

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

WHAT IS IT?

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IN FOUR PARTS

Part I

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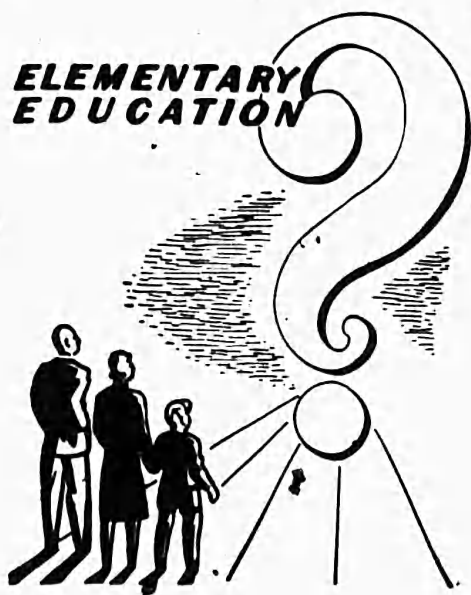
Foreword

DURING A CONFERENCE on elementary education held at the Office of Education in June 1938, this bulletin had its inception. Subcommittees of the conference stated their points of view concerning the problems of elementary education, the curriculum, school administration and organization, and teacher education. An editorial committee which met in October 1938 to discuss outgrowths of the conference outlined a series of four publications in the field of elementary education based upon reactions to the first committee reports. The first of these publications is planned to give a bird's-eye view of elementary education—its nature and importance, together with its relation to and contribution to the whole process of education. Other publications to follow will discuss the purposes and program of the modern elementary school, agencies and lay groups that can aid educational programs, and curriculum principles and practices.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the members of the June conference of 1938, to students and instructors in summer-session courses who criticized the first committee reports, to members of the Office of Education staff, and to the editorial committee: Edith Bader, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Ann Arbor, Mich.; W. S. Gray, Professor of Education, University of Chicago; and W. W. Kemmerer, Director of Child Accounting and Curriculum, Houston, Tex.

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Chapter I

How Interpret Elementary Education

THE SCHOOL YEARS which cover grades known as 1 through 8, bring together all the children of the community more nearly than the junior or senior high school, or the college level. In fact, many people think of education as the kind of experience which they had in elementary school as they learned to read, write, figure, and speak.

Any attempt to tell what elementary education is or does depends upon an understanding of what general education is as a lifelong process, for the principles of learning are the same for young and old. Teachers, principals, supervisors, superintendents, parents, and other citizens in the community need to decide together how these principles are to be worked out in their schools.

Many people as individuals and as groups have expressed their ideas of the nature and purpose of general education, in a wide variety of ways. The present attempt to state the purpose of general education in the form of principles, is based upon many available materials in print. For each guiding principle, the responsibility of elementary education is suggested.

What is Education?

The educated person—

Continues to grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially from early childhood through adult life.

The educated person—

Contributes his share to worth while activities of home, school, community, and country.

The educated person—

Learns from every experience the art of living with other people, and with himself.

What Responsibility Does The Elementary School Have?

Although education is commonly thought of as beginning when a child enters school, learning actually starts at birth and extends throughout the lifetime of the individual. The elementary school continues education which has already begun. A teacher helps children to organize their learning so that each day's experience contributes something to the whole process of education.

Schools need to be so organized that the child will not encounter difficult breaks or gaps in his experience as he moves from home to preschool, on to kindergarten, elementary, and secondary levels, and then to college or work for pay. His progress should call for no more adjustment than is needed in shifting from low to intermediate, and then to high gear in a modern automobile.

The child acquires and uses knowledges, habits and skills, and attitudes which are a part of what he actually thinks and does. He must feel a need for such learning in his home, his school life, and in his community. As his horizon enlarges he realizes that his community is a part of the Nation and of the world.

When he cares for a pet, buys at the store, plays with his friends, or takes part in Junior Red Cross activities, the child is being educated. School experiences should make him better prepared to meet each situation as it comes and to make his own contribution.

Each school has the responsibility for giving the child many different experiences on the highest level at which he is capable of working. Such experiences in the elementary school should include reading, writing, seeing, constructing, singing, drawing, recording, reporting, listening, observing, appreciating, discussing, planning, analyzing, evaluating—all these and many more.

Such experiences are organized to meet the needs of the individual as a member of the group, and are not necessarily to be set up as class periods in geography, arithmetic, spelling, or reading. The child's ability to work with other children in these activities is a measure of his mastery of the art of cooperation.

The educated person—

Develops his own personality through achievement at each level of growth.

Personality is the sum total of interests, insights, attitudes, motives, drives, and patterns of behavior which are to be found in the individual. Education consists in a succession of achievements toward the development of a stable and desirable type of personality.

Past and present experiences are of equal importance. His past experience conditions what the child will say, do, think, and feel about each new activity, and how he will interpret it. From each day's experience the child should get all there is in it for him at the time. Each year of school life and every teacher should contribute something to the personality growth of each child.

The educated person—

Makes intelligent reactions to each situation, new or well-known, which presents a problem to be solved.

The degree to which a person is educated is measured by his ability to think and act wisely. The school tries to select and teach those processes in thinking which help the child to understand an idea or a problem, to make decisions, to arrive at conclusions, and to discover principles.

The teacher and a group of children grow in ability to make intelligent reactions to problems when they together plan goals, discover means for realizing them, and judge their own accomplishment.

What Part Does the Elementary School Have in the Whole Process?

Education goes on from birth to death, both in and out of school. Going to school is only one part of each person's education. The elementary school helps children to develop by guiding them as they take part in daily happenings which call for intelligent action on the part of the learner. Each child should be able to see by means of graphs, charts, or by talking it over that he has made progress each day, week, month, and year. Teachers will help him to understand that growth is measured from the point at which he started, rather than by a line on the yardstick, which is the same for every child. He should learn that he may grow more rapidly or more slowly than other children, but that the thing which counts is whether or not he is working to the limit of his ability. By means of a cumulative record which follows the child throughout his school life, all those concerned with making it possible for him to grow can guide his development with real understanding.

