

C. THE SPECIALIZED OR VOCATIONAL VS. THE COMPOSITE HIGH SCHOOL

ARTHUR DEERIN CALL, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS,
HARTFORD, CONN.

Compared with the Latin schools of our earlier time, schools typified by the Boston Latin School antedating Harvard College by a year, by the Penn Charter starting before the close of the seventeenth century, our secondary schools of today represent a long wholesome advance in American thought and practice. These very pioneer schools, and their like, represent in themselves a rich and sane evolution. Our secondary educational system, like our other human institutions, is not perfect, but I have little patience with most of the indiscriminate destructive criticism of our public high schools. They have done, they are doing, they will continue to do a great service toward the promotion of the ideal at the basis of our democracy.

And after all, is it not by this standard that we must measure the results which we think we accomplish in our educational endeavor, this standard of the ideal behind our democracy? That is to say, does our system provide a full and free opportunity for every youth of whatever section or station to make the most of himself, to promote his own enjoyment in the service of the common weal? This, I take it, is the great aim of all public service: to provide the freest possible opportunity for each to work out his own happiness in the service of an advancing democracy. Any adequate discussion of an educational problem, it would seem, must start and end in this proposition.

Of course there is a difficulty involved in the word "opportunity" as used in this relation. "Opportunity" for what in detail? And how best is this "opportunity" to be provided?

It will probably be granted that our high schools, like our colleges, have overemphasized a bit their duties to a selected few. No one person is to blame for this, no one set of persons. It has grown largely out of a general haziness in the minds of most of us about culture, and a dense darkness regarding the specific needs of society. We have seen clearly that doctors, lawyers, clergymen, teachers must be provided. So, drawing upon the rich stores of the ancient world for most of our models, we found a way to manufacture these desirable persons fairly well, at least to the a bit complaisant satisfaction of the doctors, lawyers, clergymen, teachers. We forgot, or ignored if we remembered, that only 4 per cent of our population are professionally engaged. Or, if we knew the facts, we assumed rather *a fortiori* that the training which worked so well for the professionally inclined was the best possible preparation for all. Our great lawgiver, the General Emeritus in our educational army—Charles Eliot—still fervently contends that the best preparation for life is to prepare for college.

Now this theory has worked. Let us confess to the truth. It has worked impressively in important instances. We must tread softly here, for you and I are flowers of this very system. It should not be surprising, therefore, when we find opponents to innovators in this sacred field.

And yet we are awakening to newer connotations in the word "opportunity." We can agree with Great Britain's distinguished Professor Murray that a "deep decay has eaten into the study of classics in America," and thank him sincerely for recognizing the truth which we all consciously or unconsciously feel, that "the time has come which demands a deeper and more solid—and therefore, a slower—education. Great insurgent forces are at work in the United States and citizenship will require in the future a finer training and vision than in the past." In short, there is a wide area of genuine loyalty to the culture of the old school. This is quite true, and hopefully true.

We can also see, however, that the so-called "practical sense" of our people is very strong. The demand for a short, cheap, effective training to meet the demands of the field, shop, conveyance, trade, home, is a real demand. Given a demand, we are disposed in America to meet it. Hence the high schools, determining never to give up all that made glorious the past, are struggling to do their share to meet the practical situation in a practical way, to meet the need of the 36 per cent of our population engaged in agriculture, the 24 per cent in manufacturing industries, the 10 per cent in trade and transportation, and the 20 per cent in domestic arts, as well as those of the 5 per cent in our high schools who go to college. And so, as an outgrowth of our efforts to interpret more widely the significance of the word "opportunity" in these latter days, we witness the growth of agricultural, industrial, commercial, and domestic art courses on a wondrously increasing scale. We explain to ourselves that these serious, tho often ineffective, attempts aim to do for the industrial what we have been doing so long, and, for the most part so well, for the professional workers.

