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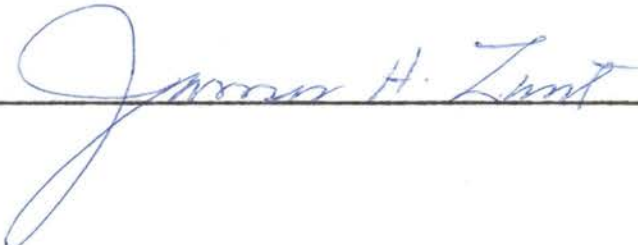
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Scope of Study: A review was made of the factors related to a poor student attitude and lack of academic interest in the high school at Agua Dulce, Texas in the year 1957-58. Factors considered were; the nature of the community, the administration and faculty, the school plant, the students, extra-curricular activities, and precedents. Opinions and information were secured through the use of a standard questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to students and teachers in the school, individuals in the community, and to other individuals interested in schools in other areas. The report was formulated on a basis of a composite summary of opinions as indicated by the responses to the questionnaire, opinions of other individuals with whom the writer had personal contact, and the writer's own opinions.

Findings and Conclusions: Established precedent was considered to be a major factor in the problem of poor attitude and lack of academic interest. Excessive emphasis in athletics weakened the academic program. The size of the school did not lend to the best utilization of competition as a motivational influence and prevented the use of ability grouping. The unlimited use of automobiles on the part of students was a detriment to the development of a proper interest in studies. Lack of required after school duties and the possession of considerable wealth tended to prevent the development of a sense of responsibility by the students. Some students with high intelligence had not been properly challenged by school work in the past and failed to make the proper use of their ability. Student participation in school government is encouraged under proper guidance. Our schools need administrators and teachers with great breadth of human understanding and strength of character.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL



A REPORT ON A PROBLEM IN MOTIVATION

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The writer has three years experience as a secondary teacher of science and mathematics. In these three years he has found the profession of teaching to be one which is filled with challenges. This report will consider some factors related to one of these challenges.

Students in high schools have two essential needs, ability to learn and desire to learn. Almost all of them have ability to learn. The desire to learn academic material varies considerably from place to place, within schools, and among individuals. This desire to learn, or lack of it, is dependent upon many factors: the home, the community, the economy, the school, the individual, the teacher, and other factors. The writer intends to survey some of these factors in relation to a particular problem in motivation, present some problems, and perhaps find some answers. A teacher needs to understand these factors in order to be able to come to terms with them. A teacher needs to work continually toward an improvement in his ability to motivate students. Gates says, "Basically there is no such thing as unmotivated learning."¹ He also states that, "Motivation is an essential condition of learning."²

Difficult problems are best solved by being exposed to a continuous examination over a period of time and from various points of view. The

¹Arthur I. Gates et al., Educational Psychology (New York, 1942), p. 311

²Ibid., p. 320.

writer has now an opportunity to examine this problem of motivation from a new perspective, since he is, at the time of this writing, a student. The writer has an opportunity to extend the study of this problem over the interval of time during which he will be away from high school teaching.

In the course of this study and in the writing of this report, the writer hopes to gain advantages which will enable him to return to the classroom as a better teacher.

CHAPTER II

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The writer taught for one term in a small school in which, in his opinion, interest in academic matters was at a relatively low level. Interest in the athletic program and after school diversion, on the other hand, was by comparison, relatively high. Excessive informality prevailed at times. Some few students were disrespectful toward the school, the administration and the teachers. All too many of the students attempted to achieve only the minimum in learning. Non-academic behavior prevailed.

Non-academic behavior and attitude was exemplified by the senior boys. The negative influence of this group had a detrimental effect on the entire school. The majority of the members of this group had been together in school since the first grade and they formed a unified body. Behavior and attitude was controlled through group sanction. The members of the group possessed better than average mental and physical ability. The athletic teams excelled and standardized tests gave evidence of the high mental ability.

The community was one of considerable wealth. The fertile soil made possible a prosperous agriculture. The presence of oil contributed an additional income for the community. The majority of the senior boys came from rather wealthy homes. Nearly every one owned his own car. Few of the boys were required to work after school since their parents were able and willing to utilize hired help as needed. The boys lacked little in terms of what is often referred to as advantages.

