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The Course of Study in the  
Work of the Modern School

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Course of Study Monographs  
Introductory  
The Public Schools  
Berkeley, California  
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# The Course of Study in the Work of the Modern School

H. B. WILSON  
Superintendent of Schools.



Introductory to all Courses of Study  
presenting the general point of view  
which has guided the formulation of  
the detailed courses in all subjects  
for the various schools.



COURSE OF STUDY MONOGRAPHS  
INTRODUCTORY

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Berkeley, California

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## COURSE OF STUDY MONOGRAPHS

The Course of Study in all of the subjects taught in the public schools are under critical study. As rapidly as the course in any subject can be rewritten following such study by the committee responsible for the task, it will be issued in mimeographed form that its plans and recommendations may be tested through use by all teachers. Upon the completion of the testing process, each course will be revised with the aim of incorporating such modifications and improvements in the course as are suggested by the teachers who use it. When ready to be issued in more permanent form, each course will be printed as a course of study monograph.

### ALL SCHOOLS—

Introductory—The Course of Study in the Work of the Modern School—Issued January, 1921.

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS—

1. Arithmetic—Issued July, 1921.
2. Home Economics—Issued August, 1921.
3. Nature Study—Issued August, 1921.
4. Geography—Issued August, 1921.
5. Penmanship—Issued July, 1921.

### INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS—

1. English—In mimeographed form, hence not available for distribution.
2. History—In mimeographed form, hence not available for distribution.
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**HIGH SCHOOL—Revisions Under Way.**

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# THE COURSE OF STUDY IN THE WORK OF THE MODERN SCHOOL

The first requisite in any undertaking is determining and defining the results sought. This is true whether the task be a simple one, such as purchasing a suit of clothes, or a complex one, such as developing a city water system or drafting a state constitution.

In an institution so complex as the public school system, it is fundamentally important to conceive clearly the results to be sought through the elaborate process of education. It is a complex and difficult process in the work of each day; yes, in the teaching of each lesson and in the direction of each exercise. Not only so, but it is rendered further complex and difficult by reason of the fact that it extends over many years of the child's life. Not alone is the process complex because of the long time it occupies, but it is further complicated by the growth changes and by changes from other causes which take place in the child during the period of his school training. Then, too, because several different teachers will help in the child's education before it is completed, it is very necessary that each have a clear understanding of the results public education should secure so that every teacher who tries to aid in the child's education may be aiming for the same results.

It is evident that any fundamental attack in developing a course of study must first define clearly both the general and specific aims of the school system in which it is to be used, in order that all of its details may be planned and shaped to the end that the course of study may be uniquely adapted, to the accomplishment in the most direct and economic fashion of the projected aims. The truth of this general proposition will become evident to any one who will recall his history of education sufficiently to note how curricula have been modified and reshaped with each succeeding aim or purpose of public education which has been proposed. A brief survey of the aims of education and of the moulding effect of each aim on the curricula of the time will afford a needed perspective in approaching our task.

## Early Aims of Education.

There have been many changes in the conception of the purpose of the public schools during historic times. As the time when the amount of knowledge possessed by the race was very meager—so meager that it was all necessary as a means of eking out a mere scant existence—the function of the school was to fit each individual to earn his living, or to earn his "bread and butter." Living, then, was merely a food, clothing, and shelter problem, and so the aim of the school was correspondingly limited and narrow.

A little later in the history of the race, the amount of information which had been developed was greater than was absolutely essential to meeting the essentials of the food, clothing, and shelter problem. At that time the function of the school was the acquisition of the knowledge which the race possessed. The function of the school was then merely the transmission of the racial heritage of information.

Gradually, however, the knowledge possessed by the race increased in such quantity that it was not possible for the school to transmit it all, so it became necessary to select that which should be taught by the school. Then the goal which was projected was that of providing culture, and that knowledge or information possessed by the race which it was thought had greatest cultural value was organized into the curriculum. In those days the classic languages held sway almost regardless of the claim of other types of knowledge.

Finally, however, this type of curriculum began to be endangered as the modern sciences and modern languages developed. Then as a means of retaining the classic languages and other traditional curricular elements in their position of control, a new aim of the school was set up, namely, that of conferring discipline or general training upon the students of the school. It was urged that those things should be retained in the curriculum of the school which have greatest disciplinary value.