At the elementary-school level each child should have the kind and amount of experience which fits his own physical, mental, and social needs, to the extent that his community can provide it. Although no two communities offer exactly the same education, standards can be set to show the quality of the learning which every child has a right to receive regardless of who he is, where he lives, or how much he can pay. Increasingly the elementary school is using all the resources of the community—its industries, its centers for recreation, its social and civic groups, its people—to help the child understand that the business of living and working together calls for some effort on the part of every citizen, whether boy, or girl, man or woman. Reports to parents cannot show this type of learning accurately. Instead, the best means of finding out how well or how poorly a child is being educated is to note the changes in him as shown by his behavior at home, at school, on the street, in public buildings, and in all life situations.

Education at the elementary level is a series of experiences which the school selects for the purpose of guiding the growth and development of children. Using the principles worked out for general education as a basis, elementary education can map out common goals which will make it possible to meet the needs and interests of all children without causing undesirable uniformity in materials and methods of work. Every child needs opportunity to work with his hands, using all kinds of materials and equipment; to develop skills that will make him efficient in earning a living and in getting along with others; to have a hobby and ride it; to have time to play and to use it wisely; to demonstrate good health in his own habits of living; to appreciate and to enjoy art, music, and literature in an active way rather than as an onlooker; to have some idea of places and peoples other than his own home and friends, and to know how they influence his own life; and to be challenged to work hard at whatever he undertakes. If the individual teacher has in mind such goals as these, she can create the kind of learning conditions which will contribute to the continuous growth of the child. The elementary school is the one agency in every community which can take the lead in making each child's everyday experiences rich, broad, deep, and meaningful by referring back constantly to these goals as continuing purposes.

Will You Read Further?

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22,749,351
ENROLLMENT



Chapter II

Nature and Importance of Elementary Education

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW of education at the elementary level, based upon facts and figures, shows something of the nature and importance of this field. In spite of reported decreases in enrollments the elementary school still holds the center of the educational stage from the standpoint of numbers of children, as well as for the values which these years have as a foundation for the levels which follow.

Costs for elementary schools as compared to those at secondary and college levels show less money spent per pupil, lower salaries for teachers, larger classes, and often shorter school terms. Not only because these conditions are found but also because the quality of school, the methods of work, and the materials for teaching depend largely upon the amount of money which can be spent, communities need to know more about the relative importance of the early school years and the problems which elementary schools have.

A survey of the country as a whole would show at one extreme one-room schoolhouses with little equipment and few materials. In such situations water has to be carried, heat is supplied by stoves, toilet facilities are poor. The teacher is apt to have only the minimum amount of training required for a certificate to teach. A curriculum may not exist except as the teacher assigns work from a textbook. Contrast this situation with a modern school in a prosperous community. The building is new and represents the last word in comfort and efficiency. Heat, light, ventilation, sanitation, materials, and equipment are the best that science can make them. The teacher has had 4 years of preparation and receives help from a director of curriculum and from special supervisors in developing with children experiences that are truly educational.

The differences between these two situations are largely measured by the amount of money which the community can and will spend. Although it is true that the one-room school may have a good teacher

who accomplishes miracles in spite of all the difficulties, and although the modern school may have teachers who are not well prepared, the reverse is likely to be the case. Between the two extremes pictured here, there are many kinds of school situations. Only insofar as all schools move toward certain uniformly recognized standards, can the problems of elementary education be solved, and the individual school assume its true importance in the lives of boys and girls.

Not only costs but precedent, personal opinion, and activities of professional groups influence the kind of education which a community will provide. State laws and the philosophy of education held by those in responsible positions are also factors.

Furthermore, variations in school and class organization, in the curriculum, in the qualifications of teachers, and in the relationship of the elementary school to all other levels of instruction involve many problems which should concern every school community. A brief résumé can show something of the nature and importance of all these elements in elementary education today.

What Are The Facts About Elementary Education? (Figures Based on 1936 Statistics.)

What Responsibility Does The Elementary School Have?

Enrollments

How Many Children Are Enrolled in Elementary Schools?

Children numbering 22,749,351 ranging in age from 5 to 14, and representing about 84 percent of the children of these ages in the United States were enrolled in elementary schools, public and private, including seventh and eighth grades in junior high schools. Between 1930 and 1936 the number of children attending elementary schools decreased 4 percent.

Percent of children 5 to 14—	
Not enrolled in elementary school	Enrolled in elementary school
16	84

Nearly 23,000,000 children in elementary schools! On the basis of numbers alone the elementary school is a big business.

The school's problem is to plan for teaching and learning so that each child as an individual has a chance to grow in terms of his ability. The elementary school needs to develop ways of working with large numbers of children and still think of each one as an individual.

The decrease in elementary school population has kept pace with a declining birth rate.

What is the Relation of Elementary to Other Enrollments?

The enrollments at all educational levels in this country showed 22,749,351 children in grades kindergarten to 8, 6,435,703 in grades 9 to 12 and postgraduate, and 1,208,227 in colleges. Approximately 75 out of every 100 pupils in the United States were enrolled in the elementary school.

Percent of school population enrolled—	
In high school and college	In elementary school
25	75

How Many Children of Elementary School Age Are Enrolled in Private Schools?

Of the 22,749,351 children enrolled in elementary schools, 2,271,381, or 10 in every 100, were attending private elementary schools. About 97.5 percent of these children in private schools were attending schools under church control.

Percent of children in—	
Private schools	Public schools
10	90

What is the Relation Between Enrollments and Community Size?

Increases in enrollments at the secondary level have focused general attention there. But examined for relative importance the elementary school still carries the heaviest educational load.

Since this is true, and since the problems of elementary education are by no means solved, funds and emphasis should be given to the elementary school on a basis proportionate to its responsibility.

It is desirable that public and private schools find a common ground which will stress their likenesses rather than their differences. Opportunities should be found for cooperating in activities that affect all the children in the community.

Of every 100 children in public elementary schools, 52 lived in the country or in towns under 2,500, 17 in towns of 2,500 to 10,000, 7 in towns of 10,000 to 30,000, 5 in towns of 30,000 to 100,000, and 19 in cities of more than 100,000.

Statistics show that more than half the teachers of the country and 9 out of every 10 school buildings are found in communities of less than 2,500.

Percent of children living in—	
Towns or cities over 2,500 population	Rural communities
48	52

How Many Negro Children Are Enrolled in Public Schools?

