

THE
GARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCIENCE TEACHING

By
OTIS W. CALDWELL

GENERAL EDUCATION BOARD
61 BROADWAY NEW YORK

1919

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INTRODUCTION

THE GARY PLAN

In the last few years both laymen and professional educators have engaged in a lively controversy as to the merits and defects, advantages and disadvantages of what has come to be called the Gary idea or the Gary plan. The rapidly increasing literature bearing on the subject is, however, deficient in details and too often partisan in tone. The present study was undertaken by the General Education Board at the request of the Gary school authorities for the purpose of presenting an accurate and comprehensive account of the Gary schools in their significant aspects.

In the several volumes in which the main features of the Gary schools are separately considered, the reader will observe that, after presenting facts, each of the authors discusses or—in technical phrase—attempts to evaluate the Gary plan from the angle of his particular interest. Facts were gathered in a patient, painstaking, and objective fashion; and those who want facts, and facts only, will, it is believed, find them in the descriptive and statistical portions of the respective studies. But the successive volumes will discuss principles, as well as

state facts. That is, the authors will not only describe the Gary schools in the frankest manner, as they found them, but they will also endeavor to interpret them in the light of the large educational movement of which they are part. An educational conception may be sound or unsound; any particular effort to embody an educational conception may be adequate or inadequate, effective or ineffective. The public is interested in knowing whether the Gary schools as now conducted are efficient or inefficient; the public is also interested in knowing whether the plan as such is sound or unsound. The present study tries to do justice to both points.

What is the Gary plan?

Perhaps, in the first instance, the essential features of the Gary plan can be made clear, if, instead of trying to tell what the Gary plan is, we tell what it is not. Except for its recent origin and the unusual situation as respects its foreign population, Gary resembles many other industrial centers that are to be found throughout the country. Now, had Gary provided itself with the type of school commonly found in other small industrial American towns, we should find there half a dozen or more square brick "soap-box" buildings, each accommodating a dozen classes pursuing the usual book studies, a playground, with little or no equipment, perhaps a basement room for manual training, a laboratory, and a cooking room for the girls. Had Gary played safe, this is the sort of school and school equipment that it would now possess. Provided with this conventional school

system, the town would have led a conventional school life—quiet, unoffending, and negatively happy—doing as many others do, doing it about as well as they do it and satisfied to do just that.

As contrasted with education of this meager type, the Gary plan is distinguished by two features, intimately connected with each other:

First—the enrichment and diversification of the curriculum;

Second—the administrative device that, for want of a better name, will be tentatively termed the duplicate school organization.

These two features must first be considered in general terms, if the reader is to understand the detailed description and discussion.

As to the curriculum and school activities. While the practice of education has in large part continued to follow traditional paths, the progressive literature of the subject has abounded in constructive suggestions of far-reaching practical significance. Social, political, and industrial changes have forced upon the school responsibilities formerly laid upon the home. Once the school had mainly to teach the elements of knowledge; now the school is charged with the physical, mental, and social training of the child. To meet these needs a changed and enriched curriculum, including community activities, facilities for recreation, shop work, and household arts, has been urged on the content side of school work; the transformation of school aims and discipline

on the basis of modern psychology, ethics, and social philosophy has been for similar reasons recommended on the side of attitude and method.

These things have been in the air. Every one of them has been tried and is being practised in some form or other, somewhere or other. In probably every large city in the country efforts have been made, especially in the more recent school plants, to develop some of the features above mentioned. There has been a distinct, unmistakable, and general trend toward making the school a place where children "live" as well as "learn." This movement did not originate at Gary; nor is Gary its only evidence. It is none the less true that perhaps nowhere else have the schools so deliberately and explicitly avowed this modern policy. The Gary schools are officially described as "work, study, and play" schools—schools, that is, that try to respond adequately to a many-sided responsibility; how far and with what success, the successive reports of the Gary survey will show.

It must not, however, be supposed that the enriched curriculum was applied in its present form at the outset or that it is equally well developed in all the Gary schools. Far from it. There has been a distinct and uneven process of development at Gary; sometimes, as subsequent chapters will show, such rapid and unstable development that our account may in certain respects be obsolete before it is printed. When the Emerson school was opened in 1909, the equipment in laboratories, shops, and museums, while doubtless superior to what

was offered by other towns of the Gary type, could have been matched by what was to be found in many of the better favored larger towns and cities at the same period. The gymnasium, for example, was not more than one third its present size; the industrial work was not unprecedented in kind or extent; the boys had woodwork, the girls cooking and sewing. But progress was rapid: painting and printing were added in 1911; the foundry, forge, and machine shop in 1913. The opportunities for girls were enlarged by the addition of the cafeteria in 1913. The auditorium reached its present extended use as recently as the school year 1913-14. The Froebel school, first occupied in the fall of 1912, started with facilities similar to those previously introduced piecemeal into the Emerson.