### **The Social Aim of Education**

All of the foregoing aims were individualistic and narrow. Their concern was primarily the individual without much thought in reference to equipping him for his social relationships. The next aim of the school which was proposed after the disciplinary aim, which gave such an amount of difficulty that it could no longer be defended, was the aim of developing moral character, or the training of people for good citizenship. This aim had the advantage of taking into account the social needs of people. Educational leaders began to view the school from a more adequate social standpoint rather than from the purely individualistic standpoint.

Whereas the disciplinary aim had given difficulty because nobody knew exactly what it meant to develop harmoniously all of man's powers, so also the aim of developing moral character gave difficulty. It gave difficulty in a little different way, owing to the fact that the standards of morality have differed so at different periods in the world's history and because they differ now greatly in different nations. Even all states do not have the same standards of morality in the same nation. Indeed, communities vary greatly in their moral standards. This, therefore, proved a difficult aim of the school in

light of which to organize a system of education. It gave no definite guide for the selection of the subject matter and exercise of the school curriculum.

But the social point of view which had been emphasized under the aim of training for citizenship remains in the aim or function of the school which succeeded it and which is now currently controlling the organization of schools. It is generally agreed that the function of the public schools in these days is to train each person so that he may carry as satisfactorily as possible all of life's responsibilities. The modern school, therefore, seeks to train for "social efficiency."

### **Meaning of Social Efficiency.**

But, before we can begin rationally to plan the course of study and the other details of the modern school, we must inquire what the current aim of education means when analyzed, and what specific responsibilities it imposes.

What the schools and other more informal means of education should accomplish is clearly indicated by the respects in which every individual must be efficient if he would succeed after he goes from his period of formal training into the actual work of the world. The most commonly accepted statement holds that every person who may be expected to succeed well in meeting all the responsibilities of life must be efficient in physical health, in some occupation, in the use of his leisure time, in his duties as a citizen, and in his moral and religious life.

### **Physical Efficiency.**

It seems that it should be perfectly evident that the physical equipment requisite to succeed in the strenuous work of the Twentieth Century is a sound, fully developed body in good physical tone. Until recently, however, schools have given merely incidental, or rather accidental, attention to this first essential of social efficiency. Schools proceeded as though it was their business merely to instruct those who remained alive, and well enough to attend school, but they made no definite provision for contributing to good health and physical vigor.

Even before the war, scientific investigation had determined that seventy-five per cent of the more than twenty million children in the public schools were handicapped by a large variety of physical defects, most of which are remediable. The wonderful results which may be secured in removing physical handicaps in a brief time by intensive attention to the matter are evident in the military training camp records. After about thirty-five per cent of the men examined under the first selective draft had been rejected for physical defects, intensive attention to the improvement of the physical efficiency of

those accepted produced almost incredible gains in their health, vitality, and physical and general efficiency.

It is now definitely recognized that public education must make definite provision for insuring that every pupil is constantly at the maximum in health and that his vital and physical efficiency are receiving first attention. Only thus can we hope to secure the largest results from all our educational efforts and at the same time insure that physical vigor and vital efficiency essential to success in the work of the world. In our determination to accomplish this objective of education, we must be guided by the fact that the perfect physical development and good health of our people is even more essential and fundamental to the integrity and permanence of our nation than industrial development, economic accomplishment, scientific progress and political achievement. Out of this conviction must come nationwide attention to physical education such as has been recently instituted through legislation in such progressive states as California, New York and New Jersey.

### **Vocational Efficiency.**

That every person who would succeed must be able to do some kind of work, to pursue successfully some occupation or calling, is almost as evident as that he should possess good health. Almost every child in the public schools must be able to earn his living when he reaches maturity by some work he does. In dealing with him the schools must be guided by this fact.

Training for vocational efficiency requires not only the proper guidance of each youth into his life work, but the development of both vocational intelligence and operative skill. As yet, the public schools are organized and equipped to do but little in developing operative skill. These efforts are confined to commercial courses and to a few industrial courses developed by the Federal Board for Vocational Education. The possibilities of developing vocational intelligence are much greater. Our courses of study must provide definitely for giving the public school pupils a wide knowledge of occupations through both reading, observation, and participation. From such training young people will be able to determine with greater wisdom the occupation each should enter. They will also be rendered much more sympathetic with and appreciative of the labors and products produced by those engaging in different occupations than their own. As a result of the attention which should be given to equipping each child for successful vocational participation will come in much greater measure than now obtains those abilities, dispositions, bodies of knowledge, types of skill and social attitudes which are essential to the gradual establishment of a higher type of vocational efficiency among our entire citizenship.

