Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science

Volume 15 | Number 1 Article 9

4-1947

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IN-SERVICE CLASSES FOR TEACHERS ON CONSERVATION

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The events of recent years have focused the attention of lay groups as well as teachers upon the importance of conserving our natural and human resources. Previous to World War II we heard and read many vivid portrayals of what was happening to the natural resources of the United States, of how man-made droughts and floods were on the increase over our land. We discussed the loss of the eroded hills and vanished grasslands, shuddering at the destruction wrought by ignorance and greed.

Generally, every teacher and administrator agreed that conservation teaching should be included in the curriculum. A few states had given conservation complete endorsement and included it as a part of the state course of study at every grade level. In Minneapolis at the elementary level we learned that the modern school-trained child with his keenness of new thoughts and new ways was bringing the subject of conservation into the schools. With his wide observation and varied reading abilities it could not be otherwise. His eager questions and explorations proved that he could not know his own community without meeting conservation problems.

In the secondary schools the responsibility was left to the science teachers, probably because it seemed to deal largely with the natural environment. However, to many there seemed to be some confusion as to the meaning of the term "Conservation" and the complexity of the problems seemed too removed from the lives of boys and girls.

Suddenly we were thrust into another war and as we slackened in the effort needed to win the war, we realized that resources are valuable only when they are developed and used to make life better. This we knew to be true of human as well as natural resources. Children must be taught to conserve through knowledge, training, and practice of good health and safety habits. Through the education of our young people we may hope to restore some of our lost natural resources and to conserve these remaining gifts that surround us. Now, more of us realize that conservation is a way of life, that it is the responsibility of all teachers, regardless of grade level or subject area, to help our youth see that there are scientific, social, and economic understandings which contribute toward the formation of desirable attitudes, attitudes that forbid sentimentality, attitudes that favor the use and not the abuse of natural and human resources.

During the school year 1945–46, the teachers and administrative staff of Minneapolis, under the leadership of Superintendent Willard E. Goslin, began to lay the ground work for a curriculum revision which would help boys and girls to learn how to live in a democratic society.

Necessarily the objectives or purposes would have to be considered first. Briefly they charged the school with the responsibility of providing ways of—

(1) Protecting and improving our democratic way of life.
(2) Offering a modern health program.
(3) Developing world understandings.
(4) Giving knowledge and skills with which to work.
(5) Training in economic competency.
(6) Directing an effective program for the improvement of attitudes and beliefs.
(7) Preserving and rebuilding of human and natural resources.

Naturally the physical plant and teaching equipment of the schools would have to be modernized if an aggressive program for curriculum revision was to be made effective. An understanding and well-trained corps of teachers would be of first importance. A program of in-service training was undertaken. Teachers, principals and consultants in various subject areas were selected to attend summer workshops at different universities and training centers.

The workshop chosen for conservation study was at the Audubon Nature Center, Greenwich, Connecticut. The course there promised to

be a practical and non-technical course for teachers of all levels desiring help in building a conservation program. Two were selected from Minneapolis to attend. The course was not a disappointment and the experience not only proved helpful and interesting but very inspirational.

In September, 1946, when the opening of schools was delayed due to the polio epidemic, a three day workshop was conducted in six centers for all the Minneapolis teaching staff. Voluntarily a group of teachers interested in conservation teaching met in each of the centers to consider conservation teaching problems and teaching techniques. Recommendations and resolutions for the improvement of teaching in this area were drawn up and presented to the administration at the close of the session.

These recommendations were as follows—

1. Teach conservation as a continuing subject from kindergarten through the twelfth grade in conjunction with science and social studies. (A minority report favored also one semester course, probably in biology, devoted solely to conservation.)

2. Use visual aids more widely to teach conservation. More conservation films should be added to our school film library.

3. Cooperate closely with such services offered by the public library as publicity for the museum, pictures, lectures and field trips.

4. Use the conservation theme in drawings, pictures, and posters on bulletin boards and in library displays.

5. Encourage science teachers to become familiar with the films, bulletins, and posters made available by the State Department of Conservation, and other sources including commercial enterprises.

6. Secure the cooperation of the Park Board and other similar or interested agencies for furthering popular interest in conservation.

7. Recommend a workshop to be set up next summer in the field of "Conservation of Natural Resources."

8. Recommend one or more teachers vitally interested in the field of conservation again be sent to a workshop under sponsorship of the National Audubon Society.

To activate this program of recommendations Mr. Goslin appointed a conservation commission of eight members including teachers and principals of both elementary and secondary levels, science and social science specialists. This committee has been active since January. One of the first services of this committee has been to sponsor an in-service course for teachers in Conservation of Natural Resources. This course is one of thirteen in-service courses in many areas offered to teachers during this school year.

The class has been attended by fifty teachers from all levels of instruction. The class has met on Wednesdays from 4:00 to 5:30. There were eight meetings in the series. Due to the limited number

of meetings, all phases of natural resources could not be studied, neither could any one of them be covered very thoroughly.

The course has aimed to bring to the teachers' attention recent information, the relationships needed to understand some of the problems, and to see modern methods and practices in dealing with conservation problems. At each class meeting copies of up to date bibliographies, film lists, and local resources available to teachers were given to members of the class. Four of the meetings were lectures and four were field trips. The program consisted of:

1. Lecture on the inter-relationships of plants and animals by Dr. Breckenridge. This lecture was given at the University Museum of Natural History where the habitat exhibits were used to illustrate actual conditions.

2. Lecture on the water resources of Minnesota by Walter Olson, Director, Division of Waters, State Conservation Department.

3. Lecture on the mineral resources of Minnesota by Dr. G. M. Schwarz, Director, Minnesota Geological Survey. This lecture was given in the Geology Building of the University of Minnesota, where Dr. Schwarz had the facilities to illustrate very effectively what he lectured about.

4. Lectures on soil erosion and discussion of classroom techniques for teaching soil conservation effectively by Mr. Bennett of the United States Soil Service and Mr. O. J. Muser of the United States Regional Soil Office, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

5. Field trip to the city filtration and water softening plant.

6. Field trip by bus studying the geology of Minneapolis region. Leader and lecturer of the trip was Mr. Milton Thompson, Director of the Minneapolis Science Museum.

7. Field trip to the Anoka Sand Dunes, leader, Dr. Breckenridge.

8. Field trip to the Carlos Avery Game Refuge and Public Hunting Grounds in Anoka and Chisago Counties. Mr. Taylor Huston, State Supervisor of Game, was in charge at the Refuge.

The teachers found the course helpful and interesting, evidenced by the fact that there was 100% attendance at all meetings. Other field trips showing phases of conservation teaching were suggested as well as additional resource materials.

This course is but the beginning of a series of non credit in-service courses dealing with conservation teaching which will follow next fall.

A four-week summer workshop at Marshall High School at the close of the present school year, will offer continued study in conservation of natural resources. More time will be available then for discussion, further field trips, and for formulating plans of integrating conservation problems in the common learnings program at the secondary level.

Present plans provide for sending more teachers to out-of-state workshops on conservation.

The cooperation and services of the members of the University staff, Minneapolis Science Museum and the director, Mr. Milton Thompson, the state and regional Conservation Departments, have made these courses and field trips helpful and valuable. All of us are most grateful for their generous help.

Certainly no group is better qualified to inspire an interest in conservation than the teaching group. "Their training, their purpose, and their hearts are for the benefit of tomorrow. Tomorrow needs an inheritance from today which has not been wasted by ignorance or made useless by satanic greed."

THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES IN THE NEW MINNESOTA SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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