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### ORGANIZING AND UTILIZING THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE STUDENTS

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are accomplished: the significance of our every-day actions, their relations to our ideals, are uncovered; the kinds of action demanded by our ideals are discovered; and the ideals themselves, in becoming defined and formulated and made the object of our solicitude are broadened in range and strengthened in their hold upon our affections.

This method—the method of training conscience, or moral education, as it might perhaps be called in the narrower sense of the term—is that which lies at the foundation of the program presented in the February number of this journal under the title: *A Course in Moral Education for the High School*. The fundamental aim of this course is to develop the power and the habit of reflecting upon conduct, in the belief that with genuine acquaintance with its moral issues will grow love for the right, and that reflection inspired by love will produce both the strength and the skill that are needed for victory in the conflict with temptation. It is not presented as a competitor of any method of training through action, but as providing for a clarifying and broadening and thus strengthening of those ideals from which the life of habit derives its vanity, and, in the long run, its existence.

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## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE HIGH SCHOOL.

### ORGANIZING AND UTILIZING THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE STUDENTS.

JESSE B. DAVIS, A.M.,

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The cry of the day is not only for practical training but for general social efficiency. This demand comes from the industrial and commercial interests all about us, but it comes also in increasing power from the boys and girls themselves within our institutions.

Gradually school men have granted recognition of this growing social power. Athletics and fraternities came, and being ignored as educational possibilities, they degenerated into positive evils before educators awoke to their great mistake. Now we actually meet to consider how we can redeem ourselves through training our boys and girls in the principles of social efficiency.

Five years ago I assumed the charge of a school that was like the average city high school of that time. Fraternities were in absolute control of all social activities. Athletics was in little better condition. The Board of Education was determined to banish the fraternity system; drastic laws were passed and a war was imminent. But there has been no fight with the students. The fraternity problem is solved, and athletics along with many other activities have been elevated to a more dignified and worthy plane.

On the day following Thanksgiving of the year 1912 seven hundred and fifty boys representing one hundred and ten high schools in the state of Michigan assembled in the auditorium of the Grand Rapids Central High School. These boys were in training for Christian leadership. As guests of the Leadership Club of that school, these boys were met to discuss the problems of the home, the school, and the church. Under the direction of the State leaders of the Y. M. C. A. a most inspiring convention was brought to a close, and the boys left to spread an influence for higher standards of life and work among high school students throughout Michigan.

This Leadership Club who entertained the seven hundred and fifty delegates is composed of boys who are the actual leaders in the social life of the school. They are the presidents of the various boys' societies, the managers of athletic teams, the monthly publication, and other activities of the school. Every other Monday evening these boys meet to study the principles of leadership under the direction of the principal. Not long ago under the auspices of this Leadership Club a supper was given in the school lunch room to which all the boys of the school were invited for a conference. About two hundred and forty boys were present. Speeches were made by the boys on such topics as "What the Boy Expects of the School," "What the Boy Expects of the Community," "What the Boy Expects of the Home," etc. A few men were invited to speak in reply on what the community, the school, and the home expect of the boy. Altogether it was so wholesome that it is now planned to hold such a supper conference at regular intervals during the school year.

This club is but a factor of the scheme that includes the entire work and life of the school. Through the Department of English a complete course in Vocational and Moral Guidance is given in the endeavor to aid each pupil in finding that career

for which he was intended and in preparing himself for that calling in character, in training, and in social efficiency. Each department lends itself so far as it is able to further the vocational interest and ambition of the pupil. The whole atmosphere of the school is dominated by this central idea and is evident in the aim of the social organizations of the student body.

Recently ninety high school boys, known as the Junior Association of Commerce, met in regular business session at the auditorium of the Grand Rapids Association of Commerce. An address on "Railroading as a Vocation" was given by the local manager of the Pere Marquette Railroad. The boys were then taken by special train to the car shops, engine repair works, round house, and the Railroad Y. M. C. A., and were shown in detail the work and management of the plant. Every other week these boys have similar opportunities to study the vocational openings in and about that city. Many have been aided in this way in choosing the work for which they wish to prepare themselves.

The general plan of directing the many societies and activities in this school of fifteen hundred pupils is simple in outline. The principal is at the head as an ex-officio member of all advisory boards. For every student activity there is an advisory board composed of two teachers and at least two students. These boards are not for "control" or "censorship," but are advisory in the sense of directing or helping the various activities to higher standards of efficiency. The teachers on the advisory boards form for the principal an "advisory council," who help to determine the general social policy, to make awards of honors, and to attend to such matters as may properly be referred to them. Also the pupils who are presidents, managers, or official leaders of these activities and who are members of the advisory boards, form what is called the "Student Council." This body has certain duties to perform, may present nominations for student honors to the Advisory Council, and may initiate other matters to be referred to the Advisory Council for consideration. The boys on this Student Council form the nucleus for the Leadership Club for the boys, and the girls who are at the head of the various societies for girls form the basis of a Leadership Club for girls.

Student organizations are classified under the headings of "academic," "athletic," "social," "art," and "general" for the

purpose of preventing pupils from overdoing the social work to the detriment of the intellectual, as will be seen in the following rules adopted by the Board of Education.

