directly with the problem realize the difficulties arising in the school environment.

The last point to be made is that there must be a closer relationship between educators and parents in order that we have a workable understanding concerning reasons for the kind of curriculum we advocate. When this relationship exists and when the curriculum is interpreted to parents there is little, if any, destructive criticism. This has been shown in a study made by the California Parent-Teacher's Association which became concerned about the attacks being made upon education.

The test of any curriculum is: "What are the effects of our curriculum upon the boys and girls?" To quote from the *Journal of School Health,* November 1950: "Greeting his pupils, the master asked, 'What would you learn of me?' and the reply came: 'How shall we care for our bodies? How shall we rear our children? How shall we work together? How shall we live with our fellowmen? How shall we play? For what ends shall we live?' And the teacher pondered these words and sorrow was in his heart, for his own learning touched not these things."

How Can the Junior High School Curriculum Be Improved?

A. H. LAUCHNER

HOW can the junior high-school curriculum be improved? The powers that be have given me the sixty-four dollar question. Just take a semester's leave of absence and travel over the United States, visiting junior high schools, talking with administrators, teachers, students, and patrons. Then, read newspaper editorials and comments from readers. Finally, in light of all this, cast your eyes on articles in leading periodicals of our profession . . . and try to come up with a story on improving the junior high curriculum.

Know what I mean? Sit with a principal and most likely the conversation will run to a discussion of problems, needs, and interests of boys and girls. The school administrator may speak of club work, assemblies, student council, intramurals, plays, committees, field trips, exhibits, and programs of one sort or another as being proper activities for the curriculum designed to meet such needs.

Visit with the classroom teacher and chances are that she too will mention problems and needs of youth . . . but start talking about those school activities mentioned by the administrator and like as not she will make the comment that "They take too much time from regular classes."

Corner some of those students about whose future we are so vitally concerned . . . and hear them question the value of "what they are giving us."

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Now watch editorials in the daily press. Hear the cry about schools "losing their standards." Read the reports of "softening up" . . . of "getting away from the real purpose of the school." Note the reports on what today's graduates "are like."

Read the article in a national periodical—a story prepared by a teacher in an institution of higher learning—and return in your thinking to needs, problems, interests.

With all this on your mind, become a little bird and listen to a group of mothers discussing Junior across the fence. "I tell you," says one, "the children cannot spell as well as they could when I went to school." A neighbor agrees, and quickly protests the school's "doing so many things it isn't supposed to do." The group decides that their junior high school must return to the three R's.

And someone asks yours truly to attempt an essay on improving the junior high curriculum! Well, I shall do it, win or lose.

What is the school for, anyway? Try to secure agreement on that one. I shall not try; it is my intention to state what I think . . . and let it go at that.

I believe the purpose of the school — in a democracy — should be to turn out young men and women *who can and will live useful, thoughtful, happy lives.*

If that be true, then something of the true nature of improving the junior high curriculum should at once come to light. *The curriculum should seek to bring about the desired goal.*

Now let us give consideration to the arguments presented by those folks who wish to contend that schools should return to the job for which they were founded, that task being to teach the three R's. Thousands, perhaps millions, of today's older folks are seeking to lay the blame on the school's failure to do the old-fashioned teaching as they wish it done for all the sins and woes that this day beset us.

What are some of these troubles of 1951?

I should say that difficulties within individual families is one. The divorce rate is appalling . . . but that tells only part of the story. Millions of homes from which no divorce story is forthcoming nevertheless live in constant strife. Dare anyone say that a stricter adherence to a program of the subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic would have improved the pattern of family living? I hope no one cares to argue the point, for many of these men and women who fail to get along in family responsibilities these days were in school back when "standards were high."

A second ill of this day lies in the trend of getting more and more on the outs with those who have been more successful than we. In nearly all walks of life is this true. Millions of us look upon anyone who does well as being dishonest; since we fail to get along ourselves, we just can't see how

anyone can manage. And so there is in this country today an eternal strife between those who succeed and get ahead and those who sit around and blame others. What has brought this about? Is it a lack of training in math or any other of the good, old subjects? I doubt if there's much argument on the question.

As I am writing this, a call comes over the radio. "If you drink, don't drive" says the voice. Yes, brother, that's a problem in this enlightened country of ours. And if you think all of those drivers who kill innocent people because they mix drinking and driving are folks who weren't taught the "things for which school's for" you've another guess coming; not a few of them are college graduates. It seems we've done a better job teaching math than we have abstinence.

