

## WAYNE COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL

The Wayne County Training School at Northville, Michigan, admits only higher grade mentally defective children between eight and sixteen years of age. This freedom from the impediment which would have resulted from the presence of lower grades and older adults makes possible a training program which effectively prepares the child for return to the community and for the responsibilities of maintaining an independent or semi-independent existence.

The training of the adolescent groups has three aspects, viz., vocational train-

ing; day school training; and the training received through participation in cottage living, organized recreation, and leisure time activities. The program of training is supported by a program of individual guidance, both prior to and following parole; by work with employers and families; by medical care; and by research.

Normally a half day *vocational assignment* is given when the child becomes fifteen years old, full day vocational assignment when he becomes sixteen. During his fifteenth year he remains in day school on a half day schedule.



In the summer-time, however, children below the age of fifteen may ask for and receive appointments to suitable jobs; and even during the school year some who ask for jobs get an opportunity to try their wings after school hours and on Saturdays. In providing more than forty vocational outlets and several types of assignments in each, the School compares favorably with a small city. The vocational training program is in immediate charge of a Senior Vocational Supervisor who is attached to the Educational Division and is assisted by a Vocational Supervisor for the girls. The program was presented to this Association in 1932 by Dr. Robert H. Haskell, Medical Superintendent. It was later discussed in several papers by Mr. Lynn C. Sullivan, the Senior Vocational Supervisor. One paper by Mr. Sullivan appeared in the *Journal of Exceptional Children* for May, 1939. The crucial points in the program have been thoroughly covered in these communications.

The first point is *guidance*. The child has free access to the guidance officer and his wishes are given full consideration. He is continuously under observation and, when necessary, receives sound advice. Job placements are approved by three persons: the Vocational Supervisor, the General Supervisor of Cottages and the Mental Hygienist.

The second point is *exploration*. It is important that the child acquire broad vocational experiences; that he find out for himself what he likes to do and does not like to do; what he can do and cannot do. Maturity based on realization of one's areas of strength and weakness, a personal choice of goals, can best be developed in such a

way. It is equally important that supervisors and guidance officers be in a position to observe successes and failures. The setup provides for a certain amount of try-out, and for quick adaptations in the program when necessary. It provides for a change of job when training has been satisfactorily completed. Guidance and the broad scope of the program provide insurance against overspecialization which is of little value if at variance with community opportunities for placement.

The third point is *supervision of training*. Each area of work furnishes a logical sequence of operations which have been analyzed and through which the child should be taken insofar as abilities and job adjustment permit. The guidance officer checks progress through a system of detailed reports and through personal observation. Some suitable instructional materials have been developed. It is the function of the guidance officer to see to it that the needs of the child are not forgotten under pressure of production and service demands.

The fourth point has to do with *learning*. What does the child learn? He acquires skills and habits, information and experiences which may prepare him to some extent specifically for certain jobs in the community. More important, he acquires skills and habits, information and experiences which later on will make it easier to adapt to new jobs for which he lacks specific preparation; he also acquires experience with the problem of learning a new job, adapting to new people and requirements; last, but not least, he acquires attitudes, social and work habits which are prerequisites for success on any job.



He gets this training on real jobs, under conditions resembling those of corresponding jobs in the community. He gets it through day by day concrete experience with the prerequisites for success and with the immediate and tangible consequences of irresponsibility, lack of effort, or inadequate skill.

The fifth and final point has to do with *adjustment*. A review of the description already given will impress one with the fact that vocational training may be made an essential medium for a program of adjustment. Thus it will now suffice to point to the strong appeal of this training. Its intrinsic appeal is evident. There are also extrinsic factors. The children are thoroughly aware of the promises which this training holds for the future and of its bearing on chances for parole. And the child may advance to positions which will give him a higher standing in the social hierarchy of the institution.

In the *day school* half of the time is spent in manual training rooms, the other half in academic rooms. Some time is taken out of this schedule for physical education, music, auditorium, and art.