Granted that the high school must continue to meet both the old and the new demand, one immediate question to be answered is: Where shall these two lines of educational activity be carried on? To be precise, shall we have separate, special schools with a vocational bent for the practical courses, or shall we combine all secondary activities in one composite plant, albeit the courses be kept distinct? Thus our question is one principally of organization.

There are arguments on both sides. Indeed, both systems have been pretty thoroly tried in various and differing centers of our land. When I was asked to prepare this study, I at once settled upon certain fundamental theses—theses, I confess, springing from a pathetically limited first-hand experience in such matters, a large amount of a priori speculation, and the hypnotic suggestions from a few men whom I greatly respect. The theses were:

1. The tendency toward specialized high schools has gone too far in some quarters.
2. Economy requires less speed in this direction.
3. There should be less duplication of plant, laboratories, and the like.
4. Pupils should not be asked to go so far to reach the "special" schools.
5. Many facilities are now practically forbidden a large number of students because of the inaccessibility of the "special" schools.
6. The "special" school removes pupils from the "composite" school, hinders the promotion of democracy, and tends to promote class feeling, etc.

These theses have given me some interesting experiences. I found, for example, that they meet with enthusiastic support from the small cities, and with a rather generous disapproval from the large cities. In trying to analyze the reason for this divergency among the doctors, the conclusion seems justifiable that the large cities, being more directly interested because more acutely in need of industrial schools, and having the resources with which to act, have proceeded along the one shortest and most practical way and begun their experiments with the special schools. These schools are usually centrally located, launched with industrial fervor, but of very little significance, I believe, so far as real vocational training is concerned. Of course this last is not true of the trade school, but it is true of the industrial work in high schools. Officers of the large cities grant that most of the theses are true for small cities. I venture the question, If they are true for a small unit, are they not also true for a large city which is but a series of small units? So, at least for the purpose of this paper, let us forbear separating the problem into large and small city phases.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE SPECIAL INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL WITH A VOCATIONAL BENT

The arguments which I have been able to find urged in favor of the separate industrial school may be briefly enumerated as follows: It permits the economical concentration of equipment, avoiding unnecessary duplication. It permits of the concentration of the teaching force, enabling the work to be done with fewer instructors. It permits the concentration of individuality in the work, such as enabling the school to fit the English to the industrial pursuit rather than to preparation for college. The administrators of the regular high schools have not proved to be willing or competent to administer successfully effective industrial courses. From some sources I gather that the separate industrial school produces better results. One superintendent from a large city writes:

The kind of work that is effective in industry or in business is not possible in a composite school. For this there are many reasons. First, it is impossible, unless the administrator in the building knows the field, and that almost never happens, because principals are chosen according to traditional ideals. Second, the efficient vocational school is possible only when the academical and vocational studies are correlated or dovetailed together. The student who is taking a business course needs a different kind of English in part and in practice from that one who is headed for college. Third, the effective vocational school has an entity of its own, for it must establish a bureau connecting with

those who employ the product. These seem impossible in a composite school. The fact is that it is impossible to secure the results in a composite school that are possible in a separate school.

The commissioner of education in Massachusetts believes that the vocational school must be something set apart; that a vocational school must have its equipment, location, etc., determined by the conditions of the vocation for which it prepares; that a commercial high school and a high school for machinists should not be in the same building and cannot interchange equipment.

He urges that

a school for tailors would not use the same equipment as a school for carpenters and a school for carpenters would use little of the same equipment as that used in a school for machinists.

In general, Dr. Snedden doubts the element of validity in what might be called "general vocational training." He grants that every general or liberal high school should have opportunities for manual training for boys and household arts for girls, but that these should be simply a part of the program of general education, and that we should not deceive ourselves into thinking of it as "vocational." The composite high school is rarely going to give, in his estimation, vocational training.

