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Activities of the Merrill Palmer School

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Activities of the Merrill Palmer School

By EDNA E. WALLS, Vice Dean of Home Economics

A new venture in education is the Merrill Palmer School, and we of Iowa State are most proud to have a part in it. Not only are we sending some of our senior women there, but our own vice-dean, Miss Edna Walls, is there for this year. The accompanying article sent by Miss Walls is a clear explanation and a pleasant glimpse of school activities.

A FEW years ago, Mrs. Lizzie Palmer, becoming profoundly convinced "that the welfare of any community is divinely and hence inseparably dependent upon the quality of its motherhood and the spirit and character of its homes," bequeathed her estate of approximately three million dollars for the founding and maintenance of the Merrill-Palmer Motherhood and Home Training School.

After a careful search for the right director for such a project, the trustees of the fund secured Miss Edna N. White, then head of the home economics department of Ohio State University. After a year's study of local conditions Miss White spent eight months abroad in further study and observation. Her major interest was centered about the infant schools and nursery schools of England. Upon her return in 1921 Miss White devoted her energies to securing a site and completing plans for the organization of the school. For about a year the activities consisted mainly of short unit courses in homemaking, nutrition and other projects in co-operation with public and parochial schools and social agencies.

In January, 1922, the first resident group of college students began their work at Merrill-Palmer school. They were senior women from the home economics department of Michigan Agricultural College. Since that time other institutions have availed themselves of the opportunity of having small groups of selected senior women receive three or four months instruction in child care problems at Merrill-Palmer School. Among the institutions may be listed:

Michigan Agricultural College.

Ohio State University.

University of Nebraska.

Pennsylvania State College.

Antioch College.

Cornell University.

University of Missouri.

University of Minnesota.
Teachers College, Columbia University.
University of Michigan.
Iowa State College of Agriculture and
Mechanic Arts.

In addition to the undergraduate group about a dozen graduate students have been in residence since 1922.

The work is planned to give "general instruction for women in the problems of childhood" and to train "specialists, either teachers, or research students. The courses so far offered have chiefly to do with the first object." A brief survey of these courses taken from the 1923-24 announcement will enable the reader to better understand the foundation which is laid for the use of an Americanized Nursery School as a Child Care laboratory.

Child Health and Nutrition

The lecture work includes a study of the physical development, general hygiene and feeding of the child during the period of infancy and the pre-school age. Studies are made of the physical status and dietary needs of each child in the nursery school and careful records of individual physical developments are kept.

Laboratory includes assisting in physical examination, planning and service of daily meals of children, keeping records and making individual dietary studies of each child with necessary modifications for correction of physical disabilities.

The field trips include visits to hospitals and animal nutrition experimental laboratories.

Home Administration and Practice House

Consideration of efficient home management including money and time problems. A practice apartment is provided at the school and the students perform the tasks which are necessary in an average home, keeping records of all expenditures in money and time, and securing practical experience in marketing, preparation of family meals, and care of the house. This provides an opportunity for the student to acquire practical experience in adjusting her home care problems to her other activities which, in this experiment, includes care of children.

Sociological Aspects of Child Problems

Lectures include a discussion of the social needs and problems of children and the family as they relate to the community; the agencies and institutions dealing with these problems are considered, with a brief presentation of some of the remedies proposed for social ills. Occasional lectures are given by specialists in charge of various types of social work.

Field work includes visits to agencies dealing with children and family problems with field reports.

Educational Methods for Young Children

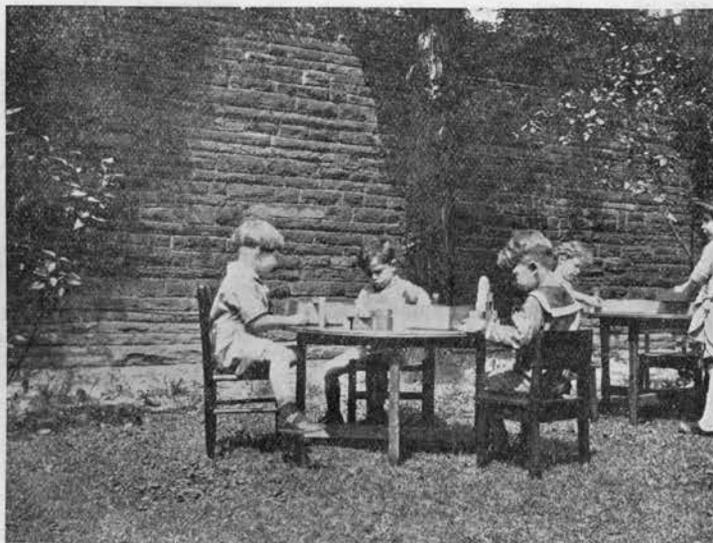
The course covers the use of Montessori and Froebel materials, art, dramatics, stories and music for young children, as well as the use of tools and of a variety of occupational materials. The educational importance of projects carried out by the children is stressed.

