

WORLD HORIZONS FOR CHILDREN

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“THE elementary school which contributes most in the next generation will be the one which prepares students for the world community while giving them roots in the local community.” This is the penetrating comment with which the Educational Policies Commission concluded the volume *Education for All American Children*. Yet, curiously enough, they did not spell out ways and means of implementing this trenchant statement. Difficult though that task may be, the writer is daring enough to suggest some ways in which our schools may move in the direction of preparing children for the revolutionary world in which they seem destined to live. His comments are confined to some general statements regarding the world. He is aware, however, of the fact that no education for world-mindedness can be carried on successfully

unless it is based upon the development of secure, integrated boys and girls who are at home in their family circle, their friendship group, their school, their local community, and their nation. Education for world-mindedness must not wait until children are secure in these groups but, to be successful, it must be based upon the security of belonging to these basic human societies.

Stated as compactly as possible, there

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seem to be at least five basic aims or concepts in any program for broadening the horizons of boys and girls:

1. The world is composed of many kinds of people similar to us in many ways and different in others.
2. People are affected by their environment and their education; they learn what they live.
3. People live in countries which are also alike and different.
4. People and countries are interdependent.
5. Countries have their quarrels but countries, like people, are trying to learn to live together peacefully.

On the surface this may seem like over-

simplification, but each of these concepts is pregnant with teaching possibilities. To teach any one of them will require far more skill and far broader views than most teachers now possess. Taken together they will demand a new type of teaching to prepare pupils for the changing, chaotic world of the second half of this twentieth century.

TEACHING BASIC CONCEPTS

Let us look briefly at each of these, sketching in thin pencil lines the general outline of what might be taught under each of the five topics, leaving it to the skill of each teacher to fill in with bolder



Baltimore Children Assemble Correspondence Albums for Aamori, Japan

strokes the methods for his or her particular class.

1. One task of the elementary school teacher is to introduce children to a variety of the world's people. Through games, songs, stories, films, and other devices the teacher should help children to know and respect a wide variety of the two billion and more people who are their neighbors on this planet. Boys and girls need to realize that the United States is only one part of the world, albeit an important part. They need to realize eventually that they, as Americans, are in a minority in the world and that they have to learn to live with all kinds of people. Teaching on this topic should stress the similarities and the differences between people, helping children to understand that the variations among people of the world can be an enrichment, just as it is in their families, classrooms, and communities. At the same time they should learn that biologically there is very little difference. Children and adults of the world all need food, clothing, shelter, warmth, recreation, education, religion, and government even though there may be great differences in the ways of meeting these basic needs.
2. The idea that people are affected by their environment and their education, used in the broad sense of that term, is a second concept which can be stressed successfully in the elementary schools. In the past it has been thought necessary for children to study the warm, humid countries, or the cold, dry countries in order to understand this idea. This seems to be an impractical way of studying the effect of environment on people; any country being studied illustrates this point, whether it be Iran or Egypt, Korea or China, Brazil or Chile. It is not easy to combat the idea that the Chinese or the Russians, the Germans or the French, the Hawaiians or the Filipinos are born different from us. Perhaps one of the easiest ways of illustrating this point is through language. Children can see fairly readily that if they were born in Quebec they would probably speak French; if born in the United States they would probably speak English. It can be a fascinating and valuable experience for children to develop this concept by being imaginary inhabitants for a period of days or weeks of Norway or Egypt and discovering what they would do to adjust to their new environment. In the process a basic geographical concept should be developed, critical thinking should take place, and a good measure of empathy