Shall we speak of tossing money away? I am nearing the end of a tour of the country which has taken me through the Middle West, East, West, and South. It is no untruth when I make the statement that I've seen thousands of folks competing with one another to get rid of their money. And for nothing of value. Take the funds spent in the United States for drinking, gambling, and betting on the horses and the schools could get along with it quite well, thank you. *But that's not all of it;* add the dollars that are lost in so-called petty gambling, throw in the thousands that carnivals remove from communities, plus half a dozen other "expenditures" most of us know about, and you will be thinking about another source of unhappiness that cannot be laid to failure of traditional subjects.

As I have traveled from one community to another, I have noted that Community Chest organizations are having their usual tough time in raising funds for what any right-thinking man knows is a good cause. Boy Scouts, Y.M.C.A.'s, Salvation Army, the church . . . nearly always it's a task to secure what they need. Why? Well, I know one argument folks can't raise; they cannot lay this to poor spelling or reading. It may be poor figuring, but not the kind they're yelling about.

And here's another illness of today's generation; most of us do not know what to do with our leisure time. And that's fatal, for we are having more and more idle-hours laid at our doors. Time was when a man worked sixty hours a week and thought nothing of it. I'm not the one to argue that was good, but I'll suggest that working forty hours a week and squandering the rest is not good either. Does anyone think the millions of our citizens are going to use this newly-discovered time to continue further learning in the three R's? Let's be honest.

These are just some of the more pressing problems that are apparent to the casual observer who may be wondering what the junior high should do about improving the curriculum.

What can be done?

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1. A lot of us are going to have to do the best job of our lives in the matter of public relations. We shall need to make a sale to our classroom

teachers and to John Q. Public. It will not be easy. Through the years we've built a sort of halo around reading, writing, and arithmetic. We've said they were for everybody . . . rich and poor, brilliant and not-so-mentally-endowed, ones who liked them and those who failed to go for them. Teacher has said that these were something "everyone should learn." The principal has remarked, "All educated people know how to write, spell, and read." When some child declared a dislike for a sacred subject, he was warned that, if he failed to master it, he would grow up to be a so-and-so.

The Three R's for All Children, and All Children for the Three R's! That was it.

We've made some progress in getting rid of that slogan. But every now and then some mother with a Phi Beta Kappa award or some employer who has hired a girl who can't spell stirs up a fuss about the schools . . . and ground is lost.

Math has not been the all-important subject they told me it would be. The facts I learned in history have for the most part passed by the boards. The algebra I didn't learn hasn't been needed.

Not everyone needs all this. Especially is it true since we are being called upon to keep all the children of all the people in school until they are sixteen years of age.

Furthermore, not all children can get these subjects.

When we come to the realization that not every child has to read, figure, write and spell . . . that many of them either cannot or will not master these chores . . . then we shall be on the road to improving the junior high curriculum.

Between this day and that a lot of selling must take place. But it's coming. We shall some day accept the thought that it is just as illogical to assume that every boy must be able to read as it is that each one must be able to perform on a violin, that it is no more reasonable to require that each girl shall spell well than it is that each one shall bake a good cherry pie.

We cannot all do the same things. We do not like to do the same things. And we won't. When adults finally realize that fact, everyone will be happier . . . and schools will be nicer places in which to live. (Some of my colleagues will want to root me out of the profession for these statements.)

2. If and when we are able to convince a few folks that mastery of reading, writing, and arithmetic is not the one road leading to happy, successful living, the next step is to cut down the amount of time and attention devoted to these areas in general junior high-school courses.

Let those boys and girls who have the ability and inclination in these areas go along.

But for those thousands who have neither capacity nor desire to work in those areas, the school must provide other types of activities they can and will do. It's high time for us to stop cramming these subject materials down all mouths. Too many of the mouths have to be pried open . . . and too many

of the stomachs cannot or will not digest the materials forced into them. When there is no assimilation, food cannot be said to have value.

When I think of the many, many hours we struggle with young men and women in junior high, laboring to teach them the multiplication tables (in remedial classes), I wonder! When I step into a school that is working day and night to get everyone to spell, I do a bit of debating in my mind. When I visit a school that worries and frets constantly because "so many of the children cannot read," I find myself asking the question if these teachers know that thousands of youngsters never will be able to read. One junior high in the East has, after long and careful study, accepted the fact that some twenty per cent of their students will not be up to standard in reading . . . and they are doing other things for these boys and girls. That's straight thinking. Contrast that with the junior high which says, "Every student must know the multiplication tables before graduation."

Such a requirement attaches more importance to those tables than I'm willing to accord them.

3. Having reached the point at which we are willing to admit that these subjects . . . and I shall now include history, geography, Latin, algebra . . . are not worth the stress we've been giving them, we may then turn to two topics for consideration.

