DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD IN INSTITUTIONS FOR DEPENDENTS

MONOGRAPH V

TO ACCOMPANY ROUND TABLE PLAN FOR TRUSTEES OF INSTITUTIONS FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN

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The Round Table Plan has been prepared to assist boards of trustees of institutions caring for dependent children in their administrative duties. It comprises eight studies, or round tables, each of which is devoted to a vital problem of institutional management.

To discuss the questions raised, the Department of Child-Helping of the Russell Sage Foundation is preparing a series of eight monographs, one to accompany each of the Round Tables.

The following monographs are now available:

I. "The Job of Being a Trustee," by Dr. Hastings H. Hart.

II. "Admission and Discharge of Children," by Dr. Hastings H. Hart.

III. "Physical Care of Dependent Children in Institutions," by C. Spencer Richardson.

IV. "Education of Dependent Children in Institutions," by C. Spencer Richardson.

The Round Table Plan and the Monographs can be obtained from the Department of Child-Helping at five cents a copy.

Development of the Individual Child in Institutions for Dependents

By C. Spencer Richardson
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"All mechanical devices which might tend to develop our children into machine-like men and women, without initiative and originality of their own, are wholly absent in our discipline. Our children are not brought up to bathe and dress and eat and play and study and work and arise and sit to the tap of the bell."

"The care and training have been planned so that the dependent might be developed into an independent, self-respecting, self-supporting, self-directing, law-abiding, useful citizen."

These words of two superintendents of orphanages state the leading feature of progressive institutional care of dependent children—the development of the individual child.

The majority of institutions have made a vital mistake in the training of their wards. They have treated the children as a mass and not as individuals, as a group and not as separate persons. Their system has provided for a uniformity of feeding, clothing, training, and education. The activities of the children have been conducted by squads, with the children marching here and there and everywhere at "the tap of the bell."

This wholesale method of care and education has had its inevitable results. The children have been marked by passiveness, timidity, uncertainty, and repression—a poor foundation indeed for those who at sixteen years or even earlier must go forth to earn their own living.

The following monograph suggests how different branches of institutional training—religious, moral, economic, recreational, and social—can be made to center upon each child and thus make possible in him a normal growth of the qualities required later for sturdy, efficient citizenship.

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL TRAINING

No class of children needs thorough religious and moral education more urgently than dependents. Practically unaided, the dependent must not only support himself but must face the even

sterner test of temptation. His manhood is soon tried repeatedly by temptations to dishonesty, intemperance, immorality, gambling, vice in a hundred attractive forms. No matter how well equipped he may be, academically and vocationally, if he cannot master these forces of evil he is soon overwhelmed. How can an institution so help to strengthen his character as to enable him to weather the storms?

First, it can give him personal religious instruction. The formal church service is good as far as it goes. Many institutions send their wards regularly with advantage to services in nearby churches, the denomination depending upon the religious faith of the child's parents; others conduct their own services, for which they either provide a stated preacher or else a succession of different preachers. A weekly change in the pulpit is unsatisfactory for the reason that it does not permit the preacher to become acquainted with the spiritual needs of the children or to give systematic connected religious instruction. Secular education arranged upon such a haphazard plan would not be thought of: why should religious education, of at least equal importance, be so conducted?

But the formal service should be supplemented by a closer, more direct instruction. The Bible school with its opportunity for holding up to groups of children great religious truths and noble characters; the Sunday evening hour with its singing of favorite hymns and discussion of everyday problems; the young people's prayer service with its encouragement to take a public stand for God and right; systematic instruction in morals and religion on Sundays or week days; the heart to heart talk between adult and child with its help towards self-mastery—these are some of the means by which each child can be led to higher spiritual levels.

Furthermore, it is of the utmost importance that the members of the staff shall be earnestly religious. Boys and girls are very imitative. If a cottage father and a cottage mother set a right example of godly living they exert an immeasurable influence for good upon the children.

Second, an institution can give to each child sex education suited to his years and mental development.* The subject is

* Forbush, Wm. Byron: Child Study and Child Training. New York, 1915. Charles Scribner's Sons. $1.00.

usually considered so difficult and delicate that the children are left to acquire in a random way some of the most sacred facts of life. It may be safely assumed that the average child of ten years has picked up in one way or another fairly complete information upon birth, parenthood, and kindred matters, and that his mental attitude toward them is somewhat morbid.

