

**CORNELL STUDY
BULLETINS FOR TEACHERS,
NO. 2, GUIDE TO HIGH
SCHOOL OBSERVATION**

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BY
G. M. WHIPPLE



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GUIDE TO HIGH SCHOOL OBSERVATION

Purpose and use of the bulletin. The primary purpose of this bulletin is to serve as a guide to the observation of high-school teaching now required of college students of education in the State of New York. It will serve equally well, however, for all such visitation elsewhere, whether by candidate, principal, or superintendent, and it will enable all young teachers to check up and improve their own work.

In the State of New York, to qualify for the College Graduate Certificate each candidate is required to spend twenty hours in observation of school work actually in progress. It is desired that a record of each visit of observation be made in a permanent note-book.

It is, of course, not expected that all of the questions can be answered for each exercise observed, but in a series of visits the attempt should be made to cover as many points as possible. It is suggested that a copy of this guide should be at hand during each observation, and that the points upon which observation is made be checked off at the time in such a way that the guide can afterward be used in writing up the note-book.

Some of the questions, *e. g.*, those concerning the content of courses, demand more than the mere observation of class exercises. To answer these, the candidate may usually obtain information from the school program, from the teacher in charge, or from an examination of the text-books in use, but it might be well to expend a portion of the observation upon a school with the organization of which the candidate is already familiar. It is further to be desired that the candidate should observe work in more than one institution, and that, for comparative purposes, at least one small and one large school be visited.

A. Observation of the School Program, Curriculum, Attendance, and General Organization

1. Whenever possible secure printed schedules of the school visited. Note herein the number of courses offered (classical, scientific, etc.) the freedom of election allowed, the apportionment of time to the main groups, such as ancient languages, modern languages, science, English and history, etc. In the case of classes you visit, pay particular attention to the sequence of studies in these groups, to the time allotted, and the ground covered. Compare the school program in these respects with the recommendations of the Committee of Ten and with the specimen programs given in DeGarmo's *Principles of Secondary Education*, Appendixes A-E, especially Appendix B. Cf. questions 57, 94-7, 127, 142, 174 and 201.

2. **Size and attendance.** The most frequent type of high school is the small school with one, two or three teachers. The average high school has fewer than 90 pupils, and numbers approximately 0.8 per cent. of the local population. Compare the school visited with these figures.

3. If the school visited was a small one (not over three teachers), how did this limitation of the teaching staff affect its work, *e. g.*, were recitation periods shortened; was there more text-book and less laboratory and field work; was the number of courses limited and the freedom of election thereby curtailed; were the teachers overtaxed; were they less well prepared for their work, etc? Were there any advantages that would have been absent in a larger school? If the school was a large one (eight teachers or over), what advantages appeared in comparison with smaller schools? What disadvantages? On the qualifications and efficiency of teachers, see particularly questions 39, 67, 68, 70, 74, 105, 108, 110, 116, 135, 143, 155, 156 and 182.

4. What percentage of the eighth grade entered the high school? The estimated entrance for the country at large is 5%.

5. The estimated distribution of attendance in American high schools in 1903-4 was: 1st year, 43%; 2d year, 26%; 3d year, 18%; 4th year, 13%. Compare the school visited with these figures. What percentage of those who enter complete the full course and graduate? Are any specific measures employed to encourage attendance and prevent withdrawal from the school?

6. The Report of the Committee of Ten recommends that the **work of students not going to college** should be identical with that of those who are going to college just so far as the two classes pursue the same subjects. Was this principle approved and followed in the school visited? What reasons were assigned for any variations observed? To what extent in general did the work of the school seem to be arranged to meet college entrance requirements? Were any special classes formed for this purpose?

7. Were **grammar-school pupils** encouraged and allowed to begin such high-school studies as they were prepared for? If so, what effect had this upon attendance in the high school? Was care taken to adjust the grammar-school work, particularly that of the seventh and eighth grades, to secure an early entrance upon high school studies, *i. e.*, was the course of study so systematized as to avoid any break between grammar and high school and to prepare pupils for the undertaking of high-school studies?

8. Were **related studies** or groups of studies so arranged in the program and so taught as to make their important inter-relations apparent to the pupil?

9. Was the training for securing efficiency in the use of knowledge equal to that for securing insight? Cf. questions 27, 34, 57, 112, 115, 126, 127, 131, 134, 146, 157, 161, 176 and 199.

10. Were there any **clubs or societies** in the school aside from

secret societies or athletic associations, *e. g.*, debating or literary societies, scientific, mathematical, or English clubs, etc? Was membership confined to teachers or to pupils alone? Cf. question 39.

11. Were any school or public **lectures** given by the teachers or outside talent? How supported? Is the building used for any other purposes, aside from the regular work of instruction?

12. Was the school **co-educational**? To what extent, in seating, in attendance at class exercises, school functions, etc., was segregation of the sexes observed?

13. Was the school provided with an adequate reference **library** With a reading room? At what hours accessible to students?

B. Observation of Psychological Principles in Teaching

N. B.—Questions in this section are to be undertaken in all classes visited.

14. **School exercises** may be classed as lectures, recitations, examinations, written or verbal (quizzes), laboratory, shop or field exercises, as review, drill, or study lessons, assignments, etc., or they may be further described in terms of method of conducting or treatment of the topic as heuristic, Socratic, individual, developmental or genetic, inductive, deductive, etc. Which of these terms apply to the exercise and method observed?

15. **Instinct.** Did you observe any appeal to, or operation of, instinctive tendencies, such as competition (emulation), curiosity, play (and games), imitation, the migratory instinct, social interests (sympathy, co-operation, altruism), interest in constructive work, in making collections, in esthetic or artistic expression, etc? Any instances in which these tendencies were advantageous, or the contrary?

16. **Individual differences. Temperament.** To what extent and how did the teacher adapt his work to meet individual differences in temperament, in emotional type, in mental alertness or sluggishness, in breadth of general information, etc? Was any provision made for systematic individual instruction (Batavia method, arrangements for individual advancement, promotion, etc.)?

17. **Attention and interest.** What appeared to be the dominant motive behind the work of the class:—interest in the work, curiosity to know, spirit of competition, fear of displeasure of the teacher, desire to merit approval, desire to get good marks or mere habit and immersion in the routine of the day's work? In general, was 'effort' or 'interest' more conspicuous?