### **Civic Efficiency.**

It matters not where one may live, it is evident that in addition to doing acceptably and well some sort of work, he must take some active part in the government and in the affairs of general concern in the town, county, state and nation in which he lives. Not only should one vote intelligently and obey loyally all the laws or ordinances under which he lives, but as a good citizen he should be aggressive as a leader in all possible ways which might promote the growth, improvement and perpetuation of our democratic institutions, both local and national.

The public schools must give definite attention to the provision of such teaching and training as will develop in each oncoming citizen the capacity and disposition to obey orders and follow loyally governmental leadership. At the same time, every effort should be made to develop in every pupil as largely as possible independence, initiative and originality—the qualities essential to capable leadership. The highest standards of government in a democracy are dependent upon the fullest possible development in all the people of those qualities essential both to following and leading intelligently. Decisions can not be reached, nor can action be taken under our democratic form of government except in accordance with the thought and will of the majority. The responsibility of equipping the oncoming citizens for efficient, democratic citizenship rests heavily upon the public schools, and every educational program must make large provisions for fulfilling this duty in the most concrete and detailed fashion.

### **Avocational Efficiency.**

After the busy man has satisfactorily done all of the serious tasks devolving upon him in his work, in his responsibilities as a citizen and in discharging his moral and religious obligations, he should have considerable leisure time. As the working day is shortened, the amount of leisure time is increased. In the interest of morality as well as of efficiency in work, it is highly important that every citizen's leisure time shall be spent profitably and inspirationally, and, if possible, wholesomely to himself and to all who are affected by his acts or example.

That these conditions may be realized in people during their leisure, they must be equipped to employ such time aright. This necessitates not only the development of those standards and prejudices which may be depended upon to guide each into acceptable, wholesome conduct; but the furnishing of each so that he has things to think about and the means of entertaining himself wholesomely, whether alone or in the company of others.

The field of leisure occupations is extensive. It includes activities

which are physical, intellectual, social, aesthetic. Professor Bobbitt lists the following:

“Conversation, observation of men and things, construction and operation of things, hobbies, sports, games, athletics, reading, travel, music, painting; scientific experimentation prompted by interest in science; the reading of history, economics, philosophy, science, foreign languages, mathematics, and technology, when prompted by love of the subject and delight in the intellectual experience; religious meditations and philosophic contemplation.”

While provision for leisure training should be adequate it must not be made the excuse for the retention in schools of that subject-matter and those activities which are merely traditional. The useless and obsolete must go; but increasingly larger provision must be made in the public schools for training the oncoming citizen for the right use of their leisure time.

### **Moral and Religious Training**

The most lofty and high-minded efficiency in physical attainments, in work, in leisure and in discharging one's duties as a citizen is impossible under our Christian conceptions and standards except as those types of efficiency spring out of and rest back upon a high moral and religious efficiency. Large, constructive programs of helpful action and fundamentally conceived social service can only emanate from people whose thought and actions are determined by those moral and religious principles which constitute the fundamental basis of our growing, expanding Christian civilization. These large, basic principles of living and action which underlie all Christian efforts and sects must by both direct and indirect means, through study, discussion and participation, be made as fully as possible the common possession of all our pupils. They are indispensable to personal inspiration and ambition. They are needed as fundamental guides for all in every action that is designed to affect others. And they are no less necessary in the life of every individual to insure that his thinking is pure and high-minded. The reflex effects upon one's personality and therefore upon all aspects of his efficiency of the purity and loftiness of his thought is too little appreciated as yet. Teaching must not only seek to give pupils experience in accurate thinking, but likewise in clean, high-minded thinking. In the final analysis, the nature of one's thinking and one's ability to think constitute the essence of all the effects of education. As one "thinketh in his heart, so is he" is a universal law, with many and far-reaching educational implications.

### **Educational Outcomes.**

If we grant that these types of efficiency are essential to that measure of success attainable by any man, the question immediately

arises as to what the school should make the permanent possessions of developing children in order that they may manifest each of these phases of efficiency in their daily living. The answer is that they must be equipped with such knowledge, such habits and skills, and such attitudes as will enable each to be as efficient as possible in health, in vocation, in leisure, in citizenship and in his moral and religious life.

