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FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION
in
THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

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by
Judith Reuther
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Recent recommendations by various bodies that a family life education program be included in school systems has fostered considerable interest. The inclusion of sex education as a part of this program has raised questions concerning moral values and judgments by educators and laymen alike. In addition, the very newness of the program implies numerous problems concerning the establishment of a family life education course in the school curriculum. It has been the purpose of this writer, then, to explore the subject of family life education, to try to establish its need in our educational system, and to set up an initial program of family life education for the elementary teacher.

In attempting to carry this out, a series of problems which would require answers before a family life education program could be established in the school system was formulated. Answers to these problems were found through research in educational journals and other periodicals, statistical reports, books, pamphlets, and various news media.

It was found that a definite need for the teaching of family life education exists, both at the national level and in the state of Connecticut. Statistical evidence indicates great increases in illegitimacy, teenage divorce, and venereal disease, much of which occurs due to lack of knowledge. Further, it was found that young people realize their need for education in these areas, and are asking for

enlightened teaching. Research has also shown that most educators and parents are aware of this need, and that more schools each year are including family life education in the curriculum.

Several difficulties are experienced by communities interested in establishing a family life education program. One of these is involved with teacher training. Few teachers have sufficient background to teach this course, and for this reason many school systems have established in-service workshops for the purpose of teacher preparation. However, it would appear preferable for teachers to receive such training at the college level.

Other problems experienced by communities involve parental cooperation, appropriate grade levels for the teaching of family life education, evaluative procedures, and available materials.

In regard to the first of these, it was found that most parents are cooperative when they are involved in the program from its onset, and are allowed to make recommendations and view materials. As for age level, the most successful family life education programs are begun in kindergarten and continued through twelfth grade. Evaluative procedures are somewhat complex, since this course is concerned mainly with the teaching of attitudes and values, rather than specific knowledge. However, certain testing can be done, and attitudes can be checked by observation of children, class enthusiasm, and even through community statistics.

Finally, although this field is relatively new, and the number of text books somewhat limited, a wealth of material in the form of films, booklets, pamphlets, slides, and articles in periodicals are available to the teacher.

Much planning must take place before the initiation of a family life education program. Thorough investigation of literature, observation of schools with established programs, familiarity with recommendations of recognized authorities, and perusal of curriculum guides of other communities are just part of the preparation that must take place before a school system can begin to plan its own program. In addition, an in-depth survey of the individual community is necessary, for each program must be geared to the special needs of the people. Only in this way can we be assured of realistic, useful teaching that will result in more productive and responsible citizens.