



Science News Letter, August 24, 1940

EDUCATION

Training in Reading Urged for High Schools

HIGH SCHOOL students will add reading — yes, reading! — to their studies, if advice of ten noted educators who have been probing weak spots in American education is followed. Producing competent readers would be a major achievement in educating young Americans, they conclude.

Recommending “radical changes at many points” in high school education in this country, their report to the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education discloses that many high school pupils read no better than fourth or fifth grade children, and strongly criticizes present methods of teaching young America to read.

Errors in teaching reading, cited in the report, include:

Cramming facts into textbooks so thickly that the pupil cultivates the habit of plodding through pages, and has little chance of acquiring ease and fluency in reading.

“Pupils,” says the report, “begin to think that it requires from three to six months to read through a book.”

Minute dissection of what the pupil has read, by questioning teachers, develops the student habit of rambling thought. The young reader who takes up a book becomes used to speculating as to all possible questions that might be raised.

Declaring that “reading is not a simple skill; it is a complex of many skills,” the ten educators urge “years of practice in the higher forms of reading.” It has been a mistake on the part of educators, they report, to assume that pupils past elementary grades need no more reading lessons.

Among reading lessons and habits which high schools may teach, if the committee’s recommendations meet with favor, are:

1. How to look through a book of reference for a single desired fact.
2. How to be critical of the testimony presented by a biased writer.
3. What to do when a statement, important but not fully understood, must be supplemented by further reading.

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SOCIOLOGY

Schoolma’ams’ Marriages Statistically Analyzed

PROSPECTS of women schoolteachers getting married have been reduced to cold statistics by Harold H. Punke, sociologist of Georgia State Women’s College.

While the marriage rate for schoolma’ams is highest at 22 to 24 years, as it is for other native white American women with whom he compared them, schoolteachers in their twenties who must resign to marry have a marriage rate only one-half to five-eighths as great as non-teaching contemporaries, he states (*American Sociological Review*, August).

Beyond 40 years of age, however, schoolteachers marry at a greater rate than women of that age in general, he finds.

Mr. Punke’s study was made in a southern city of over 300,000, in which women teachers until very recently were not permitted to teach after marriage.

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PHYSIOLOGY

Synthetic Hormones Cause Changes in Sex of Fish

SEX reversal in fish, changing females into males, has been accomplished by injecting synthetic male sex hormone, in experiments performed by Drs. F. M. Baldwin and H. S. Goldin of the University of Southern California.

The fish used were young female swordtails. The males of this species have a long point spine projecting backwards from the tail, which gives the fish its name. The female normally lacks this spine, but injection of the male hormone caused the ones under experiment to grow it, as well as to develop internal changes in the reproductive glands characteristic of the male.

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