It is perfectly evident, in the first place, that accurate up-to-date information is essential to each phase of efficiency. One must know what is essential to the maintenance of good health. He must possess accurate information in his vocation, whether he teaches, practices medicine, operates a laundry, or drives an auto truck. Information is also essential in his duties as a citizen, in his leisure moments, and as a basis for any moral or religious life which goes beyond mere superficial sentimentality. In the discharge of this function, the school must equip its pupils with large funds of accurate information as one result of their work in both the elementary and high schools.

In the second place, owing to the manifold and complex character of our acts, it is evident that most of our information does not function consciously. It must therefore be reduced to the plane of habits and skills. This is the large burden of the teacher's efforts in good schools, particularly in the first six grades, when teachers are seeking to render automatic the basic equipment in writing, reading, spelling, figuring, talking, composing, and so on. The importance of an adequate body of habits and skills favorable to the work one is responsible for is very forcibly stated, and with approximate accuracy, in the language of Professor James when he says that "ninety-nine one-hundredths of any act or thing that one may be doing at any time is performed automatically, by reason of the habits and skills which he has built up out of his past experience."

In the third place, if one would be efficient, he needs not only adequate knowledge and an appropriate body of habits and skills, but more important than either of these, he needs a wholesome, right attitude growing out of his right appreciations and prejudices. In the final analysis, the thing upon which one places most emphasis in choosing his friends or in making appointments to responsible positions is one's belief in reference to the fundamental attitude of the individual in question.

The foregoing discussion may be summarized and graphically presented in the following table:

## SOCIAL EFFICIENCY

(The aim of all education.)

Necessary Outcomes  Phases of Efficiency	Knowledge	Habits and Skills	Attitudes
Vital or Physical Efficiency	Were it possible to print the details of		
Vocational Efficiency	the course of	study in such a	table as this, greatly enlarged, every item, detail and pro-
Avocational Efficiency— right use of individual and social leisure	cedure should either find a place here or be eliminated. It would be well if teachers were		
Civic Efficiency	to test what	they teach in each	subject by whether they can justly give it a place in
Moral and Religious Efficiency	such a table as this.		

Before taking up their work of studying critically the various courses of study in use in the Berkeley Public Schools with a view to their improvement, the point of view above set forth was definitely agreed upon. Under the guidance of this formulation of aims, objectives, and outcomes, the committee responsible for the course of study in each subject has gone about its work.

### Committees.

The work on each subject has been done by a committee of teachers. In forming these committees, the first, second, and third choices of teachers and the judgment of their principals and super-

visors were taken into account. In charge of planning and directing the work of each committee and of organizing the results achieved has been a chairman. The chairman of all committees constituted the General Course of Study Committee, whose work and meetings were directed by a general chairman. In practice the General Committee and each subject committee met approximately every week for the purpose of criticising each others work as it developed and for preserving a working agreement in reference to how the details of each course should be developed under the general point of view.

### **Essentials of Course of Study.**

Quite as important as the general point of view which has guided the committees has been the general conception of all in reference to the essential features which should characterize a good course of study. In general the thought is that a course of study should constitute a definite hand book and guide to the teacher in her responsibility for teaching the various subjects. It should be so written and organized as to be an inspiration to teachers in their work. Hence, it is not sufficient if it merely indicates the general scope of the work to be done from grade to grade in each subject and the text books to be used with the page limits therein. The definite topics and the exact subject matter which should be taught because of their socializing value should be indicated. How they should be varied to suit differences in pupils must be specified. In fact all choices which depend for their correctness upon scientific investigations and research studies must be made for the teachers by the course of study. Not only must it do all of this, but in addition thereto it must indicate those methods and procedures which are recommended because of their proven value together with specimen results achieved by their use. References giving both pedagogical and subject matter help should be supplied that the busy teacher's task of teaching well so many subjects may be lightened. The standards of attainment expected of pupils should be set forth as concretely and definitely as possible. Further, all directions and helps must be so presented as to keep definitely and convincingly before the teacher the aims, objectives, and outcomes toward which she is to work in all she does with the children.

The teachers into whose hands these courses of study come should study them carefully in order to grasp the fundamental point of view of each. Each course is so written as to show how its mastery should promote the complete socialization of every on-coming citizen who is a pupil in the public schools. The teachers' economy and efficiency of effort will depend largely upon her fundamental grasp of the basic function of each subject of study in the training of each child for social efficiency. Further, this large

understanding of each course of study is necessary to a discovery of its weaknesses and shortcomings which we shall continually seek to eliminate. It is also necessary to a thorough appreciation of the virtues and strengths of the course which we must be concerned continually to increase.

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