

# AN ORIENTATION COURSE IN EDUCATION

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AND

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

BOSTON • NEW YORK • CHICAGO • DALLAS • ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

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**The Riverside Press**

CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

**DEDICATED  
TO THE CAUSE OF  
PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION**

*Potentially, the school is the steering gear of a democratic society. It is the business of the teachers to run not merely the school, but the world; the world will never be truly civilized until they assume that responsibility.*

*If it were only the schools that they are running it might be excusable for them to study the Herbartian lesson plans, the psychology of the learning process, tests and measurements, statistical methods as applied to administrative problems, and such like subjects, with nothing much besides. But the school is the least thing they are running. They are running the world! And they ought to realize this fact.*

*Professor ROSS FINNEY  
University of Minnesota*

## PREFACE

WHAT shall constitute the first course in Education for prospective teachers? Shall it be a detailed treatment of a limited phase of the teaching process or shall it consist of a broad introduction to the problems of Education?

Such texts as, *Principles of Teaching*, *Methods of Teaching in the High Schools*, *School Management*, *The Teacher and the School*, and *The Teaching Process*, were the outgrowths of the first theory, published during the second and early third decades of this century. *Introduction to the Study of Education*, *Introduction to Teaching*, and *Introducing Education*, represent an acceptance of the second view.

The latter concept fits better into our present-day philosophy of purposefulness as a necessary prerequisite to intelligent action.

Determining the content of a course predicated on the second theory presents an unsolved problem. Should it comprise a series of chapters, each of which presents in very compact and highly simplified form a résumé or abstract of a specialized phase of the educational problem, couched in such language that the neophyte can cope with it successfully, or should it cut across the several specialized fields of the educational problem, and introduce the students to the theories and practices of education as they have evolved from the past and as they exist today? The first texts in the field of general science, for instance, as well as pioneer texts in introduction to education were representative of the first alternative. Recent offerings in texts of this nature point to a growing belief that if a course in Introduction to Education is to be functional it must orient the student to the larger aspects of education in order to develop a mind set and to provide a vantage-point from which he can see in perspective the specialized treatments of method, curriculum, administration, and testing with which he will deal later. The authors of *An Orientation Course in Education* hold this view and have attempted to formulate a course which provides this advantage for the beginning student.

Another question, however, is raised. Should such a course deal primarily with organized education as it is or should its chief function be that of raising problems with which organized education is confronted? Should it prepare the student to accept that which he finds as existing and accepted practices or should it develop a questioning attitude—one critical of the *status quo*? If the teachers are to prepare their pupils for a changing civilization should they not also be

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prepared for an ever-changing educational program? The authors of this text contend that only as the beginning teacher is aware of the inadequacy of present school practice to meet the needs of a changing social order will he do his best as a teacher to effect desirable changes even though they necessitate opposition to prevailing practice.

The authors further believe that the time to introduce the challenge is in the beginning of the student's professional education and not at the end. For twelve years the freshmen in our teacher training institutions have lived in a school environment in which in large measure acceptance of the *status quo* was required. Although the student in most cases was not consciously taught a philosophy of education, he was unconsciously impregnated with the philosophy of education which gave expression to the practice in the institution which he had been taught to recognize as "our school."

This philosophy he is bringing with him when he enters the teacher-training institution. This philosophy he is going to use in estimating the validity of his college academic contacts. It becomes the function of the introductory course in Education to raise those questions concerning the validity of prevailing practice which challenge his thinking, to give him a new set of guiding principles which enable him to become intelligently critical of the school practice to which he was subjected in the past, and to give him also the organized college experiences which are designed to equip him for the kind of school which his new philosophy visions as the ideal.

The authors further believe that a large part of technique of teaching is better taught by example than by precept, particularly if the example is accompanied by an explanation of the reason for its being. Therefore, if education texts exemplify those techniques of teaching which are being accepted as valid in modern education, less time will need to be devoted to courses in methods and techniques as a part of the student's preservice training.