RULES GOVERNING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL.

"I. All organizations composed wholly or in part of high school pupils or using in any manner the name of the school, or in any way connected with the Central High School of Grand Rapids, shall be under the control and direction of an Advisory Board composed of at least two members of the faculty and an equal number of student representatives from the individual society with the principal or vice-principal as an ex-officio member.

"II. This Advisory Board shall pass upon all matters involving the general policy of the organization and shall supervise the work of each society, using its influence in such a way as to avoid all objectionable features and to guide the members in developing higher standards of social efficiency.

"III. No pupil shall be permitted to belong to more than one organization of the same type at the same time except by the special action of the faculty Advisory Council.

"IV. No pupil shall be permitted to hold office or to become a candidate for office who is not eligible under the following rule: viz., that he or she shall have passed fourteen hours of work the previous two semesters and be carrying fourteen hours satisfactorily during the semester of candidacy for office.

"V. No pupil shall be permitted to hold office in more than one society at the same time, nor to serve in more than one executive capacity at the same time without the special action of the faculty Advisory Council.

"VI. Any question regarding the interpretation of these rules shall be decided by the Advisory Council."

The problem of directing the social activities of high school pupils is a matter of guidance which means much more than censorship or control. The teachers who act upon the advisory boards must be in sympathy with the students, they must have a special interest in the object of the particular organization, and they must have the ability to get into the spirit of the activity as one of the students, and through expert leadership guide them toward efficiency. Not all teachers in our high schools are qualified to do this work. As the movement to encourage these various activities has progressed in American schools those teachers who have had the interest and the ability to do the work have given of their time and energy without the prospect of material reward. They have been fully appreciated by the students themselves and in occasional schools by the broad-minded principal, but rarely by

the Board of Education. The teacher who could not or would not do this extra work in the interest of the pupils has looked upon the teacher who did such work as a very foolish person who was throwing away his or her time upon outside affairs and getting little in return. Today the teacher with a social mission is the one most desired by the principal, and his or her services are in a few places being recognized by the authorities at their full value. Such teachers should receive pay commensurate with their worth, and their duties should be arranged as a regular part of the curriculum and assigned to them in proper proportion. Just how this should be done is now being considered by our Advisory Council. When social efficiency is given its proper place in the general scheme of education and is standardized this recognition will be assured.

As the attempt is made to bring all the social activities of a large high school under the right kind of guidance, one is also impressed with the burden that efficient service brings upon a student who attempts a position of management or executive office, and who at the same time tries to keep up the regular academic requirements. In some schools efficient work in special lines has been recognized by allowing a certain credit toward graduation. Athletics, musical organizations, music studied outside of school, religion and Bible study done outside of the school, employment after school hours under the directions of the commercial department,—are among the activities receiving proper recognition by a few school authorities. Our Advisory Council has recently appointed a committee to work out a plan by means of which the students will be given credit toward graduation for the work they do, in dramatics, in music, in athletics, and in the other activities which give definite opportunity for social development.

We have also instituted a system of permanent records that indicates the attitude of the school toward vocational and social efficiency. On the reverse side of the regular scholarship record is a tabular form for recording every six months such data as may be obtained during that period along the following lines: "Plans for the Future," indicating the probable vocation or college; "Ability," showing evidence of some special aptitude, skill or tendency; "Personal History," giving such facts regarding health, travel, or employment as may aid in vocational counseling; "Character," recording all positive qualities, but merely referring to some teacher who knows the pupil

when the record is not favorable. This data is of greatest value to the counsellor who attempts to guide the pupil in deciding future action, and to the principal in recommending pupils either to college or to an employer.

This school is exceptionally well equipped with an athletic field, banquet room, co-operative store, and complete theatre seating fourteen hundred people. A moving picture machine has recently been added to the splendid gifts from the many loyal citizens and societies of the community.

Since beginning work upon the plan which I have outlined, marked improvement has taken place in the entire spirit of the institution. The secret society problem has been solved. The standards of athletics have been raised to fair play and honest effort. The very type of boy in athletics has been changed. The percentage of boys who smoke has been reduced from twenty-seven per cent to thirteen per cent in two years. An earnestness of purpose and a more serious attitude toward work is noticeable. Exceptional efficiency in conducting meetings, in impromptu speaking, in carrying out plans and campaigns, and in conducting business enterprises is evident in the fact that every society is financially in a prosperous condition. The Athletic Association handles over three thousand dollars annually. The monthly paper has a surplus of two hundred dollars. The dramatic society has one hundred and fifty, and the musical societies have purchased several hundred dollars worth of instruments. Faculty auditors are responsible for the proper handling of funds by the several student treasurers, and in this way splendid business training is afforded in a very practical manner.

Undoubtedly the formal study of vocational and moral guidance through English composition has laid the foundation for these results in social efficiency. Pupils are endeavoring to find that field of service in which they can make the best use of their talents; and along the opportunities for intellectual growth offered by the school they are eager to test their efficiency in the wide range of student activities. So far as we have been able to carry out our plans as outlined, we feel that some progress has been made along right lines, and that we are attempting to educate the whole boy and girl and to prepare each one for a definite place in the life of the community into which we send them.