Some institutions have attempted to meet the problem by providing periodical lectures by physicians for the boys and girls separately. This blanket method does not suffice to meet the difficulties of the individual child. No child will ask the questions in the presence of his mates which he longs and needs to have answered. Furthermore a public lecture on sex matters is apt to arouse in children unnecessary and unwholesome curiosity.

It is believed that the problem of sex education is best solved for most dependent children by the following methods:

First, each new child upon entrance to an institution should receive a specialized medical examination, and surgical treatment if needed.

Second, each child should be taught to bathe regularly. Cleanliness of mind is apt to accompany cleanliness of body. Children should bathe at least once a week in winter and twice a week in summer; and a daily bath every morning upon arising is most desirable for strong children of twelve and upwards.

Third, the daily schedule of each child should be so arranged that his time is occupied fully with wholesome tasks or recreation. A child thinks of but one thing at a time, concentratedly, intensely, whole-heartedly. If his mind is bent upon carpentering, gardening, or baseball it has no room at the moment for undesirable thoughts. The superintendent of a state public school said recently:

"I have a boy who lives for two things—caring for our horses and catching on the baseball team. I believe that he thinks of nothing else."

Reference will be made later to children's organizations that can help to form the daily institutional schedule.

Fourth, each child should receive sex instruction from a carefully selected adult through a private interview. One institution employs a person known as the "guardian," whose duties are to conduct the religious services; become closely acquainted with each boy; help to start and supervise organizations such as a

glee club, literary society, or debating society; promote entertainments of different kinds; and by winning his way into the inner chamber of each boy's thoughts assist him to a sane, healthy attitude toward religious and sex matters.

Another institution delegates the private interviews with its boys and girls to one of the cottage mothers. The superintendent states that her frank talks have influenced a number of boys to overcome vicious habits. A woman who can deal successfully in this matter with both sexes is rare; as a rule the children should be instructed by adults of their own sex.

What method of correction should institutions use? Should corporal punishment be employed, and if so under what conditions? Or can more satisfactory results be obtained through other methods? These are important questions in connection with the moral training of the individual child.

The real purpose of correction should be kept clearly in mind. It is to reform, not to punish. It is so to influence a child that he shall be made to realize the social wrong that he has committed and be deterred from repeating the offense. To be thus effective an act of discipline must appear to a child to be just. Whatever discipline arouses in a child bitterness, resentment, or a desire for revenge fails to that extent of realizing its main end.

While no state, as far as the writer knows, has forbidden corporal punishment through legal enactment, a strong reaction against it has been steadily spreading throughout the country in all forms of educational and correctional work for children. Many local and state authorities of public schools have ruled that corporal punishment, in the sense of striking with the hand or rod, shall be used only as a last resort, and be administered solely by the school executive or his representative. Many state boards of charities and correction have taken a similar stand regarding discipline in institutions for dependents and delinquents.

Attention should be called to the fact that corporal punishment in the widest sense of the term means any punishment that causes physical pain or discomfort. Restricted diet, standing for hours upon a crack, "setting-up" exercises imposed to the extent of producing physical distress, prolonged confinement in a room that has only a hard floor whereon to sit, and other like penalties are as truly forms of corporal punishment as are the blows inflicted

by a rod or strap, and may cause the same mental effect upon the recipient.

We have come to realize that the inflicting of bodily pain usually does not reform; that on the contrary it arouses resentment, stubbornness, and cunning; and that it tends to brutalize the punisher. We have come to see that a more effective way to educate a child's moral nature is through an appeal to his reason, self-respect, honor, loyalty, or affection.

Some institutions have found a modified form of self-government to be a great help in maintaining discipline. The children are allowed to choose their own officers, including a judge who hears the cases of misbehavior tried, and metes out justice under the supervision of an adult; or the executive council as a whole may act as the judicial body. Under this plan the children voluntarily take upon themselves a considerable amount of responsibility for enforcing law and order. Experience has shown that children of ten or eleven years of age co-operate zealously in enforcing regulations; that the acceptance of responsibility tends to develop in them a respect for law and an appreciation of its need; and that where this plan is used offences diminish in number, due to the fact that the incentive for law-breaking is largely lost when the law is maintained by a child's own mates.

The Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Orphan Asylum, at Pleasantville, N. Y., has worked out an elaborate system of self-government. Each of the 18 cottages, housing 32 children, is organized into a Cottage Republic, with all of its officials elected by the children save the president, who is appointed by the superintendent; the Cottage Republics of the boys combine in turn in a Boys' Republic and those for the girls in a Girls' Republic; and occasionally the two larger Republics unite regarding matters affecting all the children. The superintendent states that the plan has been most successful in developing self-reliance and judgment among the children and in securing their hearty co-operation in maintaining good conduct.

A reasonable deprivation of privileges is an effective means of correction. The culprit may be forbidden to join his fellows in a trip to a ball game, circus, play, or some other attractive entertainment. He may be debarred from a visit to the home of friends or relatives. He may be cut off from a particularly enticing article of food such as a dessert, although this form of deprivation

should be used sparingly in order that the child's body may not be robbed of a necessary food element.

It is vital that correction of faults in children be made with sympathy and kindness. The human plant needs plenty of sunshine, the sunshine of personal encouragement, interest, and love. The writer vividly recalls visiting a certain institution at the noon hour. The children were found seated in silence at long tables in a dark dining hall. A stern faced woman in charge said sharply: "If I hear another child talk you will all lose your dinner." A gloomy cowed look came over the faces of the children that was painful to watch. One felt that the milk of human kindness was missing in that institution.

ECONOMIC TRAINING

A weak point in most institutions for dependents is the failure to provide economic training. Before entrance the children are too young to understand the value of money, or else, because of the poverty of their homes and the fact that they have not yet worked for wages, they have had practically no experience with it. During their institutional stay their expenses are usually paid for them and the only opportunity they have of actually seeing and handling money is when upon rare occasions a friend or visitor gives them a coin or two. Most of the children learn absolutely nothing even of its appearance, to say nothing of such matters as cost, wages, saving, and the simplest forms of banking. As Sallie McBride puts it: "They think that shoes and corn meal and red-flannel petticoats and mutton stew and gingham shirts just float down from the blue sky." Yet these young children soon go forth into a world of dollars and cents where they must support themselves for some time at least upon small pay. The result is that they obtain their financial knowledge through hard, disheartening experience.

Again, institutions, through omission to give economic training, overlook a valuable aid to a child's development. It is a vital part of a child's nature to earn, to own, to save. The acquirement and possession of money even in small amounts help to increase a child's self-respect and to foster a healthy spirit of independence. And money that is earned has a far greater value in stimulating these qualities than that which is given.

It is therefore of great importance that every institution

should have some system of work-and-wage that will give to its older children practical training in the earning, spending, saving, and giving of real money. At a comparatively small cost a schedule of payments for various forms of institutional work can be carried out; fines can be imposed for carelessness or negligence; a small store having for sale simple articles dear to a child's heart such as candy, toys, ribbons, and inexpensive knick-knacks can be established; and a children's bank with a simple system of check-book, deposit slip, and account-book can be opened, or the children can be encouraged to make deposits in savings banks nearby.

The Colorado State Home has worked out an elaborate economic system for its children.* It is called the "sun" system. Each child receives one "sun," or cent, a day if his conduct is satisfactory. Thirty conduct "suns" are necessary for citizenship, with its accompanying privileges. Misconduct is punished by fines which, through the loss of "suns," may result in a suspension of citizenship; and citizenship once lost can be regained only by the earning of more conduct "suns." In addition the institution has arranged a carefully graded schedule of work and payment so that every child can earn industrial "suns." The children pay for all living expenses such as board, clothing, lodging, and the like. After trying the plan for three years the superintendent writes:

"The employment of the 'sun' system has had an almost miraculous effect on the lives of the children of the Home. Elements of crime have practically disappeared. Serious misdemeanors are almost a thing of the past. The children are universally happy, thankful, and buoyant. Deception is rapidly decreasing. Self-respect is plainly evident. The children are proud of their self-reliance and are trying with all their might to make good."

RECREATIONAL TRAINING

The application blank for admittance to a leading institution for dependents includes this question: What does the child play at most of the time?