*An Orientation Course in Education* has been organized on the unit basis with a preview preceding the readings and with an accompanying work book which contains the study helps necessary for careful guidance through what Morrison calls the assimilation step of the learning process.

If the authors are making any contribution to the field of professional courses for prospective teachers through the publication of this text, such a contribution will result from four characteristics of their offering:

1. The avoidance of the encyclopædic treatment characteristic of many of the first attempts in an introductory course in education.

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2. The treatment of basic issues as issues and not as problems which modern education has solved.

3. Opening to the student of education the major problems of the curriculum, teaching, administration, and educational research and indicating the opportunities for professional service in these fields.

4. Illustrating, through its own method, the unit plan of instruction.

If the authors have succeeded in doing this they feel they are justified in introducing their offering to those engaged in the preparation of teachers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the past five years the authors of this text and a number of their colleagues have experimented with, studied, and revised annually the first course in education, which was required of all students. The purpose of this careful study was to evolve a first course which would challenge the student, lead him to think in critical terms concerning his chosen profession of teaching, encourage him to weigh opinions, to evaluate practices, to become a thinker rather than a passive acceptor of what is, in order that he might become a dynamic factor in the up-building of that kind of teaching profession demanded by the age.

With three to four hundred students taking the course each year and four to eight teachers engaged in using the instructional materials, a large variety of views and ideas was contributed to the creation of the final product. It is to these teachers and students that the authors are indebted for many of the elements in these pages. Special mention should be made of the colleagues whose suggestions and contributions have enabled the authors to make certain important additions and changes from time to time: Charles A. Fisher, T. Herrick Bawden, Dr. N. William Newsom, Miss Vera Butler, and Dr. H. Clay Skinner.

Thanks are due many writers for ideas developed into the concepts embodied in the text, as indicated by reference to sources. For the privilege of using certain quotations grateful acknowledgment is made to Houghton Mifflin Company, The Macmillan Company, D. Appleton and Company, Longmans Green and Company, the Harvard University Press, and the Gregg Publishing Company. To Dr. Lee L. Driver of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction, Professor Ben Wood of Columbia University, Professor G. T. Buswell of the University of Chicago, and Walter H. Snow, official photographer for the Board of Education of Philadelphia, the writers are indebted for several of the photographs used.

In the preparation of the manuscript the authors are also indebted to Mrs. Grace O. Thomas for many hours of labor and for many helpful suggestions.

J. S. B.

J. C. S.



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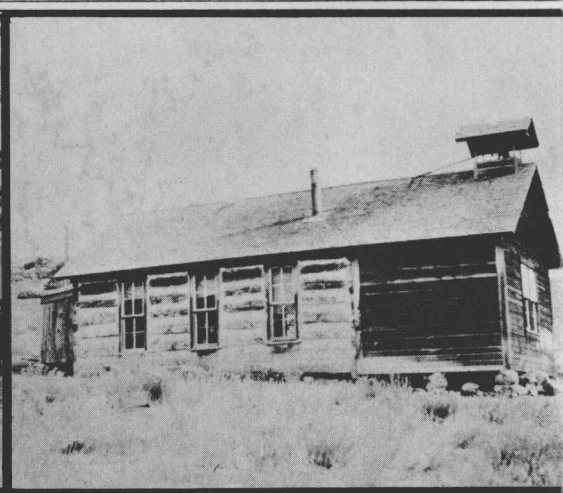
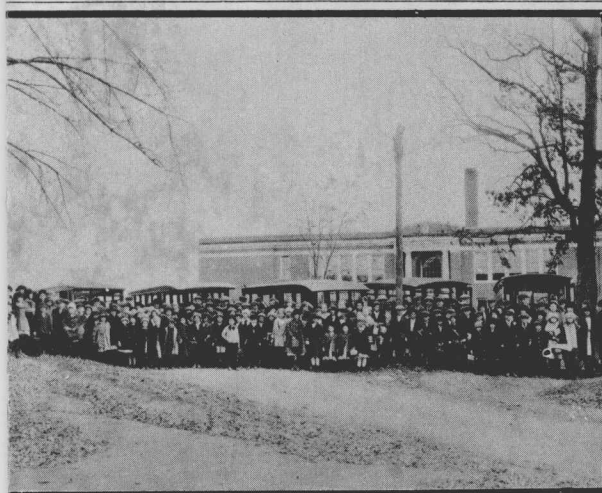
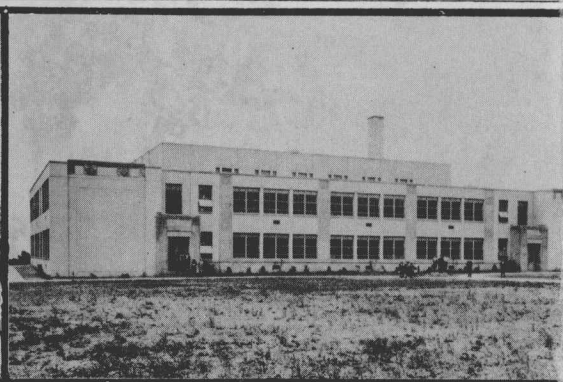
## Unit I. What is the school of today?