The members of the group were enrolled in one or more of the writer's classes during the year. As the year progressed increasing difficulty was experienced in stimulating student interest toward school work. The writer feels that the problem of attempting to promote a better academic attitude on the part of this particular group was one of the more difficult challenges he has encountered during his few years as a teacher. Exposure to this challenge furnished a desire to improve his ability to understand and cope with similiar situations in the future.

The purpose of this report is to show findings as to the possible cause of the poor attitude exhibited by the particular group mentioned and to make suggestions concerning an approach to this problem. The study required in the development of this report will be directed toward an exposure of the reasons for the development of the undesirable attitude. The various factors which influence attitude will be surveyed and an attempt will be made to analyze the factors in terms of the particular problem. Since the writer has an honest desire to better equip himself to cope with a similiar situation in the future, he will attempt to analyze his own probable strengths and weaknesses. An attempt will be made to find a new understanding of techniques which may be used to motivate students, especially those students with the more negative attitude.

Information and opinions relating to this problem will be collected from parents, patrons, teachers and students. Some opinions will be obtained from individuals in the particular community. Opinions from individuals in other communities where comparable situations have existed will also be used. This information will be obtained through questionnaires distributed to individuals from whom opinions are sought. Personal interviews will be used where possible. These opinions will be collected, studied and used as an aid in formulating this report.

CHAPTER III

THE COMMUNITY

A community is more than a numerical grouping of homes. A community includes the binding forces of religious, social, and political organizations. It includes the effects of friendships, precedents, and customs. A community is tempered by the nationality of the members and by the economy which prevails.

The temperament of the community has its reflection in the school. The school may exist for the purpose of satisfying legal requirements or it may thrive and blossom and yield profit, dependent upon the temperament of the community.

The individual teacher must be able to sense the community feeling toward the school. What interest does the community have in its school? The individual teacher must understand the community temperament in order to exert a constructive influence within the community. The teacher can expect to modify this temperament only gradually and at the expense of time.

The community in reference has its center in a small town of about eight hundred people. The school district includes an outlying rural area of about eighty sections. The community contributes approximately one hundred students to the high school of which nearly one-half are Latin-Americans.

The soil is fertile and the fields are level. The farmers engage

raising. Oil installations create employment for many. Taxes from the farms and oil interests furnish sufficient support for the school.

Worship services, PTA meetings, school programs, and athletic events are well attended. Dancing is not permitted in the school, nor are public dances held in the community. There is no theater, bowling alley, skating rink, swimming pool, or other place of amusement in the town. Places of amusement are found in the somewhat larger neighboring towns. Organized activity for the younger boys includes Cub Scouts and Junior League Base-

The writer is not familiar with the aspects of the local politics except those related to the school. The seven school board members are rather able individuals. The board and the superintendent set the official school policy. Board meetings are held at regular intervals to dispense with school business. Unofficial meetings consisting of various townsmen, but not the superintendent or board members, are held at irregular intervals in the local drug store. Some unofficial policies relating to school are set here.

The majority of the teachers in the system make their permanent homes in the community. Summer employment is provided for the male teachers if they desire. Some low rental teacherages are available. Several fine churches are found in the community. The people are friendly. In general, the writer considers the community to be a rather desirable place to live.

Interest in the athletic program, especially football, is rather high. The football team has for several years been one of the best in its class in that particular region. The interest in athletics seems to be a factor in the problem of motivation. Probably the successes in athletics fulfilled, too completely, the student's need of success. The particular

group of boys who were most successful in athletics were the ones who gave the least attention to academics. Community enthusiasm toward athletics permitted an over-shadowing of the importance of academics by the athletics. Since the group had above average mental ability the subject matter in school was not a major challenge. Athletic competition, on the other hand, was accepted as a major challenge, enthusiasm being stimulated and encouraged by overt community enthusiasm and also by excellent coaching.

Klausmeier says, "The student body, the school environment, and the broader community may accord more status and prestige to flashy but ephemeral entertainment such as athletics and quiz shows than to productive, consistent effort. Consequently, some students may not do as well as expected."¹

Athletic programs are an important part of school. There is no desire here to leave an impression that the athletic program should be discarded but rather that values be weighed properly and that academics should not be outweighed. An attractive athletic program should be used as an added feature of the school, but not as the dominant one. The same applies to any non-academic program.