Why should an institution seek to know what kind of play interests a child, rather than that he plays in a normal, healthy

* Colorado State Home. Biennial Report, 1912–14. Denver, Colo.

way? The reason is that in play more than in any other activity a child reveals himself. Through it he shows to a keen observer his leading traits, aptitudes, likings, and abilities. Recreation with an adult means merely relaxation from a chosen vocation; but with a child it becomes the main business in life, far surpassing in importance his study and work, and he throws himself into it with whole-hearted abandon. Play, therefore, is an essential part of the education of the individual child.

Yet few institutions take advantage of this opportunity. In most cases the children are turned outdoors daily for an hour or two to amuse themselves on a restricted area of ground or courtyard as best they can; no adult is present to direct the fun and organize games; and little or no playground equipment is provided. Under these conditions the recreation lacks zest and point, and furnishes chiefly a limited amount of physical exercise.

Every institution, whether located in the city or country, can make possible for its children interesting, educational play at a moderate cost. In planning this provision it should be remembered that children progress normally through a succession of different play periods each of which has its distinctive characteristics and for which certain kinds of games and equipment are best suited.

After babyhood the first play period for the average child is between the ages of three and six, and has been called the dramatic age. It is the make-believe time, during which the child's fancy rules. He impersonates a train, a dog, a cat, anything that moves or has life. With him mud becomes a cake, blocks a house, a chair a horse.

A suitable equipment for the dramatic age consists of blocks, toys, discarded pieces of wood, paper and scissors for cutting. A sand box of cement or wood affords an endless opportunity to the imagination. Dolls, playhouses, miniature dishes and cutlery give expression to the mother and housekeeper instincts in girls.

The second play period falls between six and eleven years and is the age of self-assertion. At this time a child's interest turns from fancies to realities. He becomes intensely curious. He pulls articles apart to discover how they are made; turns on the water to see what will happen; and jerks the pigtail of the girl sitting in front for the sake of the reaction. What unknowing adults call

"mischief" and punish as such, is simply an expression of a child's thirst for investigation.

Again, this is the age of heroics. A child loves in these years to fight, play warrior, chase and be chased, climb, swing high. Intense physical activity predominates.

Many devices can be used in the "Big Injun" years to give outlet to a child's bursting energy and to encourage his self-expression. Tools and plenty of wood should be had for the building of sled, pigeon-cote, kite, boat, and the like. Swimming, coasting, skating, and building of snow forts coördinate closely thought and action, and build up endurance. Playground apparatus of swings, ladders, trapezes and horizontal bars develop courage, increase perseverance in overcoming obstacles, and train in taking hard knocks philosophically. Individual boxes of paint with brush, and clay for modelling, aid to disclose artistic talent.

The third play period of childhood is from eleven years upward, and is the age of team-play. Boys and girls then seek groups of their own sex. Mutual endeavor backed by strong loyalty is its foremost quality.

Here is a splendid occasion for institutions to teach their children fairness and respect for the rights of others. Baseball, playground ball, and basket ball are excellent games for this period as in them each player must subordinate self for the attainment of a common end. The Big Brother and Big Sister organizations, in which a child becomes responsible for the kindly oversight of a small newcomer, develop unselfishness. The Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls serve a like purpose. Dramatic plays produced by the children give confidence and stimulate self-expression.

A growing realization of the deeper meaning of play has led to the starting of special schools for the instruction of those naturally qualified to conduct it. If possible, institutions should employ a trained play director. This is true particularly of larger institutions which care for 200 children or more. Sometimes volunteer play leadership can be secured. For smaller institutions or those limited in funds good books are available which describe in detail games and equipment for children of different ages.*

* Johnson, Geo. E.: Education by Plays and Games. New York, 1907. Ginn and Co. 90 cents.

Also, Bancroft, Jessie H.: Games for the Playground, Home, School, and Gymnasium. New York, 1909. Macmillan. $1.50.

SOCIAL TRAINING

By social training of dependent children is meant a training in ordinary manners, ways, dress, and speech. In considering the amount of such education usually given in institutions one is reminded of the school boy who upon being asked by his teacher to describe the manners and customs of a certain African tribe replied: "They ain't got no manners and they don't wear no customs." Yet no one will deny that politeness, neat if inexpensive clothing, together with a fairly correct use of English, are essential factors in everyday success.