*Manual training* is realistic and to a considerable extent pre-vocational in nature. Boys as young as twelve years enter the elementary pre-vocational shop in which they are introduced to a variety of crafts and to the use of light power tools. Generally they progress through wood shop, print shop, sheet metal shop and machine shop in an orderly sequence which gives every one an opportunity. When indicated, adaptations are made in the program to meet the needs of individual children. Fifteen-year-olds may be placed on

half-time vocational assignment in one of the advanced shops, thus devoting three-fourths of the school day to manual rooms. In the fifteenth year the time allotted to academic rooms is thus reduced to one-fourth of the total time, remaining as before one-half of the school assignment.

The manual training of school girls centers around preparation for house-keeping tasks.

Many of the values of the vocational training program are found in this school manual training program. It is a preparation for the more advanced experience to be obtained later and unity of purpose is promoted by having the Senior Vocational Supervisor act as supervisor of large portions of the day school manual training program as well.

It is an objective of the *academic* program to develop general skills in reading, spelling and arithmetic and thus to remove or minimize a handicap to occupational and social adjustment. This program is supported and supplemented by the non-manual aspects of the *occupational education of the adolescent* which are the joint responsibility of the more advanced academic classes and manual training rooms.

Non-manual occupational education has three main aspects: direct experience, information, and specificity of academic skills. Throughout, the occupational viewpoint serves to render instruction more meaningful, to motivate, to give a certain freedom of expression and choice, to give training in group projects, and thus to adjust, mature, and prepare the child for his experience in the vocational training program and for return to the community.

*Experience* is of course obtained in



the classroom through projects; it is acquired and verbalized through reports on, and presentation of, projects which occupy the children in manual training rooms; visits to institutional centers of work or to the community serve these purposes admirably; experience is formulated and preserved in notebooks, scrapbooks, and charts.

In the same way the class also preserves *information* which is gathered through questions and discussions; through such reading and visual education materials as are available; through correspondence; through visits by and discussions with vocational and job supervisors. It covers not only tools, equipment, and materials but also job opportunities, working conditions, requirements, and methods of work, etc., not only verbal and pictorial information and collections of such materials as blanks in use, but also the arithmetical problems. Essential health and safety instruction, personal appearance and habits may be mentioned in this connection although these topics are included in all phases of the training program.\*

By *specificity of academic skills* we mean actual mastery of words and phrases, signs, announcements, directions, etc., which are likely to be essential; the use of sources of information such as newspapers, directories, and dictionaries; the use of telephone, calendar, time tables, etc.; ability to tell time may likewise be mentioned; the mastery

of actual writing and arithmetic problems likely to be needed should not be forgotten; writing applications, filling out blanks, budgeting, saving, buying, making change belong in this category. In short, one cannot be certain that the higher grade defective will be able to apply his general academic skills in such a way as to be able to live and act successfully. One should improve his chances by giving him a certain amount of specific preparation.

It is true that the lack of adequate teaching materials and information handicaps the teacher in developing a program of occupational education along the lines indicated above. One should remember, however, that an active, cooperative, and investigative approach can be carried out regardless of the dearth of suitable standard materials. Certainly, this approach is a most essential feature in the program because it will help develop a viewpoint and a certain degree of initiative and self-reliance, as well as other social assets which are necessary for adaptation to changing situations.

That in closing I must deal rather summarily with the third phase of the general program does not imply that I regard it as of slight importance. On the contrary, the *training received through participation in cottage living, recreation, and leisure time activities* is of course of major significance. The cottage provides many work experiences and responsibilities; because of the greater freedom more day by day experience in social living than any other situation; and, in more advanced cottages, invaluable experience in self-direction. Clubs, Scouting, Camp Fire, 4-H clubs, organized recreation, hob-

\* For further information the reader is referred to an article by one of our teachers: Hilda Abrams, *Integration of Academic and Industrial Possibilities Through a Classroom Activity*. Proceedings American Association on Mental Deficiency, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, p. 125.

bies, and more informal leisure time adjustment and social training. It is, activities of many kinds are corner- however, hardly necessary to discuss stones of the institutional program of these items in further detail.