A teacher needs to understand, be sympathetic toward, and share in community enthusiasm. By doing so his efforts to raise academic standards will meet with a greater degree of approval. A need to develop a more reasonable appreciation of athletics exists in the community.

¹Herbert J. Klausmeier, Teaching in the Secondary School, (New York, 1958), p. 360.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADMINISTRATION AND FACULTY

Administration is the capacity of coordinating the many, and often conflicting, social energies in a single organism, so adroitly that they shall operate as a unit. This presupposes the power of recognizing a series of relations between numerous special social interests, with all of which no single man can be intimately acquainted. Probably no very highly specialized class can be strong in this intellectual quality because of the intellectual isolation incident to specialization; and yet administration or generalization is not only the faculty upon which social stability rests, but is, possibly, the highest faculty of the human mind.¹

A public school administrator does not have an easy task and high school administration is an especially difficult task. The writer shared a rather close association with the superintendent and principal of the school to which this report makes reference. This association has made him aware of the many and varied problems which an administrator must face.

School administrators must be able to cast an influence upon each of the teachers and each of the students. It is their responsibility to stimulate and direct the total school atmosphere. Individuals in their first administrative post often find this responsibility to be a very weighty one. Experience results in an improvement in the ability to meet this responsibility. Bridges says:

"Feeling tone" is the attitudinal atmosphere inherent in any educational enterprise. This intangible phenomenon is a

¹Brooks Adams, The Theory of Social Revolutions (New York, 1913) p. 207-208.

contagion, and no person more than the administrator determines whether the tone will be negative or positive. It flows down from the administrator to the teacher to pupil, and the sequence seldom reverses itself.

In reference to the particular administration concerned, it should be mentioned that the superintendent was overloaded with duties which naturally resulted in some loss of efficiency of supervision. The superintendent had served for several years as a principal. It was, however, his first year as a superintendent. Since the school was small the budget did not permit the hiring of a full time secretary. The superintendent was plagued with an excessive amount of secretarial work which did not allow him time for personal supervision. As a result the school was deprived of the full advantage of his rather exceptional ability.

The high school principal was serving his first year as a principal. The writer believes that a lack of experience on the part of the principal was a factor in the poor attitude in the school. In previous years the school had been allowed to become extremely informal. The past superintendent and past principal had become rather lax disciplinarians. The new school administration made a desperate attempt to improve the attitudes in the school. Precedents are difficult to change. It is like a boulder on a hill-side. It takes only a little effort to keep the boulder from starting to roll but a great deal of effort is required to stop the same boulder once it starts.

The superintendent's busy office schedule prevented him from spending much time in the high school. This left the majority of the task to the principal. His success in the improvement of attitude was limited. Lack of experience, as stated before, was a factor in the limited improvement.

²Edwin Maxwell Bridges, "The Administration as a Tone Setter", The Clearing House, Vol. 33, No. 2 (October 1958), p. 100.

One student complained of an overt and improper use of authority. Some students paid little heed to his counsel. Some few openly ridiculed him.

It is the opinion of the writer that the principal did a superb job when all factors were taken into consideration. The poor attitude in the school was present before the principal took his office. A principal in his first office will naturally find new problems, the solutions to which are slowly and painfully acquired. The principal's duties included in addition to the supervision and administrative tasks, a teaching assignment, bus duty, and the responsibility of some academic and financial records. This was too many tasks for one person. A lesser number of responsibilities would have permitted him to spend more time on disciplinary problems. A stricter discipline in the school would have resulted in an improved attitude.

One of the teachers who had been in the system for a number of years evaluated the present high school faculty as being rather strong by comparison with the faculty of past years. There were no inexperienced teachers in the system and several had considerable experience including service in other schools. They were conscientious and ambitious and worked harmoniously as a group. The teachers were universally aware of the problem with the senior boys and all worked toward the development of a better attitude and improved interests. Those who had had recent experience in other schools were inclined to make the more serious effort to gain improvement. This was possibly due to a keener insight into the gravity of the problem. The teachers of longer tenure, having been exposed to the problem for several years, were inclined to accept the conditions as they were or to be satisfied with minimum improvement. They tended to become an inherent part of the situation rather than being an extraneous element acting upon it.