First, there is the possibility of combining. Here in Long Beach where I am writing this article a Social Living course includes grammar, literature, reading, writing, spelling, library work, citizenship, and history. Students meet with a teacher two periods per day.

In Minneapolis, they call it *common learnings*. In the Folwell Junior High of that city pupils of grades seven, eight, and nine have social studies and language arts under the direction of one teacher who builds around student needs and interests.

In Battle Creek, the *core* has been in use for some time. This is a program which brings together much of the materials we used to think should be departmentalized. Here, as at Minneapolis, students remain longer than a single period with a core teacher.

In Baltimore, at Garrison Junior High School, they are working with a *home-room-centered curriculum*. Several seventh grade groups remain with the home-room teacher for half of each day, while teachers in charge work around problems of interest and value.

In Denver, it's called *general education*. They are not seeking to do away with the three R's, but rather to make them "function for pupils in everyday living." At Byers Junior High School they are striving to develop three more R's . . . successful human Relationships, Responsibility, and Rectitude.

In Elizabeth, New Jersey, this plan has been given the name, *Unified Studies*. In junior highs of that city the attempt is to integrate, to correlate, to unify, to weave together in related pattern . . . rather than to pour knowledge in from so many different sources which may not know too much about each other.

Other cities are carrying on similar programs in junior high, and hundreds of junior high schools which make no claims regarding unifying or fusing of subject matter have nevertheless placed the teaching of two subjects (usually language arts and social studies) under the direction of one teacher in what is known as block of time instruction. A few are adding mathematics or science to the block and making it a triple period. The Jennings Junior High of Akron has a math-science block, giving them a double block of time.

There is a lot of howling about the block of time . . . and more about common learnings programs. It must be admitted that: (a) Few teachers are trained for it. (b) Not many principals and administrators have made a careful study of it. (c) Not much training is going on . . . though a good many clinics and workshops are springing up. (Strong in-service programs are the answer.) (d) The public does not seem ready. (e) Not too much evidence of success has been presented.

On the other hand, some of the schools which have carried on such programs for five or more years claim: (a) With such a program, attendance at school is much more satisfactory. (b) There is less skipping. (c) More books are read. (d) Students show more interest in school. (e) Both teachers and students are more at ease. (f) The program calls for and results in much wider use of materials.

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4. Having done some combining, the next step is that of adding, changing, enriching.

This is the thing nearly every principal wants to do . . . but "just can't work it into the program." The combining makes such a course possible.

In Jefferson Junior High School of Dubuque, Iowa, time has been found for an auditorium class. Students meet in groups, weigh matters of interest to school and community, determine courses of action, appoint committees, and work at problems. They learn business procedures, abiding by decisions of majorities, and a lot more that I have not time to relate in this story. (Many schools reserve this experience for a mere handful of students.) Roosevelt Junior High of Rockford, Illinois, is another school where I found auditorium classes in session; Principal Welsh is sold on the value of such a class. So am I.

In Bret Harte Junior High, Los Angeles, and Wilson Junior of Appleton, Wisconsin, interesting co-educational physical education classes are being conducted. They, and a few other schools I've visited, have caught the idea of wholesome development of boy-girl relationships. (It's surprising the number of schools which seem afraid or unwilling to have girls and boys play together.) At Bret Harte Junior High School boys and girls are organized into forty groups to engage in volleyball, table tennis, paddle tennis, handball, shuffleboard, folk dancing, square dancing, and social dancing. (Note that these are activities which have carryover value; students may use them for leisure-time pursuits later on in life.)

One school in San Francisco, the James Denman Junior High, has set up a course, designed "to introduce students to a variety of fundamental experiences in the fields of Home Mechanics, Home Economics, and Home Arts." Units include Electricity in the Home, General Household Maintenance, The Family Car, Decoration and Redecoration, Family Foods, and Crafts for Leisure Time. This is co-educational.

Southwest Junior High of Battle Creek and South Park Junior of Oshkosh are among other schools which have broken away from traditional and are providing co-educational classes in arts and crafts.

In the new junior high at Elmhurst, Illinois, may be found a shop for girls and a home mechanics area for boys.

The junior high in New Castle, Indiana, has organized a fine program for boys in the field of home mechanics.

Many junior high schools have complete home units in which girls are trained to keep a home neat and attractive. Test Junior High of Richmond, Indiana, has a cottage for this purpose.

A large number of junior high schools have little theater programs, and some, including the Wilson Junior High of Muncie, Indiana, have their own radio stations in the operation of which students receive real training.

Scores of junior high schools include detailed study of campaigns and elections in their program and provide real activity to permit students to engage in all phases of this practice in citizenship. At Bloomfield, New Jersey, I observed all this in practice.

