

..SCHOOLS AND CAMPING

A Review of Recent Developments

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THERE is abroad in the land today much talk about the "education of the whole child." Articles, yearbooks, and pamphlets urge that the school, the home, and other community agencies work together to provide a continuum of experience. Here and there one finds that something more than talk is going on. It is probably not unfair to say, however, that there is much more of this kind of integrated approach to education to be found on the printed page than in actual practice.

The very fact that from two to three million children of school age are going to camp each summer presents a challenge to any alert educator. It can scarcely be denied that today the camp movement is an important member of that fraternity of groups and agencies playing a significant role in the education of American youth.

CHILDREN NEED WIDER EXPERIENCES

TODAY the opinion that children need a wider range of experience within the school program is commonly held by educators. When instructional procedures are confined to the classroom, many fundamental learnings and contacts essential to a well-

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Recently the president of the Progressive Education Association appointed a committee to survey the present status of cooperation between schools and summer camps and to develop a program that would explore the ways in which development of closer working relationships might take place. In this account Lloyd Sharp and Ernest Osborne review the situation.

rounded development of the child are not available to him. This was effectively pointed out by John Dewey recently when he said, among other things, "The average American child seldom comes in direct contact with nature. In school he learns a few dates from books, to press a button, to step on an accelerator; but he is in danger of losing contact with primitive realities—with the world, with the space about us, with fields, with rivers, with the problems of getting shelter and of obtaining food that have always conditioned life and that still do."

Some schools indeed have begun to broaden their curricula through the provision of camping experiences. In a bulletin published by the United States Office of Education in 1935, Dr. James Frederick Rogers, consultant in hygiene, describes camp projects carried on by thirty-three cities with populations above 30,000. The



Counselor, Leaders, and Boys

"LIFE CAMPS" PHOTO

boards of education in six of these cities sponsored camp projects. In the others, there was a varying degree of cooperation between the board of education and other community agencies providing camping experiences for youngsters. By far the largest number of these educational opportunities, however, were available to children who were either malnourished, tubercular, or physically handicapped.

There are no adequate statistics today to tell the story of the extent of the participation of schools in camping projects. It is clear, however, from reports of projects in camps that there is a wide and general interest. Schools or school systems in the East, the Southeast, the Middle West, and the Pacific Coast are actively concerned with the possibilities afforded by the camping experience.

SPENDING JUNE IN CAMP

THE entire school population of the Little Red School House, teachers and children

alike, spend the month of June in camp. Their program while in camp is continuous with that carried on in the home school, but much more emphasis is given to nature study and to contacts with the persons living in the neighborhood of the camp. The general practice of shifting the camp's environment from year to year provides the children with a variety of experiences, at the sea-shore, the mountains, on lakes or rivers, and in farming communities.

A number of private schools in various parts of the country maintain summer camps which provide for some of the children and staff members a continuity of experience. In some of these schools, like the Manumit School of Pawling, New York, the school work of the winter is closely related to summer activities. In others, there is no apparent continuity, but the opportunity for teachers to know youngsters in various kinds of situations makes a real contribution to a better understanding of the whole child and thus better educational procedures.

The Mountain View School of El Monte, California, has two ten-day camping periods for boys and girls during the summer months. The Board of Education in Atlanta, Georgia, in cooperation with the Optimists' Club and the National Park Service, maintains a camp which is used both in the summer and during the school year.

OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOL CAMPING PLANS

SUPERINTENDENT B. C. Shankland of the Cadillac, Michigan, Public Schools, in an article in the *Michigan Education Journal*, describes the first season of a camp project sponsored by the Cadillac Board of Education in which 146 boys and girls spent at least a week each in camp. It is planned that groups from the school may also avail themselves of week-end opportunities for ski and snowshoe trips during the winter months.

In the New York City schools, a different approach is taken. Mrs. Johanna M. Lindlof, a Commissioner of the City Board of Education, has raised a Camp Fund by private contribution to send a small number of children to camp. A three-year experiment in cooperation with the *Life Camps* is being carried out to determine wherein and to what extent camping experience of the child can be integrated with his school and home life.

Up to the present, the schools' efforts in the field of camping have been largely experimental and have involved comparatively small numbers. Many more schools will need to experiment with the school camp idea and evolve a more comprehensive plan if much real progress is to be made. Such plans have been envisioned by workers in the schools of New York City, and of Reading, Pennsylvania, and no doubt by others.

Attention should be called, also, to the fact that schools have played a prominent part in the widespread development of day



A Camper

camps. While such camps offer activity for only a few hours a day, they may very well be the first step in what will be a more extensive provision of the twenty-four-hour camping experience.

WORK CAMPS FOR OLDER YOUTH

WORK camps sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, the Associated Junior Work Camps and by some other groups afford opportunity for high school and older youth to have valuable educational experience in work situations. Here they learn to know and to cooperate with people of different racial, economic, and social backgrounds. This type of program has considerable merit and may well play an important part in an extended school program much needed for older youth.