The difficulty experienced by the writer was based in part upon his

lack of experience in coping with such a problem. Prior to his employment in this district, he was actually unaware of the existence of such a lack of interest in school work. In previous teaching positions in other schools he had not been exposed to this type of a problem.

Little else need be said concerning the teachers in the system. The writer does feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with this fine group of teachers.

CHAPTER V

THE SCHOOL PLANT

During the recent trend toward consolidation many small schools have gone out of existence. Several arguments favor the elimination of the small school, one of which is the more efficient use of the school dollar. In spite of the soundness of this argument many parents in the small school districts often fight long and heated battles in an effort to keep their school at home. They desire to feel a sense of ownership, the equity of which decreases as distance increases. They desire also to keep their children as close to home for as long as possible. It is not difficult to understand these feelings on the part of the parents.

When two districts containing different wealths consider a consolidation the wealthier of the two will often vote the proposal down because they resent sharing the difference in wealth with the neighbor.

The school in reference is one of two small schools which are located directly between two larger, and rather near-by, towns. These two smaller schools have considered a consolidation on several occasions. Each is in danger of being pressured, in the interest of economy, into some kind of consolidation. Each time the consideration came to a vote of the people it was voted down. The wealthier of the two districts always produced the majority of dissenting votes. Some believe that a consolidation of the two smaller schools to be the better approach. Others believe that each of the smaller schools should join with the closer of the larger schools. Many desire to keep their schools as they are. To date no majority has

agreed upon any plan of consolidation.

Due to an actual need linked with the desire to keep the school at home, the school district in reference recently voted sufficient bonds to build several small but very fine new buildings. These include a new elementary class room building, a new office building, a new cafeteria building and a new vocational agriculture building, all completed in 1958. In addition to the new buildings a considerable amount of repair work was done on the large main building which houses the junior and senior high schools. The result of this building and repair program was a school plant which was indeed sufficient.

A suitable school plant is one of the first requirements of any school. The quality of the school may be seriously lowered by insufficient room or other deficiencies in the plant. Once sufficient plant facilities have been provided little advantage is gained by adding to these facilities in excess.

It is the belief of the writer that the poor student attitude was in no way a reflection of insufficient plant facilities.

This chapter has been included to enable the reader to better visualize the overall situation.

CHAPTER VI

THE STUDENTS

Some additional remarks should be made concerning the student body. Of the approximately one hundred students in high school, some-what less than one-half were Latins. The Latin element in the high school was representative of the better class since the children belonging to the very poor transient class seldom received an opportunity to enter high school. Some Latin children failed to receive even the eighth grade education. Those in high school were alert, pleasant to work with and they presented little or no discipline problem.

The Anglo-American students constituting somewhat the majority in high school furnished the student leadership. No racial conflict existed, but an obvious dis-unity between the races was noticed. Few Latins were elected to office. No discrimination was made in athletics, band or activities where membership selection was made by teachers. However some Latins refrained from participation in certain activities since they lacked numerical support in their own race.

Community wealth was owned by Anglo-Americans. Even the Latins of the higher economic level were poor by comparison with Anglo-American standards. All the farms were owned by Anglo-Americans. Some Latin farmers rented land for cultivation, many others were employed as day laborers.

Numerical superiority linked with the control of wealth gave a license to the Anglo-American students to feel superior. Some who lacked in relative

maturity or had an inability to understand true values, permitted the feeling of superiority to show. The factor of wealth, in particular, entered into the problem with the senior boys. The possession of wealth gives a certain sense of security which tends to reduce the desire to achieve other desirable goals. Students from wealthy homes may very well be the better students since they are apt to have inherited greater ability. However, if all factors except wealth are equal, the student from the poorer home will be the better student.

The senior boys were unique in that they did possess better than average means, but did not show the expected better attitude. The writer believes that the possession of wealth linked with other factors such as success in athletics, gave a feeling of security which retarded their drive for learning to the extent that they failed to capitalize on their ability.