Eighteen States which provide separate schools for Negroes, reported that 92 out of every 100 Negro children, or 2,250,045, were enrolled in school. In these same States 80 of every 100 white children, or 6,247,827, were enrolled in public schools. Negroes represented slightly more than 25 percent of the enrollment in the 18 States.

Percent of total enrollment—	
White children	Negro children
75	25

Slightly more than half the children at the elementary level in the United States attend school in essentially rural communities.

Most of the curriculum centers in public schools or in State departments of education are located in cities, and most published materials are developed by teachers of children living in communities of more than 2,500 population.

In planning and thinking about curriculum content, materials, books, and experiences, the background of children must be considered. There are children in the country who have never ridden in an elevator; children in the city who have never seen a cornfield. Although the needs and interests of both groups of children should be represented in any curriculum program, present conditions seem to show that special study needs to be made in rural areas.

In proportion to the number of children of school age of each race, more Negroes than whites were enrolled. But some white children in the States concerned were enrolled in private schools.

If all children are to have equal educational opportunity, both whites and Negroes must develop common purposes and provide the quality of education which meets the needs of both races.

How Many Children Are Enrolled at the Various Grade Levels of the Elementary School?

More than 20,000,000 school children attended public elementary schools, including both rural and city schools. Kindergarten enrollments compared to those of first grade were small for the country as a whole. But in city schools, of the more than 9,000,000 children enrolled, kindergarten children represented 5.77 percent. Children were distributed in the various grades as follows:

Grade	Number	Percent
Kindergarten.	606,753	2.98
1.....	3,530,325	17.31
2.....	2,557,589	12.54
3.....	2,524,736	12.38
4.....	2,498,741	12.25
5.....	2,432,991	11.93
6.....	2,319,470	11.38
7.....	2,181,987	10.70
8.....	1,739,969	8.53

How Many Exceptional Children Are Enrolled in Elementary Schools?

City schools enrolled in special classes 297,307 children who were physically or mentally handicapped, who were gifted, or who were behavior problems. Probably 9 out of every 10 of these children were in elementary schools. But these nearly 300,000 children were only about 10 percent of all exceptional children in the United States.

Percent of exceptional children in the United States enrolled in—	
Regular classes	Special classes
90	10

The large number of first-grade children compared to figures for the grades that follow would seem to indicate too many failures. Schools have a responsibility to provide education for the 5-year-old. If these children must enter first grade rather than kindergarten, they should not be plunged into reading, but should be given the equivalent of kindergarten experiences as a means of leading into various types of school activities, of which reading is one. Schools need to give more careful attention to classification as well as to initial teaching.

The significant drop in enrollment in grade 8 is accounted for chiefly by the fact that in certain States elementary education ends with the seventh grade.

Although all schools may not make provision for exceptional children in special classes, the regular classroom teacher should recognize these boys and girls and modify her program to fit their needs.

Schools may well make a survey to discover how many exceptional children there are in the community and what adjustments have been made for them in the school organization.

Although elementary-school enrollments are large, they do not include all boys and girls of ages 5 to 14. The children who are not in school are those with physical or mental handicaps, those too far from schools, or those in communities which do not strictly enforce attendance laws. Children enrolled in private schools; children separated by race; children who live in rural communities; children who attend public schools under a wide variety of conditions, nevertheless should have common goals set up for growth and development.

Costs

How Does Cost Affect the Length of the School Year?

The States which have the least to spend for education have the shortest school terms. In 1936 elementary schools were in session on the average 169 days. The longest term in any State was 180 days, the shortest, 130.

Of every 10 children enrolled in elementary schools 8 attended daily. The average child attended only 132 days a year. On this basis a child's total public-school experience numbers about 1,600 days.

In general the length of school term depends upon the amount of money which a community can pay for teachers' salaries, equipment, supplies, light, heat, water, janitor, and other services. Schools need to emphasize with boys and girls their part in using wisely all equipment and supplies.

Some help comes from State funds. Nearly half the States distribute some or part of their school funds directly or indirectly, on the basis of average daily attendance. This fact causes some schools to insist upon perfect attendance regardless of the child's physical condition. This and other factors are being recognized by those States which distribute State school funds on the basis of a guaranteed minimum program. Such a method of distributing funds takes account of the fact that school expenses continue regardless of the number of children present.

How Do States Vary in the Amount They Spend Per Pupil?

In 1936, the average State expenditure was \$74.30 for current expenses for each pupil in average daily attendance when costs for elementary and secondary schools were combined. Although separate figures are not given, the cost per elementary pupil was smaller than for a secondary pupil. One State, A, spent as little as \$27.15 per school pupil; State B, which paid the most per pupil, spent \$146.90 per child.

Children in the various States do not have an equal opportunity for education. The State which spends least per pupil pays a little more than one-fifth of the amount paid by the State which has the largest per pupil cost. State A spends in proportion to its wealth as much as State B. However, in the latter State, the cost of living is higher and all expenses are greater.

How Does Size of Class Affect School Costs?

Class size for 1935-36 was reported as a pupil-teacher ratio of 25.6 pupils. This figure does not give an accurate picture of class size because it represents the division of the total number of pupils in elementary and secondary schools by the total number of teachers, special teachers, principals, and supervisors. In cities of 2,500 or more the average number of pupils enrolled per teacher was 34. In the same school system, classes at the high-school level are usually smaller than those at the elementary level.

In certain rural schools there may be as few as 3 or 4 pupils but in city schools there may be as many as 50 or more pupils in an elementary-school class. In schools organized on a platoon or departmental plan an individual teacher may meet several hundred different children in the course of a school day.

Since the greatest item of expense in any school is for salaries, the size of class is an important financial factor.

Although there are instances in which certain individual teachers do a good job with larger numbers, a recent publication of a policy-making educational group indicates that best practice shows an upper limit of not more than 30 to 35 pupils in a class as desirable.

Actual experimentation is needed to show how large a class can become, and still permit the teacher to have an intimate knowledge of each child's needs and to give sufficient time to the individual pupil. Although in theory, large classes may decrease school costs, if pupils fail to progress because of lack of guidance, costs may not be reduced and educational efficiency may be impaired.

School Organization

What Plans Are Used For Organizing Elementary Schools?

Although the typical elementary school provides for grades 1-8, there are many variations from this plan. The grade range may be 1-6, 1-7, or 1-8, with sometimes a kindergarten or a nursery school, or both, preceding grade 1.