These facilities, covering in their development a period of years, represent the effort to create an elementary school more nearly adequate to the needs of modern urban life. The curriculum is enriched by various activities in the fields of industry, science, and recreation. Questions as to the efficiency with which these varied activities have been administered will be discussed by the various contributors to the present study. Meanwhile, it is perhaps only fair to point out that the modern movement calls not only for additions to, but eliminations from, the curriculum and for a critical attitude toward the products of classroom teaching. How far, on the academic side, the Gary schools reflect this aspect of the modern movement will also presently appear.

The administrative device—the “duplicate” organization, noted above as the second characteristic feature of the Gary plan—stands on a somewhat different footing, as the following considerations make plain.

Once more, Mr. Wirt was not the inventor of the intensive use of school buildings, though he was among the first—if not the very first—to perceive the purely educational advantage to which the situation could be turned. The rapidity with which American cities have grown has created a difficult problem for school administrators—the problem of providing space and instruction for children who increase in number faster than buildings are constructed. The problem has been handled in various ways. In one place, the regular school day has been shortened and two different sets of children attending at different hours have been taught daily in one building and by one group of teachers. Elsewhere, as in certain high schools, a complete double session has been conducted. The use of one set of schoolrooms for more than one set of children each day did not therefore originate at Gary.

Another point needs to be considered before we discuss the so-called duplicate feature of the Gary plan. In American colleges, subjects have commonly been taught by specialists, not by class teachers. The work is “departmentalized”—to use the technical term. There is a teacher of Latin, a teacher of mathematics, a teacher of physics, who together instruct every class—not a separate teacher of each class in all subjects. Latterly,

departmentalization has spread from the college into the high school, until nowadays well organized high schools and the upper grades of elementary schools are quite generally "departmentalized," i.e., organized with special teachers for the several subjects, rather than with one teacher for each grade.

Out of these two elements, Gary has evolved an administrative device, the so-called duplicate school, which, from the standpoint of its present educational significance, does indeed represent a definite innovation.

For the sake of clearness, it will be well to explain the theory of the duplicate school by a simplified imaginary example:

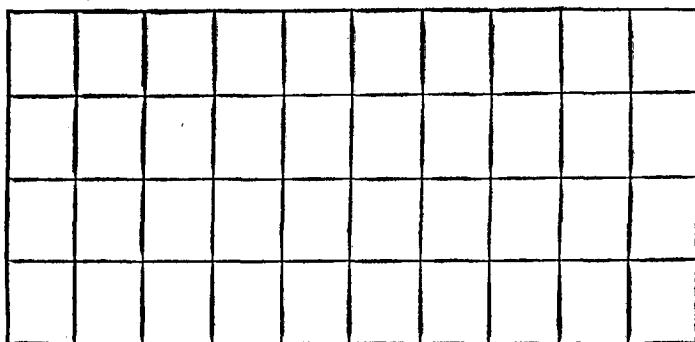
Let us suppose that elementary school facilities have to be provided for, say, 1,600 children. If each class is to contain a maximum of 40 children, a schoolhouse of 40 rooms would formerly have been built, with perhaps a few additional rooms, little used, for special activities; except during the recess (12 to 1:30) each recitation room would be in practically continuous use in the old-line subjects from 9 to 3:30, when school is adjourned till next morning. A school plant of this kind may be represented by Figure I, each square representing a schoolroom.

The "duplicate" school proposes a different solution. Instead of providing 40 classrooms for 40 classes, it requires 20 classrooms, capable of holding 800 children; and further, playgrounds, laboratories, shops, gardens, gymnasium, and auditorium, also capable of holding

800 children. If, now, 800 children use the classrooms while 800 are using the other facilities, morning and afternoon, the entire plant accommodates 1,600 pupils throughout the school day; and the curriculum is greatly enriched, since, without taking away anything from their classroom work, they are getting other branches also. A school thus equipped and organized may be represented

FIGURE I
REPRESENTS OLD-FASHIONED SCHOOLHOUSE

40 rooms for 40 classes, of 40 children each, i. e., facilities for the academic instruction of 1,600 children. A school yard and an extra room or two, little used, for special activities, are also usually found.



by Figure II, in which A represents 20 classes taking care of 40 children each (800 children), and B represents special facilities taking care of 800 children. As A and B are in simultaneous operation, 1,600 children are cared for.

