

**FINE AND INDUSTRIAL
ARTS IN ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS**

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Fine and Industrial Arts in Elementary Schools by Walter Sargent

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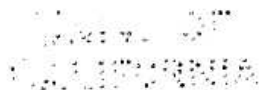
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IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

BY

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PREFACE

During the past few years the amount of new subject matter relating to the fine and industrial arts in elementary schools has rapidly increased. The organization of this material into a form involving definite progression and reasonable standards of attainment at various stages has not wholly kept pace with its introduction.

The considerations here presented regarding a scheme for such organization have taken shape in the course of numerous conferences with those interested in the subject, and as a result of investigations which were suggested by these discussions.

I wish to make acknowledgment of my immediate indebtedness in this endeavor to Professor Charles Hubbard Judd of The University of Chicago, who urged the importance of some attempt to present a survey of the subject.

I am under obligation also to Professor Frank M. Leavitt of The University of Chicago, Mr. James Hall, formerly of the Ethical Culture School of New York City, Mr. Charles F. Whitney of the Normal School of Salem, Massachusetts, Mr. Fred H. Daniels of Newton, Massachusetts, and Mr. John C. Brodhead of Boston, for valuable suggestions; and to Miss Helen E. Cleaves, Miss Lucy D. Taylor, and Miss Amy Rachel Whittier for their help in carrying on observations for two years in the public schools of Boston.

I also take this occasion to recognize a debt of long standing to Mr. Henry Turner Bailey, editor of the *School Arts Book*, who first directed my attention to the educational importance of the arts.

W. S.

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iii

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. EDUCATIONAL AND PRACTICAL VALUES OF THE FINE AND INDUSTRIAL ARTS	1
II. A SURVEY OF THE PROGRESSION OF WORK THROUGH THE GRADES	17
III. GRADE I	32
IV. GRADES II AND III	47
V. GRADES IV AND V	62
VI. GRADE VI	79
VII. GRADES VII AND VIII	98
INDEX.	131

FINE AND INDUSTRIAL ARTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

CHAPTER I

EDUCATIONAL AND PRACTICAL VALUES OF THE FINE AND INDUSTRIAL ARTS

Since 1870 drawing, constructive work, and design as common-school studies have been subjects of general discussion. The Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876 exerted a strong influence in favor of public education in the industrial and fine arts. The educational exhibitions were a revelation to the American people of the possibilities along these lines, and of their own shortcomings. Since then drawing, constructive work, and design have received steadily increasing recognition in elementary education so far as provision for instruction and equipment has been concerned.

Until recently, however, these subjects have been left largely in the hands of specialists. Boards of education, superintendents, and principals have often hesitated to make suggestions because they felt that they had not received the sort of training which would fit them to judge methods and results in these subjects. This feeling has been reënforced by the influence of the tradition that even

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ordinary ability in the arts comes more as the result of intuitive appreciation than of well-directed effort.

The present wide acceptance of the manual arts as an important part of general education is rapidly removing them from the class of special subjects, and both educators and the general public are now taking an active interest in them. The educator recognizes that the manual arts constitute a unique type of analysis of the objective world. Each science deals with material from a particular standpoint, and each different kind of analysis adds greater significance and wider range to experience. The contribution which the manual arts make toward a more comprehensive basis for mental activity is to a great degree inaccessible by other methods of approach. He finds in the manual arts a line of activity the results of which are concrete and furnish a visible record of good or poor work, which the child interprets into rational terms of cause and effect more easily than is possible in the case of subjects which deal mainly with language. He sees in them an opportunity for obtaining experience with concrete material and with some of the processes by which it is shaped to human needs. He uses the arts as a method of developing and mastering certain ideas by working them out in visible products, so that materials become a means of expressing and of stimulating thought. He finds also that these arts sometimes furnish a point of contact with the interests of many children who apparently are not reached by more formal studies, and that these interests when once awakened are likely to extend to other lines of school work.

The general public more frequently expresses its convictions in terms of the advantages resulting in later life from the training in manual arts which was received in school,

or the disadvantages experienced from the lack of such training. The attainments commonly described as most useful and desirable by these people who view the subject from the standpoint of industrial and professional occupations may be generalized as follows:

Ability to sketch with pencil or brush so as to show how an object appears or how it is constructed, or to illustrate one's ideas or record one's observations.

Skill in the use of common tools and materials, and ability to plan and work out problems involving ordinary constructive processes — such knowledge and ability as every householder needs.

An appreciation of what is in good taste aesthetically, especially as regards the things which constitute one's immediate environment, and sufficient knowledge of such matters to justify one's taste.

Some acquaintance with excellent examples of art in architecture, painting, sculpture, and the crafts, and a discriminating capacity for enjoyment of beauty of form and color in nature and art.

These advantages thus stated by people outside the schools, in terms of definite attainment which results in increased efficiency and enjoyment, do not conflict with the idea of the educator. If accepted, these standards constitute a basis for estimating the success of manual arts in school courses. When children leave the high school their abilities in this field may be measured about as definitely as in any other.

The purpose of this book is to present some considerations on the following questions, which arise from the present situation:

What are the distinctive functions of the various subjects taught under the head of manual arts in elementary

education? How shall instruction be organized so that progress in attainment shall be evident from year to year? What are reasonable standards of attainment at any given stage?

The general statements that learning to draw is learning to see, that drawing is a valuable language, that constructive work produces accuracy and efficiency in dealing with raw materials, that design develops taste and awakens appreciation of beauty, are not now considered as final or as sufficiently definite to justify the community in leaving the matter wholly with the specialist. Further questions arise, such as: How does the seeing which results from drawing differ from that which exists where drawing is not taught? Are children who complete the elementary-school courses able to use this language of drawing freely as a common, convenient means of expression? Does constructive work as taught produce accuracy, efficiency, the pleasure of intelligent mastery of material, and an appreciation of things in terms of the skill and effort required to produce them? Does it arouse industrial interests and a desire to be of service in the world? What definite signs of better taste are evident in children who complete an elementary-school course which includes design, when compared with children who have had no training in that line? Are there objects of fine art which awaken more enjoyment, and phases of beauty in nature which give more pleasure on account of the instruction which has been given? What steps have led to this appreciation? There is need of detailed testing of methods and examination of results in terms of such questions as these.

In elementary schools only rudiments of the arts can be taught, such as the beginnings of free-hand drawing; simple