Present educational programs are being offered for youth and adults. Boys and girls who have finished school but who cannot find jobs, grown-ups who cannot read or write, and those who wish to learn a trade have a chance to study.

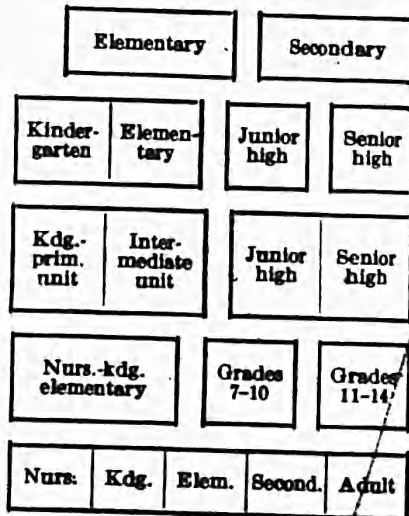
Some school systems are organized by school levels as separate blocks of experience, each with its own purposes. Other schools by their organization show that education is a continuous process, in which each level contributes something to the common aim.

Elementary schools need to take a long view of education. Because in the future, adults will be given opportunities to continue learning, pressure should be removed from the elementary period. Then boys and girls need acquire certain skills such as long division only when they are mature

The place which the elementary school holds in relation to other school units differs from State to State and from town to town. Sometimes it is unrelated to other units; sometimes it is merely one level of the whole educative process.

enough to learn and see the purpose for which the skill is to be used.

Typical plans of organization



Every school system needs to see itself in graphic form. Such pictures will help to start a rethinking on the part of school people, of the philosophy on which the educational program is based.

What Are Current Trends in School Organization?

Here and there throughout the United States schools are experimenting with plans of organization which make it possible for boys and girls to progress without failure. A number of school systems promote to the next grade those children who have spent the year in school, without holding them to a definite standard of accomplishment.

A comparatively new plan is called the primary unit. In this scheme boys and girls now in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades, or in the three latter grades, are organized into class groups without regard for grade lines. No child fails, but progresses according to his ability and at his own rate of speed, so

Schools must be willing to experiment in order to find the best way to make it possible for every child to succeed. This is largely a matter of fitting the school to children as individuals, rather than making the child adjust to the school and its program, other than is necessary when a group is concerned.

Modifications of this plan are now at an experimental stage in many different parts of the country. A sharing of successes and failures in the working out of the plan in the meetings of various organizations can help to clarify the issues at stake.

Teachers who have progressed with pupils over a period of 2, 3, or 4 years, on their own statement make a much

that if he needs extra time he may take 4 years to complete the work of three grades as we now know them. A few schools are trying the same plan at the intermediate grade level, and one school extends the plan through the senior high school. Sometimes the same teacher remains with a group of pupils for 2 or more years.

greater effort to become acquainted with each individual child.

What Plans Are Used For Organizing Teaching and Learning?

Schools are stressing increasingly certain principles which should serve as guides in any teaching and learning situation, regardless of the form of school organization. Such principles as provision for individual differences, cooperative planning and evaluation of work, and the use of any experience that promises educational value are recognized features of many plans.

Although the typical elementary school has a teacher per grade, other plans are in use. For example, the platoon plan assigns children to a home-room teacher responsible for certain experiences, but for a large share of the day sends them to other teachers; the departmentalized plan makes each teacher a specialist in certain fields; the Winnetka plan individualizes the skills, and socializes other experiences; the Dalton plan organizes school work in terms of written contracts or assignments; and the cooperative group plan is a modification of the departmentalized plan.

The school needs to be so organized from the standpoint of numbers of children and time schedules, that the teacher can know each individual child—his needs, interests, abilities, and problems. The school program can be set up democratically so that teachers and children may work together cooperatively in all learning situations.

The plan of school organization can determine the type of school program which children will have. In selecting a plan of organization, or in modifying a plan already in use, it is necessary to see that all facilities for learning which a school has to offer should be available to every boy and girl, and should be used to the maximum throughout the school day.

Curriculum

Can There Be One Curriculum For Elementary Schools?

The word "curriculum" has taken on a wide variety of meanings. To different people it

Increasingly, each individual school believes that school experiences should grow out of the needs and interests of

means different things. The fact that more than 50,000 courses of study for elementary and high schools are now in print, emphasizes the point that differences of opinion exist.

each group of children in relation to their own community.

What Forms May The Curriculum Take?

The course of study is one form which the curriculum may take. It may be an outline of subject matter, or it may consist of units to be used in the classroom. It may present a point of view and give suggestions to the teacher for working out her own materials. Courses of study are developed for separate subject fields; for certain so-called functional areas, such as language arts, social studies, fine and applied arts; or as a unified experience built around a central core.

A guide or a series of guides may be the form which the curriculum takes. Guides are designed to help teachers in thinking through to an educational philosophy which will make it possible for them to recognize those experiences suitable for the education of children.

More than half the States of the country have curriculum programs under way. Frequently these programs are broad enough to represent the whole State-wide plan for improving instruction.

How May The Curriculum Be Defined?

Curriculum, then, may be narrowly or broadly defined. There are those who would limit it to the individual textbook or to a group of courses set down on paper. The point of view which is opposed to this narrow definition would include in the curriculum all experiences both in and out of school which contribute to the growth and development of the child.

A curriculum must be personal enough so that no teacher takes a course of study or a unit and uses it word for word. Neither should a curriculum be so loosely interpreted, that no planning in advance is done. Midway between these two concepts of the curriculum there is a point of view which is acceptable to practical school people.

Regardless of the plan for work adopted by any school system, the philosophy of teaching and learning held by the individual teacher is the most important factor. Within the school as a unit there must be some common understanding of what is meant by the curriculum.

Local curriculum programs may stem from a State program, and may contribute illustrations of best practice to be shared with other schools.

If schools take the broad interpretation of the curriculum, the growth of the child is limited only by his own capacity. The problem in taking such a point of view is chiefly one of convincing the community that modern education should not necessarily duplicate the education of a generation ago. Furthermore, this broad interpretation calls for changed ideas of the preparation of the teachers who are to direct modern programs of education.

Teacher Education

How Well Are Teachers in Elementary Schools Prepared For Their Work?