The character of the staff in an institution determines largely the extent and quality of the social training. If the adults are careless of appearance, coarse, ungrammatical, and occasionally profane, the children through daily association with them tend to become likewise. On the other hand if the staff members are clean and neat as far as possible, refined, grammatical, and religious, they unconsciously help the children to attain the same qualities.

Politeness should be insisted upon in every child. Each boy should be expected to show deference to his elders by the lifting of the hat in the case of ladies, extending courtesies to them whenever opportunity presents, and rising when adults enter or leave the room. Table manners can best be taught through the use of small tables for six or eight children, each presided over by an adult.

Variety in the children's clothing should be sought. As far as possible a child's outer garments should be distinctive, and should be cared for by the child in his own locker. The under garments of each child should be carefully marked with his name in order that they may be returned regularly to him from the laundry.

Entertainments of various kinds are of help in developing a child's enthusiasm and pride in his personal appearance. It is a good thing for a child to "dress up." Although the observance of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Washington's Birthday, Decoration Day, and other national holidays requires from adults no small expenditure of time and thought the rewards more than repay the cost.

One of the best ways to familiarize children in social usages is by sending them out to the public schools and to Sabbath church

services. By mingling with children from family homes they acquire normal standards of dress, manners, and speech. One institution points with justifiable pride to the fact that its older boys are members of a town Boy Scout company and its older girls of a church sewing circle.

The superintendent of an institution which sends its children out to public school is accustomed to tell the following incident with great satisfaction. One day the school principal called at the institution. In the course of his interview with the superintendent he said, "I see quite a number of my pupils here—do they often visit your institution?" The superintendent replied, "All the children that you see belong here." Amazed the principal said, "Why I have taught those boys and girls for years and had always supposed that they lived in family homes."

THE KEY TO SELF-EXPRESSION

Superintendents are accustomed to have a master-key that turns the various bolts in their institution. They also hold a master-key that opens the doors to the interest, the enthusiam, and the energy of their children. Children can be made to study and to work, to obey rules and to be helpful, but the wise superintendent is he who arouses a desire in their hearts to do these things and more of their own accord. The key to a child's willing co-operation is found in the word incentive.

An incentive is anything that arouses a keen desire in one to do a certain thing, that furnishes a sufficient reason for trying with might and main to attain some end. In an institution it may be a sum of money offered for excellence in essay-writing or public speaking. It may be a watch given for the most productive individual garden. It may be a banner awarded to a group that surpasses in personal neatness, deportment, or care of a cottage. The important point is that an incentive inspires a child to higher enthusiasm and greater effort than can possibly be obtained through a command or a request.

One institution displays in its main building a record of the standing of each child in the institution. The chart by an ingenious system of small colored blocks credits every child weekly with his progress in cottage deportment and manners, school work, industrial work, and service to others. Permission to leave the institution for special treats such as the theatre, baseball

games, or a vacation, is granted only to those children who have earned a required number of block units. The strong desire in the children's souls to enjoy these treats impels them powerfully toward good conduct and earnest work.

Two brothers in this institution were invited to spend a month during the summer with a well-to-do relative. At an appointed hour the uncle appeared in front of the institution in a fine automobile. James had worked faithfully during the year and had won a fine record in all respects. John had taken for granted that he would share in the vacation and had been careless in his conduct and studies. John was forced, in spite of the pleas of his uncle, to watch his brother drive off in luxury. It may be added that John's record during the following year was first-class.

CHILDREN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN THREE INSTITUTIONS

The following statement of the children's organizations in three progressive institutions for dependents is given in the belief that it will have suggestive value:

1. **New York Orphanage.** A Protestant cottage institution for both sexes at Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y.

a. Council of Cottages. A self-governing organization. The Council is composed of three children elected for "life" by their cottage mates, and a house mother, from each of the ten cottages. The Council seeks especially to encourage among the children, "Democracy, Property Safe [respect for property rights], Truthfulness, Mutual Aid, Tongue Control, Good Manners." The councilors determine monthly the percentages in these matters to which their respective cottages are entitled. The superintendent meets the Council bi-monthly, on which occasions he reads aloud the percentages of the various cottages and comments upon them. The members of the Council discuss the standings read, and also make recommendations for the betterment of living and social conditions throughout the institution.