*Man has nothing at all but experience, and everything he comes to, he comes to only through experience. All his thinking, be it loose or scientific, common or transcendental, starts from experience ultimately in view. Nothing has unconditional value and significance except life. All other thinking, conception, knowledge, has value only in so far as in some way or other it refers to the fact of life, starts from it, and has in view a subsequent return to it.*

FICHTE

*School is life, not only a preparation for living.*

Professor JOHN DEWEY  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



# UNIT I

## THE SCHOOL OF TODAY

### PREVIEW

WHAT are the characteristics of the school in the United States? What is the usual size of the high schools in your state? If all the schools in the country were placed side by side in the order of size, the largest at one end and the smallest at the other end, what would be the size of the middle or median school? What kind of school building would you expect it to be? How much playground space would it have? What would be the nature of its equipment? If you had attended this median school would you have received a better or poorer education than you received in the school from which you were graduated?

If one were to travel from here to a place three or four hundred miles away he would pass buildings of various sizes, construction, and designs, each of which would be referred to by the people of that community as "our school." You attended one of these schools and with pride you point to it as the place where you received your education.

If we should visit each of the schools attended by the members of a college class we should find as great a variety as does the one who makes the three hundred mile trip referred to. Some attended the one-room country school where children of all ages meet in one room under one teacher and where the teacher's main duty is that of keeping order, assigning lessons and hearing recitations. Others attended a school which is not much more than an enlargement of the one-room building: it has more rooms, but they are all of the same design; it has more teachers, but many of them think of teaching as "keeping order," assigning lessons and hearing recitations; instead of having all ages meet in one room, older pupils meet together and younger pupils meet together; if there are only two such rooms the one may be referred to as the upper school and the other as the lower school; if there are four or more such rooms pupils of different ages may be referred to as belonging to different grades. But in most respects this larger school resembles the smaller one-room school: externally one sees four straight walls of the simplest design, one or two doors and several windows; internally one finds from two to eight rooms all of like size and design equipped with the same type of furniture, little teaching equipment

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such as maps, books, and the like, and often very little regard for the æsthetic.

Others in your class attended school in a building which differs greatly from the above in its architectural accomplishment as well as in its adaptation to teaching. Rooms differ in size, in equipment and in use. One large room is equipped with rows of comfortable seats; it has a huge platform with the lighting and scenery effects of a modern theater, an orchestra pit, balcony and motion picture booth, and windows and artificial lighting unique to this room. Another large room has no seats; its floor is marked with straight lines and circles, making various designs; along its walls are a large number of sticks, clubs, and other objects used in what is referred to as calisthenic drill; a large variety of peculiar bits of apparatus is fastened to the walls or suspended from the high ceiling; a narrow balcony suspended from the ceiling completely encircles the room. If one leaves this large room through a side door he finds himself in a smaller room containing rows of booth-like compartments large enough to accommodate one person; these are equipped with shower heads and other apparatus found in the dressing rooms of modern bath houses.

