

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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The junior high school by Leonard V. Koos & Henry Suzzallo

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LEONARD V. KOOS & HENRY SUZZALLO

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BY

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INTRODUCTION

It has been the traditional assumption that public schools are merely educative in function. To be sure this is their originating purpose and will remain their dominant one. But the scientific study of the careers of pupils indicates that the school system inevitably performs certain other functions which have large consequences for the students inasmuch as they retard, close, lengthen or determine the particular quality of the school education received.

One of these additional school functions is the protecting or conserving function which schools are always tending to exercise in special manner and varying degree. There is not much question that the schools of fifty years ago, with their rigid adherence to a narrow course of study and their continued favoring of those gifted in this restricted curriculum, were inclined to encourage the training of the few and to discourage the education of the many. In the present school system a far more democratic impetus is at work. More attention is being given to varied types of mind. Those who suffer physical and mental handicaps are given the merciful attention of medical inspectors, school nurses, school clinics and special classes with a regimen of their own. For the most

part, these modern adjustments are the outcome of an aspiration to equalize educational opportunities. Their result is a longer period of schooling than would have been the privilege of most unfortunate children several decades ago.

There is another school function which is the outcome of a quite different aspiration, namely the desire of the teaching profession to be economical and efficient in the service it renders the individual and society. In the older and more traditional schools it expressed itself in the selection and rejection of students, the standards of such continuous discrimination being on the whole narrow rather than broad. Recent statistical studies of school careers have indicated such an unanticipated rate of retardation and consequent elimination that attention has been focussed critically on the organization and method of the existing school system. In turn thoughtful educationists have proceeded to constructive experiments devised to hold children in school. Individual instruction, multiple courses and elective studies, departmental teaching, promotion by subjects, vocational and prevocational classes, educational and vocational guidance and other modern innovations have been in considerable degree developed out of the attempt to lengthen school careers through better adjustments to individual differences. In so far as this motive has established itself as a working reform in the schools, it has transmuted the older and more or less subconscious function of selec-

tion and rejection of students into the contemporaneous and quite conscious policy of distributing school attendants more effectively within the complex ramifications of the modern school system. Thus whatever ability and interest the child or youth has is given a more congenial activity through which to express himself and the student's career is prolonged. This distributive function of the school operates within the school as educational guidance and across the gap between school and working life as vocational guidance and placement.

The professional recognition of these conserving and distributing functions of the public school system and the perception of their tremendous influence on the quality and quantity of the educational service rendered by the school to youth have been responsible for much of the current educational reconstruction. For this reason, it is well to have in mind the multiple functions of the public school system before beginning the study of a particular group of educational readjustments such as are involved in the Junior High School Movement. They are mentioned here so as to give a background to the specific interpretations of this particular educational reorganization.

It is not at all accidental that the teaching profession should at the present time be deeply engrossed with the Junior High School Problem. There is adequate reason for such interest. Attention usually focuses on the most troublesome group of problems. It is

precisely because the now-obvious maladjustments seem to be more numerous and important in and about the close of the elementary school years and the first years of high school, that the effort at reconstruction has been most pronounced at this point in the school system. In consequence the analysis of the Junior High School Movement offers one of the most significant views of current educational thought and practice.

It is quite important for the profession to know in an accurate way the exact status of this movement. Many claims have been made for the Junior High School. We must know which are justified. Many new devices of administration have been proposed and tried. We must learn which are expedient or successful. The unsolved problems must be indicated that additional experiments may be conducted in an economical way and the whole development of the Junior High School hastened in the direction of sure results.

The author of the volume here presented serves our needs with a treatment which is scientific in spirit and method. He offers us the strict fact of experience. He summarizes the success, failure and uncertainty of our experiments to date. His study is a valuable contribution to the next stage in progress, because its method is not the optimistic expression of doctrine and intent, but the unprejudiced analysis of practice and result.

HENRY SUZZALLO.

SEATTLE, WASH.,
December, 1919

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE MOVEMENT FOR REORGANIZATION

	PAGE
1. THE FACTORS OF THE MOVEMENT FOR REORGANIZATION	1
a. The unfavorable result of comparison with European systems	1
b. The facts of elimination urged reorganization	2
c. Recognition of variation among children requires reorganization	2
d. The unsuitability of the conventional organization to the approach to maturity of children in upper grades added to the impulse	3
e. Factors extrinsic to educational needs	3
2. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE NEED FOR REORGANIZATION IS NOT NEW	4
a. The Committee of Ten recommended the six-year high school as alternative	4
b. Its Conferences recommended the earlier introduction of high school subjects	5
c. The Committee on College Entrance Requirements urged the establishment of a six-year high school and recommended the introduction of high school subjects into seventh and eighth grades	6
d. The Committee on the Economy of Time emphasized the recommendations of earlier committees	7
e. It recommended also the horizontal division of the six-year high-school period	8
3. THE MOVEMENT IS WIDESPREAD	9
4. IT TAKES ON A GREAT VARIETY OF FORMS	10
5. THE IMPERATIVENESS OF ATTEMPTING TO CLARIFY THOUGHT CONCERNING THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	11

CHAPTER II

THE PECULIAR FUNCTIONS OF THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

1. THE AIMS OF EDUCATION	13
2. THE RELATION OF THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TO THESE AIMS	14