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## Summary of the Technique of the Work in the Primary Grades

Flora J. Cooke

Certain subjects of study have appeared each month in the outlines of the COURSE OF STUDY. These were selected because they promised direct points of contact and interest for the children of a particular grade at a particular time. They were selected, also, because of the known experiences of these children—for the amount of educative work and individual effort which they required—and for the possibilities which they contained of exerting a wholesome influence upon the class. As the teacher's preparation, however, was made a month before the time for actual teaching, there were always many changes necessary, for in each case the immediate demands of the children governed the work given, and not the COURSE OF STUDY. The chief value of this method of planning is that it adds to the experiences of the teacher, and shows her her own faults in judgment, which she is bound to investigate as she compares the prophecy with the actual work done.

The grade outlines have only emphasized the reasons for choice in the work, and suggested the possible material or apparatus necessary to its performance. The training or formal side of the work has not appeared prominently in the monthly plans. It seemed feasible, therefore, to sum up the year's work from the standpoint of technique in the June issue of the COURSE OF STUDY.

**I. Number:** The children in the primary grades have had no number for the sake of the number alone, but they have been constantly planning, making, comparing and judging, estimating and veri-

fying, so that the number work has come into daily use. The work has been so planned that each month has presented new difficulties, new facts, or a new process, and care has been taken *at the time when that fact or process was a necessity* to have it understood and made ready for automatic use.

The June work will include a series of tests in the form of games to see what the children have gained (incidentally, as far as they were concerned) of the so-called facts and processes of arithmetic through their actual use in the necessary imaging required by their work.

**II. Reading:** Reading has been used as a means to an end, not an end in itself. It has been a direct help in bringing the children into contact with good things in nature, literature, and with simple history pertaining to or explaining phases of their social life.

1. The reading lessons, selected from supplementary reading books or prepared by the teachers, might be classified under one of the following heads: (a) Reading lessons which place before the children for their consideration their various experiences and observations in a subject—the chief requisite of such lessons being that *something new* come to the children as the result of the review. (b) Lessons which give data or useful information. (c) Lessons which present a simple, concise plan of work. (d) Good and beautiful descriptions of something within their own experiences or power of comprehension. (e) Educative stories.

2. Vocabulary. New words have been

functioned through their use. That is, a word was presented to a child only when it was necessary to him for his expression.

As a material or object was used, and the child discovered what it was, its name was written upon the blackboard, that, at the time of greatest interest he might associate the written form with the thing it symbolized. This method of word-learning means economy of effort, and diminishes the necessity for drill. The words gained in this way, and words constantly used which had no intrinsic meaning, such as conjunctions, prepositions, etc., were placed by the children in dictionaries which they made, so that they might find and spell the words correctly when they needed to use them independently. The words thus functioned and placed in dictionaries during the first year would probably average for normal children about three hundred, and they do not differ to any great extent from the words in the ordinary First Reader.

Through this training, the children in the Third and Fourth grades are able to use small pronouncing dictionaries.

**III. Writing:** There has been no writing without a distinct purpose, and but little drill. The children have constantly written records, recipes, plans of work, letters, and stories. As many children in the primary grades had already acquired bad habits in the cramping of the hand, and in position of body, they have done much writing upon the blackboard and upon

large paper fastened to the tops of desks, which they are able to raise to any angle desired. The demand has been to make the writing as free, rapid, and legible as possible.

**IV. Spelling:** The effort has been to establish *habits* of correct spelling—every dictionary lesson and every written lesson has been also a spelling lesson. Oral spelling has been used only when some special occasion demanded it.

**V. Language:** Every good lesson in any subject has been also a lesson in language. The motive has been to have the children form habits of clear and correct expression of thought. The standard placed before the child has been that of making himself understood in the best and most economical way. Beauty in expression and individuality in style have been encouraged in every way possible, and the ideal has been held of accepting only the best expression of which the pupil is capable.

Rule for Teachers (Colonel F. W. Parker): "Whenever a rule of syntax, a grammatical term, definition, inflexion, conjugation, or punctuation mark can be of immediate assistance to a pupil, it should be given, explained, and used until its use becomes automatic."

Suggestion (Colonel F. W. Parker): "Habitual mistakes of children which have been acquired through imitation can be corrected only by the continual use of the correct form."

## Notes on a Trip to Highwood

Harriet T. B. Atwood      Bertha Payne      Alice G. Kirk

The whole school recently took a trip to Highwood. Before going, the First and Second grades talked over the things they might see on the journey. They made little

books, heading each page with the printed names of things they were apt to find there.

As some of the Second Grade could not go, members of the class talked over what