Educational Psychology In Action

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Educational Psychology

In Action

Psychology students apply knowledge at the Franklin Opportunity School, reports Victoria McKibben

At THE Franklin Opportunity School in Ames, Iowa State students have a practical laboratory for developing psychological and educational ideas and getting first-hand knowledge of teaching techniques.

Pupils enrolled at the opportunity school are taught by college women, under the direction of Mrs. Frederick L. Wolters, principal. They are given individual instruction in all lines of work included in the curriculum of the regular Ames grade schools, with the idea of either finding out why they have not been doing their work and bringing them up to average with correction, or, in all cases, fitting them to live normal lives.

Teachers for the school are enlisted entirely on a volunteer basis. Each student putting in a minimum of 30 hours of satisfactory work is given one hour credit in psychology.

Since most of the workers are new at their job, the Psychology Department has prepared a pamphlet of complete information about how to teach the slow-learning students with whom they are working at the opportunity school. With this as a guide and Mrs. Wolters and Dr. J. E. Evans, of the Psychology Department, as counselors, the teachers go on the job.

No two of the 15 or 20 students at Franklin are of the same advancement in all lines of work, so instruction must be mainly individual. The students range in age from 8 to 16 years.

Diaries of their work are kept by the teachers for every hour spent at the school. At the end of the quarter they make, from their own observations, a report on rules and regulations to be applied.

Women who have worked at the opportunity school are enthusiastic about the experience. The great cooperation among students is the outstanding thing they notice. With the factor of serious competition ruled out by the basis of enrollment at the school, the students become helpful to each other and interested in their work, and discipline becomes comparatively simple.

The Franklin school building was once a farm house. With conversion one of the large rooms was made into classrooms with movable desks. These the students may place wherever they want to sit, thus making the set-up less formal than in other schools. Other rooms are outfitted for shop work and crafts.

The rest of the house is kept much like the home it was before the remodeling. This gives the students a chance to learn not only their academic work, but also good habits in everyday living about the home, according to Mrs. Wolters, who has taught in similar, though larger schools for several years.

Recreational features of the school day at Franklin are music lessons, dancing and recess play. The students are enthusiastic about songs with rhythm and cowboy songs in general.

Around the old farmhouse is a playground and large garden. Play outside is organized under the direction of the student teachers. When the students meet athletically, competition becomes a serious thing and they really work at their boxing and baseball games.

In the spring the students set up hot-beds and sell several dollars worth of plants to townspeople. They plant their own garden with the hothouse plants, too, using the early vegetables in the spring for their noon meals and canning the fall vegetables. Home economics majors have an opportunity to teach their subjects to the girls at the school. Due to the manpower shortage, they will be supervising the planting of the garden this year.

Iowa State women working at the opportunity school are practicing social service work, and through their close contact with each student, are learning what may be expected from the slow students.

Through individual training they are aiding students, handicapped from the beginning, to hold respectable positions in society.

While the school hours are the same at the opportunity school as at the other Ames schools, at Franklin the students all stay at the school for lunch. This serves as a way to teach the children to like wholesome foods and to use good table manners.