

**A STUDY OF THE BOSTON MECHANIC
ARTS HIGH SCHOOL: BEING A REPORT TO
THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE.
TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY CONTRIBUTIONS TO
EDUCATION, NO. 74**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649517091

A Study of the Boston Mechanic Arts High School: Being a Report to the Boston School Committee. Teachers College, Columbia University Contributions to Education, No. 74 by C. A. Prosser

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A Study of the Boston Mechanic Arts High School

Being a Report to the Boston School Committee

BY

C. A. PROSSER, Ph.D.

SECRETARY, NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF
INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION, NO. 74

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PUBLISHED BY

Teachers College, Columbia University
NEW YORK CITY

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A STUDY OF THE BOSTON MECHANIC ARTS HIGH SCHOOL

FOREWORD

1. *Reasons for the report.*—This report presents the results of a study of the Mechanic Arts High School undertaken at the request of the Boston School Committee. Its aim has been to determine to what extent the school is effectively performing in the school system the purpose intended by the committee of preparing boys for advantageous entrance to industry on the business and directive side. With the wisdom of that purpose this report has nothing to do.

Owing largely to the rapid development of industrial education in Massachusetts during the past few years and a changing conception of the purpose and place of manual training, the aim of the Mechanic Arts High School has of late frequently been called in question and several investigations have been made with a view to determining just what kind of service the school ought to render the city of Boston and how that service can best be performed. The first of these studies was made by Mr. Arthur L. Williston, director of Wentworth Institute, and the second by the business men's advisory committee for the school, consisting of Messrs. Fish, Alexander, Burton, Lindall, Green, Ziegler, Russell, and Kaven. The findings and recommendations of this present report are compared with those of the two previous studies.

2. *Scope of the report.*—This report is concerned with these two questions: (1) How far is the school now effectively accomplishing the purpose of the school committee, and (2) what changes, if any, should be made in the work of the school in order that it may better accomplish this purpose.

3. *Spirit of the report.*—It should be understood at the outset that this investigation has been undertaken in no hostile

spirit and that this report is not intended as an indictment of the headmaster and the faculty of the school, or a criticism in general of their efficiency.

The Mechanic Arts High School was organized in 1892 as a manual training high school. An early report of the committee in charge of the school indicates that they believed it should be a fundamental purpose of the institution to serve as a high school offering systematic instruction in the mechanic arts and drawing, and that preparation for the engineering college was also a legitimate part of its work. This policy has been consistently followed since the founding of the school and until recent years has had the approval of the sub-committee in charge of it, as well as that of the executive officers of the school committee responsible for its supervision.

In agreement with this policy, the headmaster and his associates have built up a school which has stood in the front rank of similar institutions throughout the country. Few schools can show among their teachers a better *esprit de corps* or, on the part of their pupils, a finer spirit of manliness and studious attention to work. Few schools, indeed, possess instructors of greater teaching ability or more sympathetic understanding of adolescent boys. Abundant credit should be given those charged with the administration of the school for the wisdom, the skill, the large executive ability, and the incessant labor necessary to develop such an institution.

In recent years, however, the School Committee has adopted a change of policy for this school. It is with the administration and development of the institution in the light of this new policy that this report is primarily concerned.

4. *Method of the report.*—In making this study, the Boston School Committee, as the final authority, was asked to state the purpose it wished the school to accomplish. The effort has been made to test the school by this aim. To a very large extent, the study has relied upon the headmaster for information. This information he has always been very ready to furnish and the findings given herein are largely based on data obtained from this source and included in the Appendix of this report. (See Appendix E.) The thanks of the writer are due the headmaster for his kindness and courtesy in giving his assistance in this manner. The data from the school office were supplemented

by a number of visits to the school and conferences with the members of the faculty. The records of the Boston School Committee, the reports of the Mechanic Arts High School and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and answers to printed questions by students both of the English High School and the Mechanic Arts High School, have also been drawn upon for information.

Grateful acknowledgment is here made of the exceedingly valuable information and helpful suggestions contributed by a number of persons, particularly by Mr. Arthur Williston, director of Wentworth Institute, and for the active and able assistance of Mr. W. A. O'Leary, director of Evening Training Classes for Teachers at Pratt Institute, in the preparation of this report.