

**THE ELEMENTS OF
GENERAL METHOD:
BASED ON THE
PRINCIPLES OF HERBART**

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The Elements of General Method: Based on the Principles of Herbart by Charles A. McMurry

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CHARLES A. MCMURRY

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BY
CHARLES A. McMURRY, PH. D.

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PREFACE.

THE Herbart School of Pedagogy has created much stir in Germany in the last thirty years. It has developed a large number of vigorous writers on all phases of education and psychology, and numbers a thousand or more positive disciples among the energetic teachers of Germany.

Those American teachers and students who have come in contact with the ideas of this school have been greatly stimulated.

In such a miscellaneous and many-sided thing as practical education, it is deeply gratifying to find a clear and definite leading purpose that prevails throughout and a set of mutually related and supporting principles which in practice contribute to the realization of this purpose.

The following chapters cannot be regarded as a full, exact, and rigidly scientific account of Herbartian ideas, but as a simple explanation of their leading principles in their relations to each other and in their application to our own school problems.

The General Method is followed by a second volume (now in press), on the Method of the Recitation, or the Underlying Principles of Method in Classroom Work. These two books will form a somewhat complete treatment of the general principles of method and of their application to instruction.

The series of Special Methods which follows the two volumes of General Method treats of the selec-

tion and quality of the best materials furnished by the separate studies and points out the particular application of general principles to these materials. They are as follows:

Special Method in *Literature* and *History*, especially the oral treatment of stories in primary and intermediate grades. The history course for grammar grades is also discussed and outlined.

Special Method in *Geography*. No. I., for third and fourth grades. No. II., for fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. A full plan for the grades with illustrative lessons.

Special Method in *Reading*, a discussion of the quality, culture-value, and method of using the best classics as reading exercises. A full list of one hundred and forty-six choice books, arranged according to grades, is given.

Special Method in *Natural Science*. A historical and critical discussion of the leading ideas involved in science teaching in common schools is followed by illustrations of the treatment of science topics, by lists of books of reference in science studies and by a series of science topics for the grades.

Other Special Methods in Language, Arithmetic, Music, and Drawing may be issued later.

A third series of books for the use of children as well as teachers, has been partly worked out, which gives in full, rounded form some of the choicest materials which are much needed to enrich the somewhat dry text-book lore of our schools. Thus far the series is worked out as follows:

Classic Stories for the Little Ones, by Mrs. Lida B. McMurry. They are used for oral narrative in first grade and as a reading book in second grade.

Robinson Crusoe for Boys and Girls, by Mrs. Lida B. McMurry and Mary Hall Husted, for oral work in second grade and used as a reading book in third grade.

Tales of Troy, by Dr. Charles De Garmo. A classic story for Boys and Girls in third and fourth grades.

Pioneer History Stories of the Mississippi Valley, by C. A. McMurry, for fourth and fifth grades.

Pioneer Explorers on Land and Sea, by C. A. McMurry, for fifth and sixth grades.

Finally, a *Course of Study* for the eight grades of the common school is worked out in a separate volume by C. A. McMurry. The choice, arrangement, and relation of topics in the several studies are outlined. It includes, also, a *hand-book* of brief practical suggestions to teachers relative to class management, instruction, personal qualities and habits of teachers, the individual treatment of children, class-attention, and the criticism of prevalent faults in teaching.

The controlling purpose of the whole series of three sets of books is to advance from the recognized principles of general method through the special problems of the separate studies to the practical details of instruction and school management. All these books and plans, both theoretical and practical, find their center in a well arranged and organized school course. This school course is not, however, in itself an end. It is one of the chief means by which the children find opportunity for broad, many-sided, and liberal development and equipment for life. The course of study also sums up and illustrates the theory of concentration so far as it is worked out. See price-list at the end of this book.

CHARLES A. MCMURRY,

Normal, Ill.

State Normal University, June 1, 1895.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CHIEF AIM OF EDUCATION.

WHAT is the central purpose of education? If we include under this term all the things commonly assigned to it, its many phases as represented by the great variety of teachers and pupils, the many branches of knowledge and the various and even conflicting methods in bringing up children, it is difficult to find a definition sufficiently broad and definite to compass its meaning. In fact we shall not attempt in the beginning to make a definition. We are in search not so much of a comprehensive definition as of a central truth, a key to the situation, an aim that will simplify and brighten all the work of teachers. Keeping in view the end from the beginning, we need a central organizing principle which shall dictate for teacher and pupil the highway over which they shall travel together.

We will assume at least that education means the whole bringing up of a child from infancy to maturity, not simply his school training. The reason for this assumption is that home, school, companions, environment, and natural endowment, working through a series of years, produce a character which should be a unit as the resultant of these different

influences and growths. Again, we are compelled to assume that this aim, whatever it is, is the same for all.

Now, what will the average man, picked up at random, say to our question: What is the chief end in the education of your son? A farmer wishes his boy to read, write, and cipher, so as to meet successfully the needs of a farmer's life. The merchant desires that his boy get a wider reach of knowledge and experience so as to succeed in a livelier sort of business competition. A university professor would lay out a liberal course of training for his son so as to prepare him for intellectual pursuits among scholars and people of culture. This utilitarian view, which points to success in life in the ordinary sense, is the prevailing one. We could probably sum up the wishes of a great majority of the common people by saying, "They desire to give their children, through education, a better chance in life than they themselves have had." Yet even these people, if pressed to give reasons, would admit that the purely utilitarian view is a low one and that there is something better for every boy and girl than the mere ability to make a successful living.

Turn for a moment to the great *systems* of education which have held their own for centuries and examine their aims. The Jesuits, the Humanists, and the Natural Scientists all claimed to be liberal, culture-giving, and preparatory to great things; yet we only need to quote from the histories of education to show their narrowness and incompleteness. The training of the Jesuits was linguistic and rhe-