Of all American teachers, 60 percent teach at the elementary level. Although in 1937, 5 States and the District of Columbia required 4 years of training for elementary teaching, the average requirement is still about 2 years. In small schools less than half the teachers have had 2 years of college work, although in cities of more than 100,000 population the majority of teachers have had at least 2 years of preparation.

What Are The Trends in the Training of Teachers for Elementary Schools?

As further years of training are being required, teachers colleges are revising the whole curriculum instead of adding new courses.

Some teachers colleges are making it possible for practice students to teach in a one-room rural school or in a town or city school. Instead of spending an hour or two a day in a classroom, the student may have a full day at a time, or may spend a full quarter or term teaching for credit, without attending college classes.

The requirements in years of training needed, are being constantly raised. If good teachers are to be secured, schools must be willing to pay higher salaries to make it possible for prospective teachers to complete 4 years of college-level work.

Furthermore, equal basic pay for equal preparation and experience will need to be the rule in paying salaries to teachers at all school levels.

Such a practice should make it possible for college teachers to hold the same philosophy of education and to use the same principles of method which they ask students to follow with children.

New curricula are built with the purpose of giving students both a cultural and a professional background, of unifying courses, and of providing practice in teaching children in a situation that is as nearly as possible like the regular public school.

What About Unsolved Problems In Elementary Education?

Elementary education is important from many points of view. Its very name implies that the child's experience at this level will largely condition his success or failure in the years that follow. Since the emotional pattern of a child's life is well set by the time he is 12 years old, this period has a special significance for all future educational growth.

The large numbers of children in the elementary school and the fact that more than half of them are in rural areas should center attention upon a thorough study of the problems that are character-

istic of small schools in rural communities. Problems of race, private schools, exceptional children, school costs, school organization and administration, curriculum, and teacher education all have a place in the educational picture. Individually and grouped they have a part in making elementary education effective or ineffective.

The problems of elementary education are by no means solved. Although the statement is frequently made that the best teaching is done at the elementary-school level, recent publications which have analyzed research studies for their application to teaching in the elementary grades reveal many problems to be solved, as well as solutions to problems which have not yet come into general use. If elementary education is to continue to move forward, financial support must be secured and many teachers in all parts of the country must cooperate to study problems in school and class organization, in curriculum building, and in other fields. It should be possible to find answers other than opinions to such questions as:

What should be the upper and the lower grade limits in the elementary school?

What should be the relationship between elementary and secondary education?

How can school organization be modified to make possible evident growth on the part of every child?

How can the effectiveness of education be measured in relation to class size?

How can the cost of education at the elementary level be more nearly equalized from community to community?

How can all children of elementary school age, regardless of distance from school or physical condition be provided with education?

What provision can the school in the small community make for the exceptional child?

How can the curriculum be planned to meet the needs of each community?

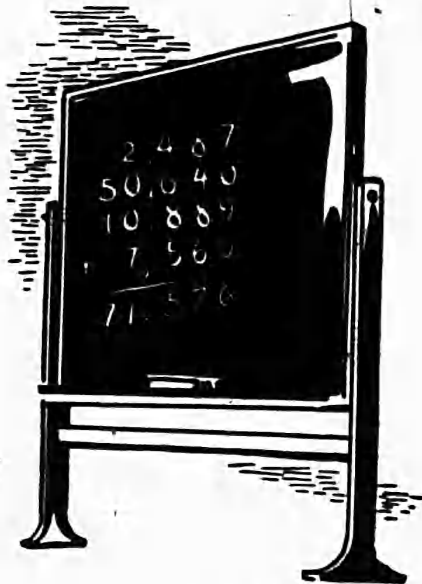
What type of preservice experience will produce the best type of elementary school teacher?

Every school needs to make use of existing research that may help to solve these problems. In addition, further problems should be discovered and analyzed. The findings of individual teachers in classrooms throughout the country should be recorded for the purpose of securing a wide sampling of reactions from people who are in the closest touch with the real teaching situation. Parents and other

citizens in the community need to be made aware of these problems and of their influence upon the quality of education which a child receives.

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Chapter III

Unique Functions of Child Guidance During the Elementary School Period

GIVEN SCHOOL CONDITIONS such as those just described but multiplied by wide variations from State to State, and even within each State, the most important factor in the elementary-school program is the child himself. In his interests State and local school systems are set up; great professional organizations have their reason for being; teachers colleges are organized; school buildings are built, equipped, and kept in running order; and teachers and other school employees are hired. Any discussion of elementary education should place primary emphasis upon the child, because he is the reason for all these activities. Programs in child guidance are the result of the interest of teachers and parents alike.

At the elementary-school level such programs are based upon an understanding of the characteristics of children. Any attempt to divide the elementary-school period into levels of growth or development shows that the limits set have to be moved now forward, now backward, because each child is an individual. The discussion here of certain stages of growth is for the purpose of pointing out a number of unique characteristics common to boys and girls at the various school levels—primary, later elementary, and upper—which now mark the elementary-school period. Actually the growth process is continuous for each child. A graphic description of his progress would show high and low points indicating that growth is not consistent in all characteristics. Such graphs for two children would not be apt to show comparable growth in mental, physical, social, and emotional development, over the same period of time. But for a large number of children certain characteristics can be noted within a 2- or 3-year period. An analysis of these characteristics should be helpful because all boys and girls follow a similar order of development although the rate varies widely. It is only for periods of several years in length that any attempt is made to list growth factors and to show the responsibility of the elementary school in relation to them.

In order to guide children wisely, the social worker, doctor, dentist, nurse, custodian, attendance officer, teacher, administrator, and parent must know the backgrounds of the children as well as understand the characteristics which cause the 10-year-old to behave differently from the 5-year-old in what to all appearances is the same situation.

What Background Factors Help In Understanding Children? What Responsibility Does The Elementary School Have?

Social

What Social Experience Have Children Had?

Children come from homes that are widely different in the advantages they offer. For example, one child comes from a home where courtesy is never practiced; yet another from a home where courtesy is part of everyday living; and still another from a home in which courtesy is a sort of surface polish. In a similar way differences in honesty, truthfulness, habits of cleanliness, punctuality, and cooperation could be shown.