Besides the ones described these modern school buildings have library rooms, reading rooms, music rooms, metal, wood-working and electrical shops, home economics rooms, science laboratories, small lecture rooms, playrooms, offices for student organizations, and others too numerous and varied to mention. But for its community it represents "our school" just as do buildings with only a few classrooms all of similar size and equipment.

There was a time when the one-room school attended by pupils of all ages was the typical school, not only because there were too few pupils to warrant maintaining several rooms, but because the ideas which people held with regard to education were of such a nature that teaching could easily be carried on in such a school. In fact for a short time schools developed in which as many as a few hundred pupils were housed in one room under one teacher. As the number of pupils increased and methods of teaching changed it was found that pupils could be better provided for if they were separated into grades according to ages: thus the upper school and the lower school came into existence, and finally the graded school with several rooms. Communities which today maintain schools of the one room type or the non-differentiated many-room type can therefore be said to be thinking of education to a large degree in terms of many years ago and not in terms of today. Theirs is the traditional school and not the modern school.

We need to be careful, however, that we do not criticize such com-



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munities unduly, for often this condition exists because of factors beyond their control. The low wealth of the community or the sparse population may make it impossible for such a community to maintain the more expensive modern school.

The school of today therefore means a different thing to people living in different communities. Yet we shall find that in some particulars there is a rather generally accepted view throughout the country as to what the modern school should be.

Practice, however, lags considerably behind accepted views, so that one community may house its pupils in a type of school building with equipment and with a kind of teaching which were discarded several years ago in another community. If we examine all of the practices in any of the schools we shall find that there is a similarity in a rather large number of characteristics, so that, although it may not be possible to select one school and point to it as the typical American School of Today, it is possible to think of a hypothetical school which embodies those practices which are rather general throughout the country.

What this school is we shall consider first. We shall want to know something about the length of its session, each day, each week, and each year. We shall also want to know something about the size of this school, the total number of pupils housed in one building, the number assigned to a teacher, as well as the differences which exist in the size of classes in the several school units.

In recent years the terms "junior high school," "junior college," "nursery school," and "kindergarten" have come into common use. We shall want to know what these terms mean and the extent to which they are characteristic of the School of Today. Finally, an examination of the equipment reveals such great differences, as already indicated, that we shall want to know what is regarded as prevailing practice today.

Briefly, then, in this unit our concern is with the question, "What is the School of Today?" Only by knowing this can each of us judge whether the school which we attended and to which we have been referring as "our school" is in the vanguard of progress, trailing in an almost lost rear, or belongs to the large majority of those which we might characterize as typical of the day.

## DISCUSSION

### LENGTH OF SCHOOL SESSION

MANY of our forefathers living in the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century were fortunate if they went to school at all. Probably most of them lived in rural sections and found themselves part of an agrarian family trying to eke a living from a partially cleared farm at a time when hand labor rather than machinery was used to perform the many chores of farm life.

*The School Year.* A large family was then an economic asset. Keeping the children home from school from the time when preparation of the soil began in the early spring until all the harvest had been reaped in the late fall was essential if the maximum value was to be obtained from the child. This fact reduced the possible length of school in even the most ambitious rural communities to about five months. These were the winter months, so that at least in the northern states, the bleak snows and cold weather served as an excuse for the less ambitious to remain at home part or all of these five months.

Even in the cities the rising industries requiring cheap hand labor and the large families requiring more income than the father could produce were responsible for an increased use of child labor and a consequent lack of interest in schooling.

If our forefathers of the early nineteenth century went to school at all they were engaged thus only for from five to eight months out of twelve. The increased consciousness of the need of education, the movement from the farm to the city, the substitution of machinery for hand labor, as well as the improved economic status of the average American family, have all contributed to an increase in the length of the school year.

Today a ten-month term is the norm for the city and it is also rapidly becoming accepted practice in the rural communities, although nine- and eight-month terms are by no means unusual.