Child Psychology and Child Training

The lectures cover a study of the mental development of the child up to five years of age. Special stress is given to a consideration of the emotional life of the child, and to problems of behavior. The history and theory of the Nursery School movement is also discussed.

Laboratory practice consists in assisting the regular teachers of the Nursery School with the care and management of the thirty children in the school. Opportunity is also given to observe the administration of mental tests of children.

(Continued on page 12)



The material equipment of the nursery school has been planned so that children may use it. These youngsters are happily engaged with blocks.

Activities of the Merrill Palmer School

(Continued from page 1)

Each student makes a careful study of the development and personality of four or five of the children.

The major interests of both faculty and students at Merrill-Palmer School center about the Americanized Nursery School. As a Child Care laboratory it offers an unparalleled opportunity for college women to secure first-hand knowledge of the physical, mental, social and spiritual development of young children. The students also learn from study and experience how to meet various problems which may arise in the training of children. As a Nursery School it functions to assist the home in providing an atmosphere and environment most favorable to the normal development of the normal child.

At present thirty-six children between the ages of two and five years have the privilege of spending the hours from 9 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the afternoon in the school environment. Upon enrollment the family history is taken, each child is given a complete physical examination and as soon as possible, a mental test. At intervals additional examinations and tests are given and accurate records of all findings are kept. These and the daily written observations of each child form the basis for the modification of the home and the school environment to meet individual needs.

Frequent conferences, both regular and special, are held for discussion of problems in the nursery school. It is not unusual for the physician, the nutrition specialist, the psychologist and the head teacher of the Nursery School to confer concerning the best method of handling particular tendencies noted in the individual child. Since home and school must co-operate if satisfactory results are to be obtained frequent conferences are held with the parents. It is definitely understood that it is not the purpose of the Nursery School to take the place of the home but rather to afford the parents an opportunity of using accurate scientific knowledge as a basis for providing the best possible home conditions for their children.

The material equipment of the Nursery School has been planned so that little children can use it. In the cloak room you will find small lockers with low hooks; in the school room, low tables, chairs, cupboards and book shelves; in the toilet room, low basins, stools and mirrors; also towel, comb and tooth brush hooks within the children's reach; in the sleeping rooms, small low beds. In each of these rooms individual possessions have attached to them small round tags, with pictures on them. Even the smallest child soon learns to recognize the picture which marks his possessions and is quite particular that his right of possession be respected.

As each child arrives in the morning he is examined by a nurse from the Detroit Board of Health. If he shows evidences of cold or other infectious disease he is taken to the isolation room until he can be sent home. Parents understand that he cannot return until the school physician is satisfied that there is no danger of infection.

The removal of coats, hats and rubbers is an interesting morning performance. Even tho the children are small they need very little help and often protest strenuously if an older person who does not understand the policy of the school, attempts to assist them. The smaller children are sometimes helped by the larger ones, which proves a more satisfactory arrangement to all concerned. On the low table in the hallway thru which the children pass, stands a pitcher of water and a tray of small glasses. The opportunity to pour their own glass of water is usually sufficient inducement to secure the desired result.

As a child enters the Nursery School room he may find a number of the children already sitting on the floor in a circle, possibly rolling a ball to each other, singing a song, or listening to a story, or perhaps they may be "doing what the music tells them to"—skipping marching, running or walking. Probably a few of the older ones will be preparing the tables for the morning lunch. He joins which ever group he chooses, or he may sit down and watch the others awhile.

Soon it is "news time" and all the children are eager to join the group seated in a circle on the floor. Usually at least half a dozen children have "news" which they show or occasionally tell. It is a thrilling moment when Margaret is selected to bring her news and skips away to her locker returning with a doll, picture or some other cherished treasure hidden behind her. As she stands at the doorway she calls "All shut eyes" and the children "hide their eyes" until she again stands within the circle and calls "Ready." These bits of news afford interesting opportunities to the teachers and sometimes call forth astounding expressions from the children.

When the "news circle" breaks up the children take their places for the morning lunch. Waiters are selected and soon half a dozen little tots are carrying sherry glasses of fruit juice (containing cod liver oil) to their companions at the tables.

But look—three-year-old Johnny has tipped his tray a little and the glass and its contents are on the floor. He turns around, puts his tray on the serving table, picks up the glass and puts it on the tray, then leaves the room and soon returns with a pail and mop cloth saying to the head teacher as he passes, "It wasn't a very bad accident, was it, Miss Henton?" She smiles and replies, "No, not a very bad one, Johnny" and Johnny proceeds to wipe up the fruit juice and then takes the pail and cloth back to its place.

