



American Vacation Schools of 1912

A Report

By Clarence Arthur Perry

In three years the number of vacation schools has nearly trebled. In 1909 we could find them in only 56 cities; in 1912 they were reported by 141 municipalities. Since they are well distributed throughout the country and show each year a fairly regular rate of increase they can be regarded no longer as a fad, but as a development that is well rooted in bona fide social benefits. A stampede may result from a real or a false alarm, but a slow and steady movement receives its impetus only from genuine human needs.

In opening their classrooms again immediately after the June graduation exercises, school superintendents were moved by the humanitarian impulse to draw children in off the streets. Accordingly they set up activities and arranged programs with that specific purpose in mind. The experience gained through these new methods and under the new conditions has had important effects upon their educational theories, effects which have already begun to show in their educational practice. This general fact is stated by Assistant Superintendent John D. Shoop in his report upon the Chicago vacation schools for 1911:

The pleasure which attends the awakening of the consciousness of the boy or girl to an appreciation of his own creative and constructive abilities has modified the conception of the office of these schools. From the original purpose which expressed itself in establishing the vacation school as a protective agency against the influences of the daily street life of the child, we turn to the greater possibility of making these schools a positive and co-operative factor in the general educative process as represented by our system of public instruction.

This tendency is already evidenced by such radical changes in school administration that before presenting the statistics of vacation schools for last summer it seems worth while to set down, categorically, some of the significant points in the more fundamental development which has grown out of them.

How Vacation Schools are Affecting Elementary Education

1. They have demonstrated the kind of school activity that secures the pupil's enthusiastic attendance, even under unpropitious weather conditions.

Regardless of the fact that the thermometer registered nearly 100 degrees in the shade some of the time, the attendance was better than for any previous year,—the total number enrolled being 222,—the average membership, 152.32, and the per cent. of attendance, 84.75...Some of the boys were so interested in what *they were making* that they begged to "come early," and "stay after."—Principal Flora E. Hinman, Medford, Mass., 1911.

2. They have proved that the summer months can be used by pupils in making up deficiencies in studies or for getting ahead in them. As the figures on page 8 show, over 80 per cent. of the vacation schools last year offered academic work.

Number of pupils taking final examinations	6,828
Number of pupils recommended for promotion.....	5,312
Number of pupils who did not lose any time by absence....	3,856

—From 1911 report of District Superintendent Edward W. Stitt, New York City.



Learning an Important Part of Homemaking

3. Their success has paved the way for the all-year school.

See "Education," June, 1907, for description of a twelve-months plan carried out for three years in Bluffton, Ind., by Superintendent Wm. A. Wirt, now at Gary, Ind. Superintendent Wm. H. Elson proposed a similar plan for the Cleveland schools in the "Journal of Education" of January 5, 1911. Superintendent Roland B. Daniel, of Columbus, Ga., is keeping the Primary Industrial School open all the year around. In Newark, N. J., Superintendent Addison B. Poland placed two elementary schools upon an all-year basis in June, 1912.

His report for 1911-12 gives a full account of these schools and shows how they enable pupils to complete eight grades' work in six years. The following points are illustrated by quotations from the reports of the two principals in charge of these schools.

4. Regular school work during July and August need not be harmful to the pupils' health.

The medical inspector watched the health of the children very carefully and did not report any injury due to school work; on the contrary, the health of the children undoubtedly improved. This was due in a measure to the work of the doctor, and especially to the work of the nurse in treating infected sores and minor infectious diseases and in giving talks on personal hygiene. The children came to school with clean hands and faces, with neatly combed hair and with clean clothes, showing that correct habits of personal hygiene, which are often nearly destroyed by the long summer vacation, had been duly inculcated.—Newark Report, 1911-12, page 78.

5. Teaching voluntary pupils during the hot months does not necessarily hurt the teacher.

Most of the teachers reported that they felt less exhausted than at the close of the regular school year in June. This was no doubt largely due to the fact that the troublesome and lazy pupils did not enroll for the summer months. There was very little illness among teachers. In fact the average number of absences per month was very much less than during the year from September to June.—Newark Report, 1911-12, page 78.

6. A large proportion of the pupils want to attend school during vacation time.

The number enrolled was about 70 per cent. of the normal enrollment....The average attendance for July was 92 per cent. on the enrollment, being higher than that for June. The percentage for August was still higher, several classes having an attendance of 100 per cent....There was no compulsion.—Newark Report, 1911-12, pages 78-9.

7. Teachers of summer courses get experience which causes them to want to vitalize and make more practical the instruction of the other ten months.

Eliminating useless subject matter—not subjects—will save a great deal of time. Thus if arithmetic is to be of any practical value to pupils after they leave school, they must be able to perform the fundamental operations rapidly and accurately, and to solve practical business problems; but such useless topics as indirect cases of interest, discount, insurance and commission, seem rather a means of confusing the child's mind than of serving any useful purpose.—Principal Pitkin, page 79.

The pleasanter side of school work was emphasized, wherever possible; thus, songs in music; nature work in drawing; games in physical training, were substituted for work of a more formal character. Probably the greatest change made was in the type of occupations employed in the second, third and fourth years. Raffia, basketry and other kinds of manual work were introduced in place of much of the ordinary written work. *This has been my first opportunity to try this experiment on an extensive scale in the primary grades. I should like permission to continue it during the remaining terms of the year.*—Principal Gleason, page 81.