And yet Dr. Snedden agrees to the objections against supporting different "classes of pupils," and "that it would be ideal if we could have all of our schools together." He says:

There is of course, not the slightest reason why several vocational departments should not be on the same block with the general high school. There would be some economy in giving such studies as English. On the other hand, most of those who discuss this sort of organization are not thinking of vocational education at all, but of some two-hour-a-day scheme of shop training, which, as my experience indicates, is of little value for purposes of vocational education. . . . The question of the location of the vocational school is an important one. It will probably have to find its location in the neighborhood where the industry for which preparation is being made is carried on. It is the feeling of the business men of Boston that the High School of Commerce should be located in the heart of the commercial district, altho reasons of economy have hitherto prevented that consummation.

There is a sense in which we must agree with Commissioner Snedden's feeling, "that this question cannot be adequately discussed until we have made up our minds as to what we mean by the 'vocational school.'"

ARGUMENTS FOR THE COMPOSITE HIGH SCHOOL

The arguments in favor of the composite high school, or, as it is variously called, the cosmopolitan high school, the general high school, or the university high school, may be briefly summarized as follows: It promotes economy by permitting the use of the same heating plant, janitor service, study halls, social service rooms, and various types of equipment. There is no reason why the pupils in all courses should not use the same library, auditorium, gymnasium, lunchroom. There is no reason why all the schools should not have the same supply-room and be run by the

same business manager. An argument which has often been overlooked, but a very important argument in favor of the composite high school, is that, because of its accessibility and all-round equipment, it lends itself more readily to the use of the evening schools with their varying demands. The composite high school provides articulated courses which enable children to change easily from one course to another. The composite high school presents various life-preparing opportunities, and for this reason is more attractive to boys and girls, promoting a larger high-school population and a longer attendance. The composite high school promotes democracy among the pupils and among the teachers, avoiding cleavage into classes and the unpleasant results which come from caste distinctions. Another reason for rearing schools of the composite type is that the aims, in the last analysis, of the two types of schools are practically indistinguishable.

In presenting my theses to the various leaders in typical cities of our country, I received replies producing a profound hopelessness in my mind of getting any real assistance from those who are best able to advise. The leaders, even in the large cities, are not wholly in agreement about these theses. The comfortable thing about this is, however, doctors disagreeing, that we are at liberty to say some things which we ourselves evolve out of our own inner consciousness. At this stage of my mental undevelopment, I am convinced, first, that boys and girls do not usually follow those vocational lines that are preferred by them at the time of entrance into the special high school. Second, I am inclined to the belief that the high-school teachers are able to detect special abilities and to promote nascent tendencies as the pupils go thru the high-school course, and that such abilities and tendencies are made manifest more readily in the composite high school. Third, as one connected with the United States Bureau of Education, Dr. C. D. Kingsley, writes:

About three years ago, while a teacher in the Manual Training High School, Brooklyn, I made a study of the geographical distribution of high-school students in that borough. We had six high schools, only one of which offered manual training. We found that the Brooklyn high-school students were regularly paying over \$100,000 a year for carfare in order to reach the schools of their choice. The Manual Training High School draws to itself a very high proportion of the boys and girls on the park slope, Brooklyn, and draws students who desire manual training from the entire borough. Many of these students have to spend three-quarters of an hour or more upon the cars, both morning and evening, adding to the overcrowding of the cars in the morning, and spending, to reach our school alone, in the neighborhood of \$25,000 or \$30,000 a year. When you remember that many of these are young girls about fourteen years of age, and that all of them are spending time on the street cars that should be spent in walking and getting benefits of the fresh air, you can see how serious a matter it is. The carfare item is a serious drain upon the income of many of the families that find it a difficulty, at best, to keep their children in school.

To this, Superintendent Maxwell replies that it is "no objection," that "education is too cheaply and easily obtained." Another adds laconically: "Maybe it is better to go farther than to get a 'gold brick' near by."