When he returns he goes on with his serving as tho nothing had happened. By this time most of the fruit juice (cod liver oil included) has disappeared as if by magic and each child has carried his own glass back to the table and deposited his paper napkin in the waste basket.

It is now time for "work" and after returning from the toilet (a routine performance cared for at least three times daily) each child chooses his own work and soon two busy groups are seen at a variety of occupations. The older children usually go upstairs to the "block room," while the younger ones work in the school room with materials better suited to their capacities. After about an hour at varied indoor occupations, they

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Chocolate Cream Coffee Is More Economical Because It Goes So Much Farther, Says This User

Minneapolis, Minn., (Special)—"It has a finer flavor, is stronger but not bitter, does not require any clearing and has a good color even if milk is used instead of cream," says Mrs. Frank Springstead of 2414 26th Ave. So., in regard to Chocolate Cream Coffee.

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put on their wraps and go outdoors for "play." Swings, see-saws, wagons, velocipedes, kiddie cars, slides and pile utensils are quickly requisitioned and the happy morning continues.

About eleven-thirty the children go in, take off their wraps and each one carefully washes his face and hands and combs his hair. He now joins the story circle or if he prefers looks at picture books or works quietly at one of the tables. The story is followed by music and then the children troop off to their little beds for a ten minute rest before dinner.

Some of the older ones are granted the special privilege of coming down early to set the tables for dinner. When this task is finished a messenger gladly goes upstairs to announce that "dinner is ready." A teacher or student takes her place at the head of each table and with rare exceptions the children choose their own places. Grace is said or sung, waiters are chosen and thirty hungry children are soon eating a dinner which has been planned and prepared by those who have made a special study of the nutrition of children. The following menu is typical:

Cream of pea soup	
Baked potato	Stewed tomatoes
Lettuce sandwiches	Milk
(whole wheat bread)	
Stewed apricots	

The week's menus are typed in advance and a copy sent to each home. In many instances the mothers request the assistance of the nutrition expert in planning home meals for the children. At intervals, typical breakfast and supper menus are sent to all the homes.

After dinner the children take a two hour nap, upon awakening have their lunch of milk, then play out doors until it is time to go home.

This brief outline gives a very inadequate picture of the Merrill-Palmer activities. To fully appreciate what the school means to children, students and mothers, one must not only see the activities but also participate in them.

The Merrill-Palmer Nursery school has been in existence less than two years. Even in this brief period an intense interest has been aroused among those who are vitally concerned with problems of childhood. Psychologists, pediatricians, nutrition specialists, educators, social workers, nurses and mothers are among those who have come individually and in groups to try to find out what it is all about. Can it be that all are interested because each group sees here an attempt to combine the efforts of all in a careful, scientific study of the whole child? What the ultimate outcome of this new venture in education may not be, not even the most sanguine are yet ready to predict.

Specific Helps on Everyday Teaching Problems

(Continued from page 2)

grades shall health instruction be given? In what courses should health work be stressed? Perhaps if we outline the aims which we are setting for ourselves as Home Economics teachers, we may find more opportunity than we may think possible.

The Committee on Home Economics Education reporting for the American

Home Economics association, suggests these aims:

1. The preparation of the individual to apply to personal habits of living and to homemaking, the fundamental principles of the natural sciences, art, psychology, sociology and economics.

2. To equip the students with facts, processes and attitudes which will render their lives more effective.

3. To improve the health and living habits thru both incidental and direct instruction in food and clothing.

The school curriculum itself may have a broader plan. But the effective curriculum may well include the aims of the home economics courses supplementing the general health work. In a recent survey made in the Ames high school, we found the following conditions: Out of 382 students, 56 (or 14 per cent) were normal, 121 (or 32 per cent) were overweight and 205 (or 53 per cent) were underweight.

The home economics teachers might well take an inventory of the school. Other teachers and students once interested will give much assistance. A faculty discussion will show opportunities in other courses. Here may be found an opportunity, a chance for real service with an abundance of opportunity in the courses now offered, with a vital contact relation in the lives of the students. The home economics teacher must recognize and analyze the need of the community which she serves. She must develop an attitude of mind which is flexible and open. She should use the wealth of material which is essential to the life of her students.

The old statement said that "students go out and teach as they were taught, not as they were taught to teach." The modern educator would change it, "students go out to teach as they were taught to teach, even as they themselves were taught." Applying this to our health ideal we might say, "students go out to live as they are taught to live, even as the teachers themselves lived."

Our Travels in France

(Continued from page 7)

turrets and of long standing. These homes are handed down from generation to generation. One French woman of great wealth was very interested in extension work for farm people; in fact, she became president of the farm women's clubs in the community near Dieppe. She invited us to her home. This was the first glimpse of a very lonely, typically French, mansion. All around the grounds was a high stone wall covered on top with broken bottles which meant woe to

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