks; reports of researches by university students; correspondence; conferences;

and school programs. This material was revised, adapted in various ways, and carefully checked by experts. It is intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, and groups using these programs should adapt them to the conditions of the particular school rather than adopt them in their entirety.

In these programs music has been almost entirely omitted except where it was highly appropriate and assisted very directly the development of the program shown. This, of course, does not mean that music should not be included in the other programs. On the contrary, the author believes that every assembly program should include much good music. The music director or teacher is the most competent person for this subject in the school and his assistance should be sought.

It will be seen that many of the programs and ideas are as suitable for home room as for assembly programs, because, in reality, the home room is but a small edition of the school assembly. It, of course, lacks size, equipment, settings, musical accompaniment, etc., but in general its possibilities, though more limited, are, nevertheless, real and similar to the larger meeting. Much of this material may also be utilized in the meetings of the various clubs.

The references, which have been kept at a minimum, include only those which, in the opinion of the author and his critics, are most helpful. Biographical and similar descriptive matter which is available in many text books and in any school or city library have been almost entirely omitted, except that which is very unique or unusual. Complete bibliographies, both books and magazines, as well as sources of additional material, may be found in *SCHOOL CLUBS* (McKown) published by the Macmillan Company.

It is strongly recommended that every user of this book read the first three chapters, because these contain not only the basic philosophy that will help in the interpretation of the

assembly but also the many practical suggestions and plans for the presentation of the different types of material, which are not repeated in the various chapters of the book.

The programs, activities and sources included in this volume represent the direct and indirect contributions of a great many administrators, teachers, and students, and the author wishes to express his gratitude to these who have helped to make the book possible. Specific acknowledgments are made in connection with many of the programs. In addition to these the author is also indebted to the following who have made valuable criticisms and contributions: Marie R. Messer, Chairman of the Extracurricular Activities, Gladstone Junior High School, Pittsburgh; William Y. Hayward, Director of the Extracurricular Activities, Peabody High School, Pittsburgh; Dr. P. W. Hutson, Associate Professor of Secondary Education, University of Pittsburgh; Dr. Evan T. Sag, Professor and Head of the Department of Latin, University of Pittsburgh; Dr. Herbert J. Stack, Supervisor of Child Safety Activities, National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters, New York City; M. A. DeVitis, Associate Professor of Spanish, University of Pittsburgh; J. R. Sisley, Senior High School, New Kensington, Pennsylvania; L. W. Korona, Taylor Allderdice High School, Pittsburgh; Dr. Will Earhart, Director of Music, Pittsburgh Public Schools; Erle Fairfield, Associate Professor of German, University of Pittsburgh; Freda Gertrude von Sothen, Newtown High School, Elmhurst, Long Island; Thomas C. Y. Ford, Supervisor of Agriculture, Trinity High School, Washington, Pennsylvania; John Emmel, Technical High School, McKeesport, Pennsylvania; Dan R. Kovar, Senior High School, Uniontown, Pennsylvania; Blossom L. Henry, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages, University of Pittsburgh; M. R. Keyworth, Superintendent of Schools, Hamtramck, Michigan; Carl T. Anstine, Senior High School, Connellsville, Pennsylvania; C.

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ASSEMBLY AND AUDITORIUM ACTIVITIES

CHAPTER I

OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

The only source of education in the school of the early day was the formal classroom exercise. Recently, however, there has come a great and rapid development of educational possibilities and opportunities outside of the classroom, which, in the field of the so-called extracurricular activities, is convincing proof that the education of the new day is not limited to classroom activities alone.

This rapid development is in line with the newer idea and ideal of education, namely, that the school must stand for something besides scholarship; that while scholarship and book lessons are important, they are, nevertheless, only minor details of the major program of educating for intelligent citizenship; and that good citizenship, represented by ideals, attitudes, and activities, is not necessarily proved by an array of high marks or the ability to do the classroom stunts of education. Education which was formerly largely concerned with the mental is now concerned also with the social, physical, and spiritual phases of man's existence. One of the most important devices for the wider interpretation and application of modern educational principles is the school assembly or auditorium period.

Definition.—The classic definition of the assembly or auditorium period is that of Martha Fleming:

“The morning exercise (assembly) is a common meeting ground; it is

the family altar of the school to which each brings his offerings—the fruits of his observations and studies, or the music, literature and art that delight him; a place where all cooperate for the pleasure and well being of the whole; where all contribute to and share in the intellectual and spiritual life of the whole; where all bring their best and choicest experiences in the most attractive form at their command.”¹

Another description of this period, quoted by C. O. Davis from a publication of the Condon Intermediate School, Detroit, is as follows:

“The auditorium should be the place in our educational system where children learn to be social beings, to make the most of themselves and to cooperate with others in making the most of themselves. It should be a sort of clearing house for all the other branches of the school world, a focus of knowledge and activity, and a source from which should come the desire for further knowledge and ability to use well in life the knowledge already acquired.”²

A third attractive picture of this interesting educational possibility is drawn by Peckstein and McGregor:

“It is in assembly that the real school is conscientiously recognized as an entity by the pupils and teachers who compose it. The assembly draws members from all classes and all departments into a social whole, united for the achievement of dignified and worthy aims. It is not the purpose of the assembly to provide a weekly period of mere entertainment, although a spirit of pleasure and enjoyment always characterizes the successful program. Information concerning school activities, inspiration for enthusiastic carrying out of school projects, and shared appreciation of whatever is beautiful and artistic in school life are the essential contributions of the assembly period.”³

Fretwell describes the assembly as:

“The meeting place of the whole school. Here policies affecting the

¹“Purposes and Values of the Morning Exercise” in *The Morning Exercise as a Socializing Influence*, Frances W. Parker School Yearbook; Frances W. Parker School, Chicago, Illinois.

²DAVIS, C. O. *Junior High School Education*, p. 354.

³PECKSTEIN and MCGREGOR; *Psychology of the Junior High School Pupil*, pages 230-231.

whole school body should be presented by pupils and faculty alike and discussed. Here public opinion is formed. The spirit of the school not only shows or fails to show itself in assembly, but the assembly may be used to form school spirit. The assembly period should not exist primarily to enable the faculty or head of the school to advise the pupils, however good this advice may be, nor is it a place where pupils must sit through the delivery of required 'orations'."

These four definitions or descriptions of the assembly period are agreed that it is a period for social education, a period of inspiration, a period of focusing of attention on the higher and better things, and a period in which pupil participation is essential. It will also be noted that all four suggest or imply that it mirrors the entire life of the school.

Origin.—The assembly activity in the high school grew very directly out of a somewhat similar activity in the college. In earlier times, one of the main interests of the college was training for the ministry, and a logical part of this training was a daily devotional service. Even after colleges widened in their objectives and curricula, this chapel service was maintained by them, not only because it was traditional and was considered a worthy educational activity, but also because it was good advertising to parents of prospective students. Many colleges still maintain this daily chapel service, and in not a few of these is attendance at this service compulsory.

The early high school was known as the "People's College." Naturally it copied the college in many things, and one of these was the chapel service. Many states required, and still require, the daily reading of the Bible in the school, and it was but logical that this service should be looked upon as being religious in character. Although the "assembly" is fast supplanting "chapel," as school authorities appreciate its wonderful educational potentialities, many schools still profess to have a chapel service, and not a few still have the faculty seated on the stage!

Although the elementary school was different in origin, the