These children meet on common ground when they come to school. A child's possession of or lack of social advantages is apparent in his behavior in the classroom. Children from the highest economic levels do not always live up to their background; and on the other hand, children from homes with low incomes are often genuinely courteous. The school needs to create situations in which every child has practice in desirable social living.

Economic

From What Economic Backgrounds Do Children Come?

Boys and girls of elementary-school age come from all income brackets up to and including the millions. Figures are not available, but it is reasonable to believe that fully half of the elementary-school children come from homes which are on a subsistence level or below. Such homes have only the bare necessities and none of the comforts.

Schools have taken the initiative in providing, but should increasingly cooperate with other agencies in securing additional food, proper clothing, medical and dental care for children on economic levels at which parents cannot provide these necessities. Through parent-education groups, schools should help parents in budgeting and in planning well-balanced meals at low cost. All children can be taught personal health habits, and the proper care of clothing. Older boys and girls, through club activities, can help younger brothers and sisters.

Boys and girls who come from homes at a high economic level may need help in managing money wisely, in developing independence, and in cultivating a social point of view.

Racial

From What Racial Stock Do Children in the United States Come?

Of the 297,215 foreign-born white children, and 7,641,267 children of foreign or mixed parentage, 14 years of age or under, reported in the 1930 census, 21 percent were Italian; 14 percent, Polish; 9 percent, Russian; 8 percent, Canadian; 7 percent, German; and among the other 41 percent were represented most of the countries of the world.

Schools of the United States are the greatest melting pot in the world. Although people of foreign birth tend to group themselves in cities, the foreign-born population in rural communities and small towns frequently is made up largely of one nationality. Teachers are responsible for coming to know the problems and the contributions of each foreign group. The school is the one agency which has the opportunity to develop a common understanding of each for all.

Educational

What is the Educational Background of Parents of Elementary-School Children?

The statement is made that the average individual in the United States has an education equivalent to that of a student who has completed the elementary school. Parents range in their educational level from the illiterate to the highly educated technical and professional man or woman. Adult education projects in the past 5 years have taught approximately a million people to read and write.

Schools need to begin with children where they are and to let them go as fast and as far as their abilities permit. Lack of education on the part of parents often makes it necessary for the school to supply for the child who is entering school a background of experience which might otherwise be taken for granted.

Although social, economic, racial, and educational backgrounds determine the point at which the child begins his education, each individual develops in relation to his ability and to the opportunities that his particular school and community offer for learning.

What Is The Importance Of Growth Periods At The Elementary School Level?

Early Elementary Years

What Do We Know About Physical Growth?

The child's development in this period calls for big-muscle activity since he is learning to make mind and body work together. Motor skill is noticeable in activities that call for balance.

During these years the child becomes more interested in physical play than in toys.

A sense of rhythm which can be improved through practice appears in these early years.

In this period the child completes the control of bodily functions.

During this period boys and girls pass through the successive stages of acquiring first teeth, losing them, and getting permanent teeth.

Even in these years girls grow at a somewhat faster rate than boys.

The amount of night sleep required for physical fitness remains at about 11 hours throughout these years.

What Responsibility Does The Elementary School Have?

Equipment and space are needed for children to enjoy big-muscle activities. The school can provide them, and can suggest to parents equipment and activities suitable for home play.

Every school needs adequate playground space. Direction by the teacher, rather than prescription, should be offered.

In the primary school response to rhythm is encouraged through activities in music, art, poetry, and physical education.

When a child does not have control of bodily functions, the teacher needs to look for physical and emotional causes. Both satisfactory toilet arrangements and opportunity to use them need to be provided.

Proper diets should be stressed with parents, and with children in discussion groups, in the cafeteria, and during lunch hours. Tooth brushes should be provided at school for those children who do not have them at home.

Differences in rate of growth are usually greater from child to child than from one sex to the other. The program in any classroom should be varied enough to provide for the growth and development of every child.

The school has the responsibility for making known to parents the results of research studies which affect the well-being of children. Rather definite evidence is available on amount of sleep required by children of various ages.

What Do We Know About Mental Growth?

Mental growth continues at a fairly constant rate throughout this period, as measured by various types of tests, but at a faster tempo than with children at the later elementary level.

Research shows that those children who attend kindergarten have greater possibility for success in the following years of the elementary school.

The child experiments with various types of activity and develops a growing interest in the relation between cause and effect.

The child's vocabulary is enlarged through incidental, rather than planned experiences, until he enters the beginning reading period. Girls seem to excel boys in language expression until after the age of 6.

During this period children are introduced to reading and number experiences. At this point there is wide variation in the time when children of the same age in years are mature enough to learn.

Not only does the attention span increase, but there are fewer shifts in attention in any given period of time. Interest in a piece of work that challenges, together with other factors such as maturity, health, and intelligence influence the situation.

What Do We Know About Social and Emotional Growth?

Even before he is 5 years old the child begins to compete with others. From this point competition and cooperation may develop together.

The work of the school must appeal to the child's intelligence as well as to his interests and must stimulate effort on his part.

School administrators need to stress with boards of education and with parent groups the importance of worthwhile learning experiences for the 5-year-old child.

Guidance is needed in helping children to observe and, to think through such relationships, as flower to seed, summer to winter, and food to health. Through such experiences they learn to face and solve problems.

Adequate records can be kept of the vocabulary growth of each child. Such lists with some additional explanation reflect the kind of educational environment in which children live both at school and at home.

No child should be introduced to reading and number experiences until observations and tests show that he is really ready to learn. An analysis of children with reading difficulties at the intermediate grade level, shows that the trouble can often be traced to the beginning reading stage.

Work can be so planned that the child attends over a longer period of time because he can do so without becoming tired, and because the situation is both interesting and absorbing.

Competition with one's own self should be encouraged and competition with others should be discouraged in all educational activities.

Although dramatic play is begun by the child as an individual, he continues this activity with members of the group.

In the preschool period behavior takes the place of language as a means of showing feeling. By the time the child enters school, he both shows and controls his emotions in a number of patterns, with or without language.

A child's interest in sex is normal and natural, unless parents, teachers, or companions make it otherwise.

The child of this age craves affection as do older children.

Opportunities for dramatic play need to be recognized and encouraged. Since dramatic play appeals to children, it should have a recognized place in the school program.

The cause underlying a child's behavior is more important than the behavior itself; as the teacher learns the reasons for various behaviors, she can help the child to develop patterns that make him a cooperative member of the group.