There are those who contend that a twelve-month term should be encouraged; for, they argue, why should a child leave school for two or three months a year just to run the streets, be ungainfully occupied, get into mischief, unlearn many of those things which the school tried to teach him and interrupt what would otherwise be a continuous educational program. In answer to these criticisms a few cities have tried the twelve-month school term with varied success. Besides the

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rather intangible claims of providing better educational opportunity for the child, the lengthened school year has resulted in some cases in a decreased cost of education per child, because the physical school plant, the cost of which is a large part of the overhead school cost, is being used for a larger number of pupil days per year.

Whether the twelve-month term will become increasingly popular cannot be predicted at this time. Private agencies such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., and many other religious or semi-religious organizations have been providing activities of an educational value to the boy and girl during the summer months. Most of these, however, are unavailable to the great mass of children because the attendant fee is prohibitive. Until the activities which these agencies promote become part of the public school system or are organized as community projects open to all, they cannot be regarded as part of organized education.

The ten-month school term must therefore be regarded as accepted practice for the present, with variations as low as eight and even seven months in the less enlightened communities, and with tendencies to increase the length to twelve in certain progressive communities.

*The School Week.* The length of the school week and the school day also varies throughout the country. A five-day week is regarded as common practice for the public schools. Many private schools and colleges and most universities, however, operate on a five-and-one-half or a six-day basis.

*The School Day.* The school day usually extends from 9:00 until 3:30 with about an hour free at noon. Many of the larger secondary schools are conducted on a continuous day basis: no general recess for lunch, but part of the school with one period of thirty or forty minutes free for lunch and the other part with another period free. In this way, the entire school program of studies can be fitted into a shorter day. Some of these schools are in session from 9:00 until 2:00 or 2:30. This probably represents the shortest school day in fairly common practice.

Another group of schools, usually private and often referred to as country day schools, continue in session until 4:00 or even 5:00 in the afternoon. Much of the afternoon is devoted to supervised play. This lengthened day is based on the assumption that organized education needs to concern itself with more than the intellectual growth of the child, and that properly directed play has educational value to the child of a physical, social, and emotional nature, which becomes a necessary associate with the intellectual if a well rounded development is desired. Lengthening the school day means an increased cost for



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teachers' salaries, larger play facilities, and a greater variety of equipment than one usually finds in the average school. Very few public schools have as yet undertaken the task of lengthening the school day and providing the differentiated curriculum which is a necessary associate.

Some of the larger cities are providing supervised play after school hours for those who wish to avail themselves of it. It is not part of a continuous educational program and can therefore not be as effective as though it were required of all and adjusted to the needs and aptitudes of all. Many of these after-school supervised play periods are conducted by auxiliary agencies rather than by the school authorities.

A few of the public schools have adopted what is often called the Gary Plan or the Platoon School Plan. The characteristics of this plan will be discussed in greater detail later. Suffice it to say at this time that it involves a lengthened school day with a differentiated program so arranged that the classroom, playground, auditorium, and shop are used in a manner to give the child a well balanced variety of activities. This plan increases the cost of instruction per child, requires more capable directorship, and involves the use of a physical plant not usually available in our public schools. Although the use of the plan is growing in modified forms, it cannot be said to be beyond its experimental stage.

*Summary.* A ten-month school term, a five-day week, and about a five- or five-and-one-half-hour day can be thought of as the norm, with a tendency to increase the length of the school year and the school day.

### SIZE OF THE SCHOOL

*The One-Room School.* Our forefathers of the early nineteenth century, if they lived in the rural sections, quite likely attended a one-room school in which pupils of six to eighteen were taught by one teacher. These schools were ungraded except that pupils were using the primer, the first reader or the third reader. One teacher might have a dozen pupils or sixty or seventy, depending upon the density of the population in which the school was located. Such schools with slight modification in teaching methods are not uncommon today in the mountain sections of the New England States or the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Kentucky, in the large agricultural sections of the Middle West, or in the sparsely populated sections of nearly every state.

Those who have always attended the large graded school of our cities and suburbs have a real treat in store for them when they visit