Results of the Inquiry

The questionnaire upon social centers which was sent out from this office on June 20, 1912, to 774 superintendents of schools contained inquiries also upon vacation schools. The 337 replies received were last fall supplemented by special inquiries to the number of 45, so that information was finally received from 382 cities.



Acquiring the Right Attitude toward Humble Tasks

1. Of these, 141 reported vacation classes in some of their school buildings. The names of the cities follow:

Alliance, O.	Fall River, Mass.	Passaic, N. J.
Altoona, Pa.	Fort Smith, Ark.	Paterson, N. J.
Anderson, Ind.	Grand Forks, N. D.	Piqua, O.
Ardmore, Okla.	Great Falls, Mont.	Pittsburgh, Pa.
Ashtabula, O.	Hammond, Ind.	Plainfield, N. J.
Attleboro, Mass.	Hartford, Conn.	Plymouth, Mass.
Auburn, N. Y.	Hastings, Neb.	Port Huron, Mich.
Bayonne, N. J.	Henderson, Ky.	Portsmouth, N. H.
Bellingham, Wash.	Hibbing, Minn.	Pottstown, Pa.
Billings, Mont.	Indianapolis, Ind.	Poughkeepsie, N. Y.
Binghamton, N. Y.	Iowa City, Ia.	Providence, R. I.
Birmingham, Ala.	Jackson, Tenn.	Pueblo, Col. (Dist. 1)
Bloomfield, N. J.	Jamestown, N. Y.	Richmond, Ind.
Bloomington, Ill.	Jersey City, N. J.	Richmond, Va.
Bluefield, W. Va.	Kalamazoo, Mich.	Rochester, N. Y.
Boston, Mass.	Kansas City, Mo.	Rockford, Ill.
Boulder, Colo.	Lima, O.	Rockland, Mass.
Bridgeton, N. J.	Little Falls, N. Y.	Rutland, Vt.
Brockton, Mass.	Little Rock, Ark.	St. Joseph, Mo.
Brookline, Mass.	Los Angeles, Cal.	St. Louis, Mo.
Buffalo, N. Y.	Lynn, Mass.	St. Paul, Minn.
Calumet, Mich.	Mankato, Minn.	Salem, O.
Cambridge, Mass.	Mansfield, O.	Salem, Ore.
Carthage, Mo.	Medford, Mass.	Saugus, Mass.
Champaign, Ill.	Melrose, Mass.	Sheboygan, Wis.
Charleston, S. C.	Memphis, Tenn.	Sioux City, Ia.
Chattanooga, Tenn.	Meriden, Conn.	South Bend, Ind.
Chicago, Ill.	Middletown, Conn.	Southbridge, Mass.
Cincinnati, O.	Minneapolis, Minn.	Springfield, Ill.
Cleveland, O.	Missoula, Mont.	Springfield, Mass.
Columbia, S. C.	Mobile, Ala.	Springfield, O.
Columbus, Ga.	Montclair, N. J.	Steubenville, O.
Columbus, Miss.	Muskegon, Mich.	Stevens Point, Wis.
Columbus, O.	Nashville, Tenn.	Syracuse, N. Y.
Covington, Ky.	Newark, N. J.	Tampa, Fla.
Crawfordsville, Ind.	New Bedford, Mass.	Taylor, Pa.
Danvers, Mass.	New Britain, Conn.	Toledo, O.
Decatur, Ill.	New Orleans, La.	Trenton, N. J.
Delaware, O.	Newport News, Va.	Vancouver, Wash.
Detroit, Mich.	Newton, Mass.	Watertown, N. Y.
East Liverpool, O.	New York, N. Y.	Wausau, Wis.
East Orange, N. J.	Niagara Falls, N. Y.	Wheeling, W. Va.
Eau Claire, Wis.	Niles, O.	Whitinsville, Mass.
Elizabeth City, N. C.	Norwood, O.	Williamsport, Pa.
Elkhart, Ind.	Oskaloosa, Ia.	Winchester, Mass.
Englewood, N. J.	Parkersburg, W. Va.	Worcester, Mass.
Everett, Mass.	Pasadena, Cal.	Yonkers, N. Y.



Developing Constructive Ability through Play

2. The total number of buildings used as vacation schools in these cities was over 450.

3. Sessions were held six days a week in 11 cities, five days in 120 cities, four days in 3, three days in 1, one day in 2 (no report from 4).

4. In a little over one-half (76) of the cities the classes ran 6 weeks, and in one-fifth 8 weeks. Six places reported 10 weeks and one $3\frac{1}{2}$; the others came in between these figures.

5. Vacation schools have been in existence on an average of four seasons. They are oldest in Newark, where they were established in 1885.

6. The average number of teachers in each school lies between 6 and 7.

7. The sources of teachers' compensation were as follows:

	<i>No. of Cities</i>
Board of Education	89
Other Governmental Bodies	8
Tuition Fees	28
Contributions from Individuals and Associations.....	15

8. The appropriations for vacation-school work totalled over \$300,000. This amount does not include certain cities where the fund is not separated from that used for pure playground work.

9. Academic work was provided in 114 cities, and hand-work alone in 26 (one not reporting).

Among the cities whose school reports include interesting accounts of vacation-school work may be mentioned the following: Buffalo, N. Y.; Cambridge, Mass.; Chicago, Ill.; Cleveland, O.; Newark, N. J.; New York, N. Y.; St. Louis, Mo.

Valuable information may also be obtained from the reports of the Pittsburgh Playground Association and the Los Angeles Playground Commission.

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