The child's questions about sex, whether they come spontaneously from the individual, or as a result of classroom experiences, need to be met in a matter-of-fact way.

The teacher in the primary grades needs to recognize this desire for affection and to see that it is realized. Much of the so-called misbehavior of children is caused by the fact that affection or attention is missing from their lives.

Later Elementary Years

What Do We Know About Physical Growth?

Rate of physical growth is slowed until toward the end of this period, when it takes a spurt. Sex changes occur toward the close of the period but slightly earlier in girls than in boys.

In this period health problems such as poor vision, heart and hearing difficulties are more evident than in preceding years, although children as a group live their healthiest years between the ages 9 and 12.

Children need large amounts of physical activity in the form of sports and games that call for competition with self and cooperation with others.

What Responsibility Does the Elementary School Have?

The school needs to watch especially for those boys and girls who vary from the average in maturing rapidly or slowly, or in maturing physically and lagging mentally. For all of these, adjustments in school programs are necessary.

Since children at this age do more work with books, poor vision calls not only for correction but for proper seating and lighting. Proper means must be used to help children with heart, hearing, or other problems.

Adequate playground space within the building and outside must be provided for these children in a way that will not interfere with children either younger or older. Direction is needed too in making activities include all children, and in guarding against overexertion.

What Do We Know About Mental Growth?

Graphic records of growth showing mental, chronological, reading, height, weight, dental, and carpal ages for children in the intermediate grades indicate variations in the relationships of these ages for each individual. However, although the rate of mental development is slower than in the pre-school period, it is closely related to physical and social growth in this period.

Children's interests shift from the fanciful to the realistic. As a result, boys and girls are able to recognize absurdities and develop some critical ability.

Interest in the why and how of things leads to a desire to construct with the hands. The child enjoys expressing himself creatively and seems to attach more importance to the activity and to the finished product, than to the quality of the work.

Persons who have made investigations say that 9-year-olds have the widest range of interests and activities. The 10-year-old and over begins to be a specialist in some narrow field or fields.

Attitudes toward work are strongly influenced by success or failure. In this period children have a keener awareness of lack of progress in reading and arithmetic.

The school needs to provide the machinery in the form of growth records and persons able to make them for each child throughout his school life. Such records make evident the fact that an alternation of sudden spurts and then a slowing down are characteristic of the growth process over a period of years. A cumulative record is frequently the key to solving a child's problem.

Especially in the choice of reading material, the school can direct this interest into wholesome experiences. It can also encourage children to think about what they have read, and to form opinions.

Schools should provide space, equipment, and a wide variety of materials, such as wood, clay, metals, textiles, foods, leather, paper, paints, for children's use. Through discussion, ideas of quality standards for any piece of work should be developed.

All kinds of interests should be encouraged in a wide variety of fields so that the child's experience may be as broad as possible before he makes a choice that limits his activity.

The school needs to examine its teaching to determine whether both methods and materials are such that learning can take place naturally. Such analysis should be made for all grade levels, but especially for reading at the primary level, since many difficulties originate there.

A child's progress should be measured not by an arbitrary yardstick but by the amount of gain that he makes from year to year.

What Do We Know About Social and Emotional Growth?

Children take more responsibility for eating habits, sleeping hours, dressing, and exercise routines. Boys especially need encouragement if they are to wash hands and face, brush teeth, shine shoes, comb hair.

Girls choose girls as companions and boys need boy friends after the 9-year-old stage is past.

Children during this age period are more interested in themselves and in the "gang" than in either younger or older children, or adults.

Behavior of children at this level often seems foolish and is difficult to explain from the standpoint of the grown-up.

In school activities children can be given responsibilities for which they decide how well or poorly they have done the job. Time and place for making one's toilet after play or because of lack of equipment at home should be provided.

Although plans should provide for both boys and girls, there should be some chance for activities that appeal to each group individually.

Teachers and others must try to understand the child's point of view. They must know what attitude to expect and must not insist upon having information about all of the child's activities.

Grown-ups need to try to put themselves in the child's place, to recall thoughts and feelings and reasons for behavior when they were 10 or 12 as the case may be. The school can be most helpful to parents by helping them in understanding the child of this age.

Pressure to bring about what is thought to be acceptable behavior sometimes results in children's finding a more subtle way of expression that may hinder growth and development.

Upper Elementary Years

What Do We Know About Physical Growth?

Since normal development covers a broad age range, marked physical changes have already begun in some children, but in others develop during this period. Every stage of development must be interpreted in terms of the child's complete history of growth.

Between the ages of 12 and 14 girls are likely to exceed boys in height and weight, as well as in time of sexual development.

What Responsibility Does the Elementary School Have?

The teacher should be liberal in interpreting the standards for what she considers to be normal development. Each boy or girl must be thought of as an individual.

In meeting situations that concern boys and girls, the teacher should be aware in a practical way of the basic reasons for the behavior of both sexes.

The bright child tends to develop more rapidly physically than does the dull child.

Except for boys and girls who make the team, youth in this period become passive onlookers rather than active participants. This situation is responsible in part for day dreaming as a characteristic of the teen age.

What Do We Know About Mental Growth?

Rapid changes take place in the interests of boys and girls of this age period. With guidance, permanent interests in vocations begin to take form.

Although the level of mental development depends to a large degree upon a stimulating environment, actual mental ability cannot be improved. It is possible, however, to increase the intelligence quotient which is the ratio between mental age and chronological age.

The bright child tends to do mature thinking slightly earlier than the average child, and the dull child somewhat later. The latter is geared to a slower learning rate, although the quality of his thinking may equal that of the bright child if he is given sufficient time.

There are no significant differences in school achievement between boys and girls during this period.

What Do We Know About Social and Emotional Growth?

Socially, girls are from 1½ to 2 years in advance of boys of the same age.

Such differences call for careful analysis of all factors which can contribute to physical growth, such as a balanced diet, avoidance of illness, and correction of physical handicaps whenever possible.

Schools need to emphasize intramural physical activities, in which every boy and girl participate, rather than try to make the team.

Encouragement to achieve up to capacity should be continued, but guidance which aims at showing the possibilities in various vocational fields should be made a part of the school program.