The size of the school was not conducive to the use of competition as a motivational instrument. This was especially true in the higher level courses in mathematics and science. These courses were in general not required and therefore enrollment in them was small. Unity further reduced the competitive spirit. The only apparent lack of unity was the split between the two nationalities and here too the Latins were willing to take the second place. The school was too small for the spirit of competition to operate to a noticeable advantage.

The senior boys were conscious of the strength of their influence upon the school. One senior boy informed the principal that the seniors were running the school. The statement was taken as a joke at the time but examination in retrospect leads the writer to believe that the statement was made in earnest. It must be stated that the government by the students, however real, lacked official sanction. The student body contained no effective student council. No positive goals of government were

set and no positive results were seen.

On the local school level the principal, the teachers, pupils, and parents are concerned with the task of providing a setting for effective learning and living together. Within this framework, pupils are entitled to a vital part in governing school life. Students should participate in school government, but by no stretch of the imagination should they govern and control the whole school life. Some of the responsibilities of the principal and his teachers cannot be legally delegated. Behavioral control, including punitive action, is one of these areas of responsibilities. Pupils may properly be involved in arriving at decisions concerning school standards and school life, but it is beyond their proper function to make the final decision. Their function is of an advisory nature only.¹

There is no such thing as full student government of a public high school, nor should there be. But if the high school is to do what it should to help its students make themselves competent members of a free society, there must be extensive and responsible student participation in the governing of the school.²

Government by the students lacked proper supervision, direction and organization. An additional effort should have been made to utilize the student leadership through a proper and well directed organization.

The junior and sophomore classes were not as intelligent as the seniors, nor did they possess the equivalent capacity in leadership. The freshman class showed signs of high potential. They were alert, intelligent, and aggressive. Although they unwittingly followed the pace and reflected the spirit set by the senior class, a little additional maturity in connection with proper control and guidance could mould them into a very outstanding group capable of exerting constructive student leadership upon the entire school. The writer looks forward to the time when he may have the opportunity of working again with this class.

¹Sam P. Wiggins, Successful High School Teaching (Boston, 1958), p. 220.

²Harold C. Hand, Principles of Public Secondary Education (New York, 1958), p. 179.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY OF OPINIONS

This chapter will show a composite summary of the opinions indicated on the standard questionnaire. Opinions from individuals in the community referred to were secured by supplying questionnaires to the superintendent and depending upon his willingness to circulate them. Of the supply of forms delivered to him, sixty five completed copies were returned. A preponderance of these were from students in the high school. The total number of first choices of items in a question was used as the means of arriving at a composite opinion.

In addition to the opinions mentioned above, the writer asked other individuals from widely scattered regions in Oklahoma and adjoining states to give opinions. A majority of these individuals were teachers. A few patrons and students were included. These individuals were selected from the writer's acquaintances on the basis of their reliability, interest in public schools, insight into the problems of the public schools and, their individual capabilities. These responses were of course given in terms of the particular high school in which the individual was interested. A composite of these responses has been made to be used as a basis for comparison and general interest.

The questions included in the questionnaire are shown below. The number following the item in each question indicates the number of individuals who selected that item as being of the prime importance, the existing

situation, or most frequent in occurrence, as the case may be. The responses from the school in reference will be found under "A". Responses from the selected individuals will be found under "B".

1. How do you rate the student interest toward studies in your high school?

	A	B
(a) Above average.	1	11
(b) Below average.	10	2
(c) Average.	53	30

2. Student interest in studies is developed, (number in order of importance),

	A	B
(a) In the home.	12	15
(b) By the student himself.	35	10
(c) Through outside associations.	0	2
(d) By the school atmosphere as a whole.	5	4
(e) By the individual teacher.	11	12

3. In the event that a student develops an unusual lack of interest in school work, the following are probably at fault. (number in order of importance)

	A	B
(a) The home.	9	18
(b) The student himself.	32	9
(c) Outside associations.	8	5
(d) The school atmosphere as a whole.	3	3
(e) The individual teacher.	10	7

4. The school atmosphere is most dependent upon, (number in order of importance),

	A	B
(a) The school administration.	14	13
(b) The students.	34	4
(c) The nature of the community.	5	15
(d) The teachers.	12	11