In St. Louis, they have four white, and one colored high school, in all of which the same courses are offered. All have an equipment of shops, laboratories, and libraries varying only to meet the needs of the number of students in each school. The quality of the teaching corps in all of the schools is the same; thus the opportunities offered to a pupil in one high school are identical with those in the other high schools. The city is divided into four districts for white children, who are required to attend the high school in whose district they live. Thus the secondary system in St. Louis is based upon the principle of the composite high school, offering all opportunities for secondary education to all pupils. They believe that this is preferable to a system of specialized high schools, and emphasize the importance of promoting democratic ideas thru acquaintance and saner judgments which this system encourages. They have worked out with considerable detail the principles involved in the theses which I offer. Philadelphia has just moved a long way in this direction. Toledo is just completing two new composite high schools, each with a capacity of about 1,200; each of the I-shaped type, the central portion to be devoted to academical work and the wings to industrial laboratories, fully equipped. Other cities leaning strongly toward the composite high school are: Minneapolis, Portland, Ore., St. Paul, Rochester, Pittsburgh, Denver, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati.

CONCLUSION

There are great unsolved, but essential things which industrial education must provide and promote, such as the favorable admission of pupils to the industries, more practical experience as wage-earners, co-operation between the school and shop, industrial efficiency developing thru definite steps to definite occupations, that personal power most locally demanded, recognition by the colleges of high-school work in household economics and mechanic arts, reverence for our social institutions, as the courts, the law, the government, the church, the school, the home, the continuance of the educational process as far as possible, applied scholarship, a purposeful life.

Assuming that education must provide and promote these things, we have to grant that our educational system must meet the needs of those large sections of our population outside the so-called professions. In carrying out this program, we have come to grant that the whole of the pupil must be led to function, body, mind, and spirit; that we must cast our teaching more nearly in the terms of real life, motivizing as well as idealizing, vitalizing and energizing as well as intellectualizing and moralizing. Thus granting the importance of the aims of the older schools, we are finding a widening place for industrial education. Granting that the language, history, and number facts accumulated and being accumulated

must be preserved, and for the most part in our old-line schools, yet we are practically a unit now in insisting that industrial training must be likewise provided to meet the practical demands of our industrial life. Industrial courses have therefore become our fixed and accepted policy. Indeed, we are beginning to find that these two types of training are not of that ultimate difference which we at first supposed. We insist now that there is no industrial education worthy the name which does not end in a richer life of culture, and that there is no cultural education worthy the name which does not end in practical service.

But we have not, in our practice, been able to fashion a single course of education equally adaptable to both types of schools. So we separate the courses, roughly, into cultural, academical, scientific, classical, and industrial. In the organization of schools for the promotion of the best in our democracy, I believe in the composite high school, with courses leading to college, normal school, commercial training for boys and girls, domestic science for girls, manual and mechanical training for boys, each of these departments separate and under the direction of an expert, but all under one head.

So I am convinced after all that my tentative theses are in the main sound, namely, that there should probably be fewer specialized high schools, and pretty certainly that more attention should be given to developing composite high schools in various parts of urban centers, as the need may arise.

It is true that high-school pupils are problems in themselves. They are not to be treated according to a psychology of adults. There is no set organized psychology of childhood or adolescence. The teacher's most practical help is concrete interpreting experience, with real boys and girls. Human development means more than the acquisition of knowledge—it is a growth from within. The teacher's vital concern is to remove the obstacles from the way and to provide for those reactions which best promote this growth, representing the whole child in distinction from the body, mind, spirit, memory, feeling, or will of him taken separately. Different periods of child development present different demands upon the teacher's resources, but the demand in all periods is for a closer transition from the school to practical life, and that the child's activities shall spring primarily from his own past and be a generous expression of himself. Better physical bases, closer relation to vocations, and a greater harmony between school and real life are the most hopeful educational tendencies toward our democratic ideal of personal opportunity for all in a progressive society. I believe that the type of high school best qualified to promote education in the light of these principles is the composite high school.