The teacher needs to analyze her problem to find whether she is thinking of learning as a series of jobs to be done or as the growth of each individual child. If she adopts the second point of view she will make use of every means which the community offers for stimulating intellectual interests.

At this level teachers should develop a curriculum made up of materials and methods which will appeal to the child who is not book-minded, as well as to the child who is academic-minded. Amount of improvement in a given period of time using his own previous record as a basis for comparison will be stressed rather than reaching an achievement level specified for all children.

If an analysis shows that boys are not achieving as well as girls in any individual school the teacher needs to analyze her methods, and to look critically at her standards to see whether they are equally high for boys and girls.

A teacher needs to be aware of the difference between boys and girls in their social growth. She should recognize that the somewhat sophisticated behavior of girls is normal and that her role is one of an understanding guide.

This is a period for the development of strong personal friendships. The boy and girl interest begins to appear. At this time youth is socially minded and seeks group approval as well as attention.

It is during this time that the child reaches physical and intellectual maturity; in a sense he becomes an individual, a complete personality.

At this stage boys and girls are influenced emotionally by the attitudes of grown-ups, especially by the attitudes of parents and teachers. Conflicts in standards may occur if the adults fail to look at each problem from the point of view of boys and girls.

Success for every boy and girl must be made possible so that each one will find approval for his strong points and will be helped to improve the weak.

Talking to boys and girls on their own level about their own problems strikes the right key. Cooperation between students and the teacher as guide, recognizes boys and girls as capable of meeting and solving personal problems.

Teachers, principals, and all who work with boys and girls need to answer such a question as "When you were this age how did you feel about your parents' point of view concerning clothes?" The answer should help in understanding the reactions of boys and girls when they seem difficult to explain.

What Are the Problems in Guidance at the Elementary-School Level?

Although certain signposts throughout the elementary period indicate likenesses and suggest changes that have been observed in numbers of boys and girls of given ages, for the individual child, growing from childhood into adulthood is a process in which he develops at varying rates of speed at different times, and in various characteristics. We say that a child is grown up when he can act intelligently and independently in the average situations of daily life. The limits of his growth are bounded by his capacity for intelligent action. The background of his home; the number, kind, and quality of experiences which he has both in and out of school; and his own physical, mental, and social equipment all play a part in deciding what sort of person he is to be and how intelligently he will behave.

If the child has understanding parents and teachers, his development will be continuous without difficult breaks or gaps. Rather than set up a standard which the child must reach, the school does its most important work when it creates conditions that make it possible for a child to develop normally. When guidance rather than prescription is given, the individual can use what he has learned as effectively at 20 as at 10.

What are the ways in which the elementary school can provide guidance? First of all there needs to be an understanding teacher. She must have both a theoretical and a practical knowledge of child nature for without that she cannot interpret behavior in such a way as to further growth and development. Ideally the teacher should be able to work in a physical set-up in which heat, light, ventilation, water supply, and sanitation are the best that science can provide. The equipment and the materials for work are chosen with growing children in mind, and with possibilities for many varied activities. Living in the school is a democratic affair with cooperation the keynote. A cumulative record which follows the child throughout his school life makes each receiving teacher aware of the physical, mental, social, and emotional status of the boy or girl. Not only must there be an awareness of these needs but the services of doctor, dentist, and school counselor must be available. The school which inventories its guidance possibilities with each of the above factors in mind, can take a long step toward making successful living for boys and girls a reality.

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Chapter IV

To Sum Up

THIS BIRD'S-EYE VIEW of elementary education should reveal problems and issues which need to be clearly defined and objectively studied by people in the elementary-school field. The members of the committees who attended the conference on elementary education, which was held at the Office of Education, and in which this publication had its origin, established in their reports some points of view that would serve as a springboard for setting up problems for study when they stated:

The attitudes and practice in the elementary school must be cast in a democratic framework, for personality must be guided toward developing the capacity for living in a democracy. This will affect the content and techniques of the curriculum, the administration and supervision of the school, and all phases of school living.

Children should increasingly as they grow to maturity share in defining and in redefining their goals and in choosing methods appropriate for the achievement of these goals. Each child should be viewed as being capable, because of his particular personality, of making a real contribution to the selection of the goals of any group of which he is a part.

Guidance in growth and development will be in the direction of expansion of the child's main concern in himself, his own achievements and relationships, into a widening allegiance to causes and relationships bigger than himself.

The fundamental function of the school throughout at least the elementary and secondary period is essentially the same, and the nature of the educational process does not warrant a radical break or change in emphasis throughout this period.

These statements indicate that all activities and functions of the school have guidance aspects. This broad interpretation is needed to realize the importance of the child himself as the center of the school program.

The goals for elementary education are the same as those for any other learning level, although the interpretation of them must be made from the point of view of the child who is from 5 to 14 years old.

The school creates or changes conditions of school living, and modifies home conditions to the extent possible through parent education, so that children may realize their abilities and responsibilities to the highest degree. As an active process, elementary education should play its fair part in the growth and development of the child by making it possible for him to:

KEEP WELL

To keep clean in mind and body; to get enough sleep and rest; to conserve sight and hearing; to select wholesome foods; to keep the body functioning at its best; and to follow health rules that protect others—these are practical activities.

WORK WITH OTHERS

To be considerate in all situations; to make friends; to appreciate one's family; to enjoy strangers; to work with people singly or in large or small groups for the best interests of others and of the child himself—these form the basis for cooperation.

ENJOY LEISURE

To enjoy music, books, art, nature, sports, and other pastimes; to share these experiences with others; to develop talents; to feel an urge to create; to know ways of using leisure time wisely—these are experiences that re-create.

COMPETE WITH SELF

To speak and write clearly; to read understandingly; to use numbers effectively; to develop a scientific attitude of mind; to get first-hand experiences with many materials and processes; to become a wise consumer; to master these arts on increasingly higher levels—these are necessities for living.

SOLVE PROBLEMS

To meet problems squarely; to recognize one's own problems and those that affect the family and the community; to use past experiences in analyzing and solving problems; to learn from each new problem-solving situation—these are evidences of ability to think.

APPRAISE SELF

To set up and use fair standards of action, workmanship, and accomplishment in judging one's self; to profit by strengths and weaknesses; to harmonize purposes and desires with those of others; to be aware of spirit as well as mind and body—these are measures of a well-developed personality.



PARTS 2 - 4

NEVER

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