5. Rate these aspects of school in order of importance.

	A	B
(a) Athletics.	15	6
(b) Social contacts.	6	2
(c) Academics.	42	33
(d) Band.	0	1
(e) Other.	2	1

6. Discipline in high school is usually,

	A	B
(a) Too strict.	3	1
(b) About right.	33	20
(c) Not strict enough.	29	22

7. Rate these factors, relating to the operation of your school, in order of importance.

	A	B
(a) Securing sufficient funds.	18	10
(b) Securing good teachers.	32	20
(c) Developing a proper student attitude.	9	6
(d) Developing a proper teacher attitude.	4	3
(e) Maintaining a proper community attitude.	2	4

8. If an individual teacher is to blame for the development of a poor student attitude toward studies the teacher probably, (number in order of frequency of occurrence),

	A	B
(a) Does not understand the subject matter.	16	5
(b) Is not able to explain the subject matter.	15	12
(c) Has a poor grading system.	0	0
(d) Maintains poor discipline.	23	9
(e) Is not interested in the students.	4	10
(f) Does not know how to be a good fellow.	2	0
(g) Does not understand children.	4	6
(h) Other.	1	1

9. Compare the students listed below in terms of their probable attitude toward studies. (place a check mark by the student who will probably have the better attitude).

	A	B
(a) The student who has access to an automobile.	12	9
(a) The student who does not have access to an automobile.	44	31
(b) The student from a wealthy home.	17	15
(b) The student from a poor home.	40	12
(c) The student who lives in the country.	42	17
(c) The student who lives in town.	19	13
(d) The student who works after school.	35	28
(d) The student who does not work after school.	22	9
(e) Girls.	32	24
(e) Boys.	28	7
(f) Students who participate in athletics.	48	23
(f) Students who do not participate in athletics.	16	11
(g) Students who play in the band.	22	26
(g) Students who do not play in the band.	38	5

10. Please feel free to suggest things that I could do to make subject matter more interesting to the students. (Please use the back of this page for suggestions and comments.)

A few respondents suggested that the items in question number eight were difficult to weigh because of the dependency among them. It was further suggested that the choice of items in question number nine depended upon the individuality of the student and that no generalization could be made.

Responses to question number one indicate that student interest toward studies in the school in question was lower than interest in schools represented by the selected individuals. The writer believes this to be a sufficient basis upon which to state that the interest of the students in

the school in question was below a desirable level.

Responses to question number two and three indicate that the students tended to accept the blame for their lack of interest. The selected individuals rated the home, the student and the teacher as having comparable influences upon student interest with the home sharing the majority of the blame for any undue lack of interest. A uniqueness existed in that the students in reference were aware of their role in the problem.

In question number four it is interesting to note that the selected individuals rated students as being the least important factor in the creation of the school atmosphere. By contrast the students in reference rated themselves as being the most important factor in the creation of the school atmosphere. The writer believes that here again the students were aware of deficiencies in the school atmosphere and were willing to accept a large share of the blame.

Responses to question number five show that a tendency existed toward an excessive emphasis in athletics as compared to other schools.

Responses to question number six leads one to believe that, in general, discipline in our high schools is not strict enough. Both groups indicated a strong tendency toward this opinion. The writer believes that discipline and interest toward studies are directly related.

In responses to question number seven both groups recognized the importance of securing good teachers. The writer believes that of the factors relating to the total school operation the teacher factor has the possibility of the greatest variation. The other factors are more stable. The respondents were probably in agreement with this belief and recognized the possible influence of this variable factor upon other factors relating to the operation of the school.

Student responses to question number eight indicate the importance

of teacher competence in subject matter and teacher ability to control discipline. Selected individuals indicated that teacher competence in subject matter and interest in the student as being important. Again the students showed an awareness of the discipline factor in their school.

In part (a) of question number nine opinions of both groups indicate the detrimental effects of the use of an automobile.

In part (b) student responses tend to indicate the existence of a factor of wealth upon student attitude toward studies. The writer believes that this factor was related to the problem. This factor probably is less important in other schools, judging from the responses of the other group.