It is essential that those concerned with the development of school camps face a number of important questions. There is today no one philosophy or practice of

camping. In some camps one finds as rigid and stereotyped an organization of program as can be found in the most formal of schools. There are other camps, however, that have utilized their natural environment in the development of their program so as to afford rich opportunities to youngsters for contact with simple and primitive processes of living in the out-of-doors. These experiences are of great educational significance, for when children are allowed to assume a large part of the responsibility for the provision of food and shelter and for the development of their own interests, they develop the feeling of personal adequacy and of social competence largely denied them by complex city life.

CAN SCHOOLS THEMSELVES CHANGE?

WILL the more widespread participation of schools in the field of camping make for more school-like atmosphere, or is it possible to hope that teachers and adminis-

trators finding themselves a part of a more informal and free situation in summer camps will make strenuous efforts to bring something of the spirit, interest, and opportunity of this freer kind of environment into the school? How can the experiences of camps and of schools become more unified? Are there experiences possible in the camp which would be difficult to secure even in the school which is progressive and informal? Who should be the counselors in a camp run by the school—the teachers, or an entirely different group? Or is there a need for specially trained counselors who have the vision of the camp as an essential part of the school?

These are a few of the problems which must be solved through experimentation and experience. Only through the close cooperation of individuals experienced in the field of camping and in the field of education in the schools can we expect that our procedures will be adequate.



In a boat they have made according to an ancient plan



PHOTO BY DAVID E. SCHERMAN FOR "LIFE CAMPS"

All join in the daily tasks

AS PART OF TEACHER EDUCATION

A NUMBER of individuals interested in teacher-training have been challenged by the opportunities that the camp experience affords teachers. In the program of the late-lamented New College, camp counseling experience was considered a very important phase of teacher-training. A number of departments of education in liberal arts colleges are helping prospective teachers arrange for a summer's experience in camp, and in one of our larger teacher-training centers it has been proposed that all of those who are preparing to teach children in nursery school or kindergarten should have at least one summer's experience with youngsters in a camp situation.

This practice is based on the assumption that the most important part of a teacher's equipment is a knowledge and an understanding of child growth and development. While colleges provide courses in child

psychology and student-teachers have opportunities for contacts with children in the classroom, only the twenty-four-hour contact with children in a natural environment will give the thoroughgoing foundation in the understanding of youngsters' interests, needs, and abilities that should be a part of the equipment of every effective teacher.

Not only is this experience important for teachers-in-training, but numbers of experienced teachers who are counselors in camps testify that camp experience deepens their insight into teaching methods and helps them to know and work with children in more effective ways. The teacher who acts as a counselor is afforded the experience of intimate contact with children in a variety of activities—activities that tend to bring out the real child and the real adult, thus providing a basis for the development of genuine understanding.

It should be pointed out that experience

in a camp situation does not necessarily insure the growth of this kind of understanding, since it is probably true that the majority of our summer camps are still too largely dominated by allegiance to one type of activity or another rather than by a genuine and intelligent concern for the growth and development of children. The latter emphasis, however, is growing, and definite provisions are being made for more adequate training along such lines. Counselor training courses associated with university centers or with organized camps have increased in the last decade. These training opportunities have made a real contribution, but have usually not offered a sufficiently rounded experience to develop the kind of leadership needed today.

A NATIONAL CAMP FOR TRAINING

A NEW venture in leadership training sponsored by *Life Camps* is beginning this next summer with the founding of a National Camp for the training of professional leaders in the field of camping. This six-weeks summer session for camp and school leadership training has been organized with the cooperation of New York University.

The success of the public school camp will depend upon the extent to which the camping activities can be made an integral part of the total educational program of the school. They should expand no faster than they can intelligently and scientifically justify their existence. The educational virtues of well-conducted camps have been demonstrated, and these outcomes are of paramount help in molding character and giving more wholesome expression to youthful personalities. The problem to face is that of integration, of dovetailing and weaving into the total life of the school that benefit which camping so effectively contributes outside of school time.

It should be made clear that the public

school camp ought not to duplicate the types of camps we now have outside the school. It should not set up a camp primarily for charitable welfare or corrective purposes or be a place for various kinds of abnormals and delinquents. Camping is an effective measure for children who may rightfully belong in some of these groups, but the public school camp should be conceived and planned primarily on the basis that it is designed to fit in with the total educational scheme in school.

The chief reason why schools should develop camping as part of their programs is that camping, when properly carried out, is so thoroughly sound educationally and so effective in its outcomes. It should not be looked upon as merely adding another subject to the curriculum but rather as a totally *different* approach and procedure in the education of the child.

The trail has been blazed. The public school has a splendid opportunity to take a most progressive step. It should wait no longer.



Repairing her own shoe