

**RIVERSIDE EDUCATIONAL
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EDUCATION: AN ESSAY
AND OTHER SELECTIONS**

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Riverside Educational Monographs. Education: An Essay and Other Selections by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Riverside Educational Monographs

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EDUCATION

AN ESSAY

AND OTHER SELECTIONS

BY

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Riverside Educational Monographs

Modern education not fully apprehended

PROGRESS in educational theory has been so rapid in recent years, and changes in school-room practice have been made with such frequency, that many parents and teachers have failed to grasp the meaning of the new movements in education. This is not a matter for blame; it is characteristic of any period of transition such as ours. As we have become conscious of the need of modifications in our school system to meet changing social conditions, we have attempted a welding of new ideals to old traditions, with the inevitable result that not a little waste and confusion have attended the administration of our schools.

As education grows scientific it tends to become less intelligible to the public

Fortunately, the significance of our modern education is constantly becoming clearer to those who are studying its problems and results in the light of the contributions from the fields of Psy-

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chology, Sociology, and Biology. More than ever before, educational theory and practice rest upon scientific truths. But as educational thought progresses it becomes increasingly difficult to keep leader, teacher, parent, and citizen in close contact. With a growing technical terminology, the educational thinker tends to speak in a dialect difficult for the ordinary person to comprehend; and in addition, the educational specialist, to a larger extent than ever before, publishes his contributions in the proceedings of some learned society or in some other equally inaccessible place. The result is that as education has become more exact and scientific, it has tended to isolate itself from the understanding of people. It is necessary, therefore, that the thoughts of these leaders be transmitted to the rank and file—to all trainers of youth, to parents as well as to teachers. To meet this need, this series of Monographs is presented to the public with the hope that it may prove a contribution to the movement for a more general understanding of the progressive tendencies in American education.

The public must understand its schools

In a society such as ours, there are many reasons why educational institutions should be

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popularly understood. Imperial edicts and bureaucratic decrees do not shape the spirit and method of our education. Each locality determines the particular form of organization of its schools, and the tacit agreement of the communities throughout the country gives the common stock of ideals which makes our teaching national in purpose.

Evidently then, it does not suffice that educational leaders alone should know the significance of a given reform or movement ; the public must also understand and accept the proposed policy. The intellectual channels between leader and follower, profession and populace, must be kept open. Then our schools will be guided in the spirit of our democratic institutions ; they will avoid unwise and unnecessary innovations, and necessary reforms will be more substantially achieved.

Intelligent parental cooperation needed

In the nineteenth century our people had an over-faith in the efficacy of school education. To-day, we have a better understanding of the limitations of the school. We have come to realize that the sphere of education embraces the whole of life, in school and out ; that many different agencies are required to make a cultured

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and efficient man. The school can do much, but there are aspects of life it cannot reach. The family has a rare power over the child, but it has special impotencies of its own.

Likewise other institutions offer but a partial training. It requires the coöperation of them all to develop the man of vision and power needed to-day. How, then, can the work of education be done unless others beside the teacher understand its aims and methods? Parents in particular must coöperate with the school if they would tide their children over moral and intellectual difficulties. And such coöperation requires the kind of understanding that comes not alone through sympathy, necessary as this is, but also through an acquaintance with the controlling and progressive tendencies in our education.

The education of teachers

It is probably true that the average teacher has none too clear an appreciation of much that is presented in our educational discussions. Indeed, it has been urged that there is a growing tendency for the superintendents of large and somewhat centralized systems of schools to make sweeping changes in school-room procedure without consulting, and, what is more serious, with-

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out convincing the body of teachers of the necessity for such changes. If this be true, and there are certainly many evidences of such a tendency, then it indicates a serious fault which must be combated, for there can be no true profession of teaching where most of its members are required to carry out official orders mechanically. A clear understanding of underlying principles is essential to good teaching. Facts and methods are of little avail without this. In the art of ministering to the intellectual and moral crises of childhood so that strong free men shall be reared, the spiritual worker should fully comprehend the meaning of the plan. Fortunately, there are many practical leaders who realize that they must carry the teachers of the staff with them in all progressive reforms, not alone as a matter of respect for the teacher's personality, but as a matter of necessity in getting the high and subtle work of the school done. These will welcome any movement that will aid in the dissemination of the best professional knowledge and belief among the teachers of the country.

The scope of the Educational Monographs

To accomplish these large purposes, the volumes of this series are offered, the plan being