I've visited schools where much is made of banking and saving, but in general, it must be admitted that most of our junior high schools do little to encourage thrift. By a bit of effort on the part of a staff the curriculum can be made rich in matters of taking care of money.

In more than a dozen junior high schools, I have noted campaigns for Community Chest in progress; but again, it must be said we've merely scratched the surface in such phases of community endeavor. Teaching anyone to share is much to be desired.

Since wholesome family relationships mean so much in lives of people, there should be courses in this area of living in junior high schools where children are so impressionable. I grant you that finding the proper folks to teach these classes is no easy job . . . but securing excellent teachers for any field is not always a simple matter.

What to do with high-ability students is always a question; many is the teacher who finds herself unable to keep up with them or cope with them when they find things boring. Some schools are pioneering in doing things for such children. In one school they are permitted to miss classes now and then and given something to do that will make use of their talents. A lad is allowed to spend several days at the art museum, a young lady is given the chore of arranging materials in display cases in corridors, another student spends a week at work in the library, and yet another takes the school's pro-

jector apart, oils proper parts, and puts it back together again. Certain gifted students are put to work aiding others who cannot do the work without a great deal of help. Some of the gifted children serve in the office, others in corridors. A young man does all the cartoons for the annual. Now and then one finds a school in which superior students are permitted to browse in the library when they've completed work in a given lesson. (We used to assign them extra problems in math or give them added words to spell; for their ability to learn quickly they were rewarded by having more of what they could already do so well heaped on their shoulders.)

The important thing to remember in setting up a program for top-ability children is to help them escape boredom, to challenge their abilities and talents to productive endeavor, to use them to stimulate others wherever and whenever possible, and to lead them to broadness of mind.

The idea that such children should be in their "regular" classes all of the time must be abandoned if the curriculum is to be enriched as far as they are concerned.

Now, what to do with the slow ones? (Not all of us serve in schools where the average I.Q. is 125, with practically no one under 100. I visited one.)

There was a time, years ago, when most junior high schools practiced "grouping." Then, for a while, a majority dropped the idea as being undemocratic.

We are grouping again. This is particularly true of the slow learners. I have observed one school after another in which small classes of boys, girls, or both are working under the direction of teachers who have them in all academic areas.

In one junior high many of these youngsters have reading ability at only second or third grade level, but they are reading the same stories . . . brought down to their level . . . as are their fellow students in regular classes. Their language lessons are at their level, as is spelling, science, and other academic work. In music, shop, home making, crafts, and physical education some of these children do as well as any.

In Grant Junior High of Syracuse some of these low-ability boys may be seen together in a Junior Trades Class while certain girls who would find the regular curriculum impossible attend Girls Trade Class. I observed them and was quite impressed by their happy attitudes.

Some people object to separating such boys and girls from other children with more ability, but to me it makes sense. It does less harm to the self-respect of a young man than leaving him to flounder among others with whom he cannot keep the pace. With normal children he can have no feeling of success; he is a failure . . . but with other boys of somewhat equal ability he can be and is successful. That develops security . . . and belongingness. All children deserve to have these feelings.

To improve the curriculum within its walls each junior high school must plan to make adequate provision for the education of its "highs" and "lows." That offers a challenge.

This brings me back to the point at which this story began. Is the junior high a building in which young men and women are brought to be crammed with facts, tables, dates, rules, and other such elements of the curriculum which have been handed down from one generation to another? Is it a day-home in which citizens of today and tomorrow learn to serve, share, save, select, sing? Or is it a place where young people are taught to cook and sew, put in a fuse or repair a screen, make articles from metal, clay, or plastic material, or do a sketch?

Put all of that together and it will approach what the junior high should be like.

Establish such flexibility in the curriculum as will permit realization of the dream . . . and the improvement will have come about.

Group XIII—South Room

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How Can the School Reduce the Number of Early School Leavers?

J. E. NANCARROW

WHO can deny that the American secondary schools have had a phenomenal growth during the past fifty years? The figures show that the enrollment in grades 7, 8, and 9 has risen from 2,425,000 in 1900 to 6,074,000; and the enrollment in grades 10, 11 and 12 has risen from 383,000 in 1900 to 4,268,000.[1] In 1900, 25 per cent of senior high school students were enrolled in private schools, but 50 years later that figure had dropped to 10 per cent. In 1900, only 11 per cent of our age group 14 - 17 years was enrolled in a public or private secondary school, whereas in 1940 that figure had risen

[1] Alexander and Saylor, *Secondary Education,* New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1950. pp. 231-252.

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