Photograph by J. Warren Southwick

Grand Rapids Children Pack Overseas Boxes

- for the people of other environments should develop.
3. Quite early children need to develop an elementary knowledge of countries; this is not easy. Learning to locate countries on a map may be an important part of the process, but it does not mean that children understand what a country is. Even adults have difficulty understanding what binds a diverse group of people together, whether it is in Switzerland, Hawaii, India, the U. S. A., or the U. S. S. R. Nevertheless, to live in today's world one must have some idea of the variety of countries and such uniting factors as common traditions, symbols, some common ideals or goals, and some general agreement about the form of economic and governmental life. Starting with their own nation, children can be led gradually to understand a little about the concept of countries. Probably the study of small, relatively simple countries will help children in this regard, particularly if these countries are somewhat similar to the United States. The study of England, New Zealand, or Australia is a good place to begin rather than India, China, or the U. S. S. R. This does not mean that these other nations will be ignored in the early grades, but it does mean that no intensive study of them as nations will be made before the fifth or sixth grades.
 4. Quite early children can learn about the interdependence of peoples and countries. Studies of food, clothing, transportation, games, and a score of other popular units for elementary schools lend themselves to the development of this concept. "Surveys" of the products in the nearby drugstore or grocery, or the destination of goods from

the local factories, and of architecture in the local community will help to give children some appreciation of their interdependence with other peoples and countries. With older children the contributions of nations to world culture, the daily current events, and the biographical approach may help to develop this concept.

5. Most of the histories still stress the quarrels among nations. To read history one would think that people did little else but fight. It is certainly true that a large portion of man's energies, money, resources, and thoughts have been concerned with fighting. That is one side of history. But teachers need, also, to show children and have them discover that men and women have been successful in the art of living together. Children need to learn about co-operation as well as conflict—the peaceful separation of Norway and Sweden, the undefended border between the United States and Canada, or the achievements of the United Nations.

Alert teachers will find many opportunities to help their pupils understand these five concepts. Through incidental



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teaching; through current events; through topics, broad themes, or units which include material on other parts of the world; through special topics or units based on other parts of the world or on themes which include several countries; and through hobbies children may be guided in their growth towards world-mindedness. Teachers should bear in mind the findings of social scientists on attitude formation and change. They need to remember, for example, that information which is discovered by children is far more likely to be retained than information that is imparted. Full use should be made of films and filmstrips, dramatic play and socio-drama, and creative work of all kinds as a means to furthering world-mindedness. Wherever possible, personal contacts with carefully chosen peers and adults should be encouraged as a means to broadening the horizons of boys and girls. The existing knowledge of how to help people form and change their attitudes is extensive and should be applied in any effective program of education for international understanding.

RESOURCES

Finally, teachers need to avail themselves of the best resources in this relatively new field of education for world-mindedness. One of the most helpful, brief accounts prepared for teachers is the booklet by Delia Goetz, *World Understanding Begins With Children*.² Two bibliographies which should prove useful are *Aids to World Understanding: For Elementary School Children*³ and *Developing World-Minded Children: Resources for Elementary School Teachers*.⁴ Among the many series of books for children are the *World Geography Readers*,⁵ *Children of the World Series*,⁶ *The Land*

²Washington, D. C.: U. S. Office of Education. 15 cents.

³By Eva M. Dratz. Minneapolis Public Schools. 50 cents.

⁴By Leonard S. Kenworthy. Brooklyn 10: Brooklyn College. 30 cents.

⁵New York 18: Charles E. Merrill Company.

⁶Evanston: Row, Peterson and Company.

and People Series,⁷ *Made In.....Series*,⁸ *Let's Read About.....Series*,⁹ and *Adventure in.....Series*.¹⁰ Teachers can also receive much help from such organizations as the American Association for the United Nations, the World Affairs Council, the Foreign Policy Association, the U.S. Office of Education, the Pan-American Union, the Committee on International Relations of the National Education Association, and many other organizations interested in world affairs.

Yes, "The elementary school which con-

tributes most in the next generation will be the one which prepares students for the world community while giving them roots in the local community" and may the writer add "nation." And the elementary school teachers who contribute most in this current year and the years ahead will be those who themselves are constantly broadening their horizons and helping boys and girls to do the same.

⁷New York 11: Holiday House.

⁸New York 22: Alfred A. Knopf.

⁹Grand Rapids 2: Fideler Company.

¹⁰New York 18: Julian Messner, Inc.