b. Chestnut Burr Literary Club. For all boys and girls above the fourth school grade. At bi-weekly meetings essays written by the boys and girls are read by them, books are discussed, and debates on current topics are held. The club also arranges for plays by the children and for entertainments of various kinds.

c. Glee Club. For older girls. It assists the literary club in giving entertainments.

d. Boys' Baseball League. Baseball nines, each representing a boys' cottage, play a series of games on Saturday afternoons for an inter-cottage cup.

e. Girls' Baseball League. Playgroundball nines, each representing a girls' cottage, play an inter-cottage series for a silver cup.

f. Boy Scouts.

2. **Good Counsel Farm,** a Roman Catholic cottage orphanage for girls at White Plains, N. Y.

a. Little Mothers' Club. The members are older girls appointed because of their refinement. Each member presides at a dining table seating six other girls; she serves the others and instructs them in table manners.

b. The Apostleship of Prayer Club. A religious organization for selected girls over 12 years to promote knowledge of the Catholic faith. Each member, called a "promoter," is assigned to a group of twelve children with whom she has talks on religious subjects.

c. Dramatic Club. Gives simple plays, and plans social occasions for all children in the institution.

d. Jenny Wren Club. Studies nature. Is open to girls of all ages. Long walks in quest of wild flowers are a special feature.

e. Audubon Club. Studies bird life.

f. Glee Club. For all girls with vocal talent.

3. **Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum.** A Jewish congregate institution for both sexes, in Brooklyn, N. Y.

a. Families. The children are grouped according to their sex into "families" of eight members each. A "family" consists of an older boy or girl called a Big Brother or Big Sister, and seven smaller children of similar school grade, physical development, and tastes. The Big Brothers and Big Sisters look out for their "families" in all ways possible and preside at their tables in the dining room.

b. Big Brothers. The heads of the "families" unite in forming the Big Brothers. Meets bi-weekly to discuss problems of big brotherhood. Conducts a court and tries practically all cases of discipline among the boys. The Big Brothers select a judge, a jury which serves for three months, a prosecutor, a defender, and other court officials. The decisions of the judge must be approved by an adult appointed by the superintendent.

c. Big Sisters. An organization similar in all respects to the Big Brothers.

d. Clubs. Dr. Siegfried Geismar, superintendent, writes:

"The clubs are literary, concerning themselves with reports, papers, recitations, the observance of anniversary days, such as the recent Shakespeare Tercentenary; or, they deal with civics, and good government; or with current events, based on the reading of magazines. We have a hiking club, taking trips here and there to points of interest; in line with the latter, an old landmark club, which visits spots sacred to history; a sketch club; a nature club; a glee club; a club which studies the lives and works of composers. Other clubs again are purely recreational such as athletic associations, and so forth.

"Among the girls the system is similar to the one outlined above, except that we emphasize there also club work in mothercraft; aid to the injured; the house beautiful, concerning itself with the planning of simple artistic effects in the institution as well as in a small home; a mandolin club; and so forth.

"While most of these clubs have an educational as well as recreational purpose, the work is not school room work. It lacks the entire atmosphere of purely academic work.

"The membership in each club does not exceed a number small enough to give free play to individuality and self-expression. Accordingly, none of our clubs have a larger membership than about twenty. Neither membership nor attendance is made compulsory, they are regarded as a privilege rather than a duty. A boy or girl may belong to a number of clubs; professional joiners, however, are discountenanced. Election to membership is the result of an application and a subsequent investigation and report. There is no rigidity about the clubs, preferably an air of quiet, peaceful pursuit. The directors are either men and women employes in the institution, or outsiders, or in some instances older and influential boys and girls themselves. We have paid directors for the work among the boys, as well as among the girls."

e. Home Council. Composed of representatives of each family, of the Big Brother and Big Sister organizations, and of each club. Meets bi-weekly with the superintendent or his representative. Presents to the superintendent the children's point of view; deals with such questions as recreation, athletics, granting franchises to clubs, and entertainments; takes care of the library schedule; and keeps in contact with the teachers in the public schools which the children attend.