This method of visualizing the “duplicate” school serves to correct a common misconception. The plan aims to intensify the use of schoolrooms; yet it would be

incorrect to say that 20 classrooms, instead of 40, as under the old plan, accommodate 1,600 children. For while the number of classrooms has been reduced from 40 to 20, special facilities of equal capacity have been added in the form of auditorium, shops, playground, etc. The 20 classrooms apparently saved

FIGURE II
REPRESENTS THE GARY EQUIPMENT

A	B
20 classrooms for academic instruction of 20 classes of 40 children each (800 children) in the morning hours and an equal number in the afternoon (1,600 in all daily)	Special facilities, taking care of 800 children in the morning hours and an equal number in the afternoon hours (1,600 in all daily)
	Auditorium
	Shops
	Laboratories
	Playground, gardens, gymnasium and library

have been replaced by special facilities of one kind or another. The so-called duplicate organization and the longer school day make it possible to give larger facilities to twice as many children as the classrooms alone would accommodate. The duplicate school, as developed at Gary, is not therefore a device to relieve congestion or to reduce expense, but the natural result of efforts to provide a richer school life for all children.

The enriched curriculum and the duplicate organization support each other. The social situation requires a scheme of education fairly adequate to the entire scope of the child's activities and possibilities; this cannot be achieved without a longer school day and a more varied school equipment. The duplicate school endeavors to give the longer day, the richer curriculum, and the more varied activities with the lowest possible investment in, and the most intensive use of, the school plant. The so-called duplicate school is thus a single school with two different types of facilities in more or less constant and simultaneous operation, morning and afternoon.

Such is the Gary plan in conception. What about the execution? Is it realized at Gary? Does it work? What is involved as respects space, investment, etc., when ordinary classrooms are replaced by shops, playgrounds, and laboratories? Can a given equipment in the way of auditorium, shops, etc., handle precisely the same number of children accommodated in the classrooms without doing violence to their educational needs on the one hand, and without waste through temporary disuse of the special facilities, on the other? To what extent has Gary modified or reorganized on modern lines the treatment of the common classroom subjects? How efficient is instruction in the usual academic studies as well as in the newer or so-called modern subjects and activities? Is the plan economical in the sense that equal educational advantages cannot be procured by

any other scheme except at greater cost? These and other questions as to the execution of the Gary plan are, as far as data were obtainable, discussed in the separate volumes making up the present survey.

The concrete questions above mentioned do not, however, exhaust the educational values of a given school situation. From every school system there come imponderable products, bad as well as good. Aside from all else, many observers of the Gary schools report one such imponderable in the form of a spiritual something which can hardly be included in a study of administration and eludes the testing of classroom work. These observers have no way of knowing whether Gary school costs are high or low; whether the pupils spell and add as well as children do elsewhere; but, however these things may be, they usually describe the pupils as characterized by self-possession, resourcefulness, and happiness to an unusual degree. While different schools and indeed different parts of the same school vary in this respect, the members of the survey staff agree that, on the whole, there is a basis of fact for these observations. Gary is thus something more than a school organization characterized by the two main features above discussed.

The reason is not far to seek. Innovation is stimulating, just as conformity is deadening. Experiment is in this sense a thing wholesome in itself. Of course it must be held to strict accountability for results; and this study is the work of persons who, convinced of the necessity of educational progress, are at the same time

solicitous that the outcome be carefully observed. The fact that customary school procedure does not rest upon a scientific basis, does not willingly submit itself to thorough scrutiny, is no reason for exempting educational innovations from strict accountability. The very reverse is indeed true; for otherwise innovation may imperil or sacrifice essential educational values, without actually knowing whether or not it has achieved definite values of its own. Faith in a new program does not absolve the reformer from a watchful and critical attitude toward results. Moreover, if the innovator formulates his purposes in definite terms and measures his results in the light of his professed aims, the conservative cannot permanently escape the same process. Gary, like all other educational experiments, must be held accountable in this fashion. Subject however to such accountability, the breaking of the conventional school framework, the introduction of new subject matter or equipment, even administrative reorganization, at Gary as elsewhere, tend to favor a fresher, more vigorous interest and spirit. Defects will in the following pages be pointed out in the Gary schools—defects of organization, of administration, of instruction. But there is for the reasons just suggested something in the Gary schools over and above the Gary plan. Problems abound, as in every living and developing situation. But the problems are the problems of life, and, as such, are in the long run perhaps more hopeful than the relatively smooth functioning of a stationary school system. Thus, not-

withstanding the defects and shortcomings which this study will candidly point out, the experiment at Gary rightly observed and interpreted is both interesting and stimulating.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
I. SCIENCE TEACHING AS A PART OF A MOD- ERN CURRICULUM	3
II. SCIENCE TEACHING IN THE GARY SCHOOLS:	
(A) GENERAL PLAN.	6
(B) TIME ALLOTMENT	7
III. DAILY TEACHING SCHEDULES AND COMPO- SITION OF CLASSES	15
IV. NATURE STUDY AND GARDEN WORK IN PRIMARY GRADES	18
V. STAFF AND INSTRUCTION IN NATURE STUDY	24
VI. BOTANY AND GARDENING	29
VII. ZOOLOGY	43
VIII. PHYSICS	52
IX. CHEMISTRY.	58
X. TESTS	64
XI. PUPIL HELPERS IN SCIENCE WORK. . . .	121
XII. CONCLUSION	123