A majority of both groups agreed upon the importance of after school work. The writer believes the importance of some tasks is related to the development of the sense of responsibility. If this sense is not developed the student is not likely to develop a responsible attitude toward school work.

In part (f) of question number nine a majority of both groups are shown to favor participation in athletics as an aid in the improvement in attitude toward studies. The writer agrees with this opinion but believes that an undue interest in athletics developed in the school in reference.

Several of the selected individuals wrote comments on the back of the questionnaire. A few of the more valuable comments are included here.

When a student develops an unusual lack of interest in school he could be having family troubles or outside associates could be influencing him to the point that he becomes dissatisfied. When this happens he must take control of himself and with the help of school atmosphere and the individual teacher, get himself back in the swing.

Even though there are funds for a school and good teachers are hired, if you cannot keep a proper community attitude, all is lost. If these three are possible the proper teacher attitude and proper student attitude come along automatically.

All modern fuzzy thinking to the contrary, teacher-student relationship is of first importance. Good teacher-student relationship makes good "school atmosphere".

To make subject matter more interesting one should be prepared for each class taught and to have some part of the lesson on a practical aspect of the topic.

A teacher should first be interested in the subject matter himself and then be able to explain it in terminology which is understandable and interesting. Student participation is one of the best ways to secure and hold interest.

Spend the first few days at school not only in teaching but in getting acquainted and showing a genuine interest in the students.

If one could leave a feeling with the student at the end of the day that it is impossible to run your class-room without him, whether it be conducting the rhythm band or a science experiment, it would certainly eliminate a great share of the lack of interest found in the class-room.

The thought included in the last of these comments should be kept in mind by all teachers. Something of value above and beyond subject matter is implied here.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

The various factors related to the problem in motivation will be reviewed here. Opinions referred to in the previous chapter will be used as a guide and a tempering element upon the writer's own opinion. Some general suggestions concerning an approach to a similar problem will be offered.

The writer considers the factor of precedent to be of first importance. Non-academic behavior and attitude had prevailed for some time. An established pattern is difficult to change in the course of one academic year. Parents and students alike resent changes especially when the changes are being made by a new-comer to the community. The administration was new and although the changes which they were making in the school were directed toward school improvement, there was a general resistance to the changes. Because of the blind spot in the parent's eye for their child the past superintendent and past principal were more popular than the present administration. The errant child had not been corrected or punished for poor behavior in previous years. Why should he be accused of or be punished for poor behavior now? The writer believes that parents blamed the administration for not knowing how to handle the children when in reality the administration was doing a better job than had been done previously. Responses to questions one and six of the questionnaire may be sighted as tangential evidence in support of these statements. Most students are inherently honest and their opinions may be relied upon to the extent of their knowledge and experience.

In item one it will be noted that for every student, (the word student will be used since the preponderance of responses from group "A" were from students), who stated that interest in studies was above average, there were ten who stated that interest in studies was below average. The significant thought here is that the students were aware of the fact that they were not doing justice to their studies. But these poor study habits had become established and were difficult to change. Poor discipline and poor study habits are often found linked together. Responses to question six indicate that the students were aware of the poor discipline. For every one who said that discipline was too strict, there were nine who said that it was not strict enough. Students want good discipline but resist administrative efforts to get it. They respect teachers and administrators who have good discipline but will exert no efforts of their own toward this goal. The poor discipline appeared to be a part of the established precedent. Improvements were achieved with difficulty.

It would seem that continued and well directed effort exerted over a sufficient lapse of time would result in a change in precedent. It is possible that a student governing body could have been created which could have been directed toward improving the school atmosphere. Administrators can not always rule by virtue of their own strength. They need the cooperation of the students. This cooperation may be difficult to enlist at times but once it is secured many problems vanish. Students may govern themselves to a large extent once they have experienced the rewards of rigid self discipline. This type of an approach to the problem was not tried but should have been.

The coincidence of the high percentage of above average intelligence among the boys in the senior class needs further mention here. They were not a normal group and their reactions were not normal. Since academic

work apparently did not offer the necessary challenge they sought other challenges. The writer believes that some-how they learned to accept the exhibition of defiance toward school as a challenge. The word "chicken" kept them in line with the group. If one tried to do right in school the group branded him as a "chicken". Group sanction became more important than good behavior or good grades.

Ability grouping permits an opportunity to offer the more intelligent students a challenge. Small schools can not cater to ability grouping but this technique should be employed wherever possible. Had the senior boys been enrolled in larger classes where all students were above average in intelligence they would have found the subject matter more challenging and they would have spent less time at being non-academic deviates.

The above average wealth enjoyed by the group was apparently a detriment to their attitude toward school. In the opinion of the writer wealth has a positive value only so long as its influence has a positive direction. Possession of wealth enslaves the unthinking. The group of senior boys felt overly secure on the basis of their comparatively wealthy status. This sense of security lessened their desire for attainment in academics. Their wealth was actually a detriment to them. Opinions from students in the school tend to support these statements. Forty said that the student from the poor home would have the better school attitude while only seventeen believed the student from the wealthy home would have the better attitude. Opinions from the selected individuals were approximately equal for both cases indicating that the problem under discussion was unique and not universal.

A significantly high percentage of students believed that athletics were the most important aspect of school. Approximately one out of four of the students indicated this opinion. Overt community enthusiasm for

athletics caused a tendency toward the development of this belief among the students. More recognition was given to the boy who made the touch-down than to the student who excelled in trigonometry. It is believed that these two students could be one and the same individual and in general participation in athletics is healthy and does tend to create a better attitude toward school. But, in the opinion of the writer, the athletics must not outweigh the academics. The athletic program should be an additive feature of the school, not the predominant one. Responses to part (f) in question nine of the questionnaire indicated that a majority of the students believed that those who participated in athletics would have a better attitude than those not participating. This is generally true when a proper balance is kept between athletics and academics but becomes untrue when the emphasis in athletics becomes too strong. The problem with the senior boys was aggravated by the excessive emphasis in athletics. A re-direction of emphasis and a proper weighing of values in the school was needed.

The unlimited access to the use of an automobile is a distraction to a student. If a student is permitted to cruise through the streets of town in the evening he is more apt to do this than to apply himself to study. Opinions indicated in part (a) of question nine is supporting evidence here. Nearly four out of five students believed that those who lacked access to an automobile would have the better attitude toward school. All of the senior boys had access to the use of an automobile. This was a factor in the problem of motivation.

The writer believes that students whose economic status requires that they work after school will be more appreciative of the opportunity to attend school than those who do not work. The only one of the senior boys who was actually required to work after school had the most desirable attitude of any in the group. The demands of a job aid in the development of

a sense of responsibility and a sense of value. The lack of required after-school duties appeared to be a factor in the problem of motivation. A general concensus of opinions is found to be in agreement with this philosophy. The school is not in a position to create after school jobs but the teachers do need to recognize the problem of the lessening amount of responsibilities placed upon our school age children and the problems connected with this trend. The loss of the family size farm is a contributing factor in the increase in the problems which face our public schools.

The experience of being exposed to this problem has left the writer with the opinion that one of the great needs in our public schools is for teachers with great breadth of human understanding and magnanimity of character. They need to be able to adjust to and accept any one of a multitude of situations and to work continuously toward an improved learning situation. Klausmeier says:

The following teaching principles lead to efficient learning by students: Organize learning activities in which all the students experience purpose and meaning. Provide continuing, high motivation. Arrange for students to have direct experience with the main concepts they are to learn. Manage practice efficiently. Encourage problem-solving activities in which the students clearly perceive relationships, including solutions. Be the kind of person with whom students want to identify so that they will imitate your attitudes, values, and other behavior. Select for emphasis the more important principles and generalizations that are to be learned, teach them meaningfully, and help students apply them in many situations, including your classroom. Provide for differences in abilities among students.

No teacher can follow all these principles to the letter; however, high school instruction will be vastly improved if a serious attempt to do so is made.¹

And smile!

At this time the writer feels that he has reached that point at which returns from additional study and effort become increasingly smaller. He

¹Herbert J. Klausmeier, Teaching in the Secondary School, (New York, 1956), p. 89.

wishes to hold any advantages which he has gained in terms of insight into the problem and gently close the door to this study in order that his efforts may be applied in a more fertile area. It is hoped that any reader of this paper has been able to profitably share in this teaching experience.

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