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MOTIVATION OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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REPORT

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL

ON THE

MOTIVATION OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

IN THE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL,
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
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Report on the Motivation of the Children's Work in the Elementary Schools

The following motives and incentives, classified by subjects, were compiled from the reports received by the committee. No attempt has been made to arrange the motives listed in the order of their value or importance nor to classify them as to their merit ethically. Some of them are merely artificial incentives.

The rules governing the length of papers forced the committee to omit all of the vitalizing material contained in the excellent discussions some sent with their reports. Only the skeletons of these discussions pertaining directly to our problem have been included in the following formulation.

H. B. WILSON, Chairman.
GAIL CALMERTON,
THOMAS D. AGNEW, Jr.

Reading

Motives in reading spring from the social value of the ability to read. It enables one to gain ideas needed in solving problems, to aid or entertain his friends and classmates, and to "express beautifully one's own conception of something that is really capable of arousing individual emotional expression."

Motives reported: (No attempt to distinguish silent and oral reading motives.) (1) to express the picture, music and emotion the reader is personally enjoying; (2) to entertain an audience with a play as other grades of school, parents' meeting, general audience; (3) to share information with others needing it as in working on a phase of history, a prob-

lem in civics, the making of a school garden; (4) to show an upper grade the progress made as when lower grade children read to an upper grade or upper grade children read to a lower grade; (5) to share interesting stories found in out-of-school reading, the new Christmas books, perhaps.

Spelling

Motives reported: (1) making little dictionaries in second grade in which were put all words children could spell; (2) wishing to write a letter to Board of Education asking for playground apparatus required quite a campaign in strenuous spelling before the letter could go; (3) preparing to defeat other schools in term spelling contest; (4) wishing to have name on list of pupils perfect in spelling; (5) wishing to spell well enough to be allowed to set type in school printing office.

Language

The motive stimulating the child to effort in his language work is the desire to communicate for the purpose of learning, instructing or entertaining. Reports showed the following needs for correct and effective language expression served to motivate the language work: (1) to tell supervisory officers, children of another grade, those attending the school assembly, parents or grandparents a story that was much enjoyed; (2) to thank a citizen for prize money, the Board of Education for a clock, hedge fence, etc., a higher grade for books loaned and for programs made, the postmaster and city librarian for privilege to see President Taft from their lawns, a mother for making pen wipers for all children in her son's room, a friend for paper napkins supplied for use at school picnic, mothers' club for pictures, books and play apparatus, the liveryman for a sleigh ride and a hay ride, the park superintendent for use of the park and for making play apparatus for the school grounds, citizens for the loan of flowers to decorate the school rooms on a parents' day; (3) to invite pupils of other grades or parents to enjoy a dramatization, a good reading lesson, or a literary program, parents and friends to come and see the regular school work on a visiting day or to attend a school fair or bazaar, a citizen to deliver a lecture on some topic related to work; (4) to answer invitations from other grades or teachers, letters from children in schools in Detroit, Mich., Stratford, Conn., and Manchester, England; (5) to inquire of city clerk, circuit judge, or superintendent of schools for information needed in civics or arithmetic work; (6) to apply to superintendent of park, a factory, a brickyard, a molasses mill for permission wanted and to thank these persons for privileges extended; (7) to succeed in a prize story contest; (8) to write programs, prepare papers and dramatize a story for an entertainment the grade wishes to plan for the parents, the other grades of the school, or a general audience for mercenary purposes; (9) to write "ads" of school enterprises and to report results of school undertakings to newspapers; (10) to write a booklet giving the history of the flag, making it so interesting people will buy it, thus raising money with which to

purchase a flag for the school room; (11) to write a letter to State Superintendent Blair thanking him for a courtesy extended the school, letters for the mothers' club ordering the pictures they wish to purchase for the school with the funds derived from the school fair, for literature to use in the study of birds, and the planting of a school garden; (12) to prepare items for the school paper which is read once per week in the school assembly; (13) to write to the congressman for seeds to plant the school garden; (14) to write letters of appreciation to Mrs. Kate Douglass Wiggin telling her what keen pleasure was experienced in reading her "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" and to Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton in reference to the pleasure the reading of his animal stories has afforded, a diary of this correspondence was prepared for binding in manual training class.); (15) to ask superintendent of schools for materials needed, privileges wanted; (16) to write something interesting enough to merit publication in the school paper as a letter to an absent pupil who is traveling in England, a half day's visit to Ichabod's school, adventures of a pay-as-you-enter car, a speech by the Great Stone Face.

Language work reported by one sixth grade teacher in which good motives are evident:

(1) Make a book of stories about vacation experiences for second grade to read; (2) letter inviting third grade to play a dramatization of "The Lion and the Mouse" which sixth grade wrote; (3) letter to the superintendent of schools inviting him to see the dramatization and enclosing a copy of the dramatization; (4) letter of thanks and appreciation to third grade after they presented the dramatization; (5) letters to parents inviting them to witness a repetition of the dramatization; (6) letter to the superintendent of schools asking permission to visit a sorghum mill; (7) letter to the owner of the mill asking his permission to inspect the mill and learn the process of making sorghum, and also one to citizens owning automobiles asking them to take them to the mill; (8) letters of thanks to the superintendent of schools, the owner of the mill and the owners of the automobiles after the visit; (9) a written account of their experiences at the mill to loan to other grades which did not visit the mill; (10) letters inviting parents to attend the school's Thanksgiving exercises and enclosing program; (11) letter of request and later one of thanks to the principal of another school for the loan of a picture needed in a colonial life scene in the Thanksgiving program; (12) letter of request and later of thanks to the kindergarden teacher for the loan of her small chairs, to a citizen for the loan of his curtain stretchers and to the teacher of another grade for the loan of some Indian shields, all for use in giving the Thanksgiving program; (13) letters of thanks to the first grade for the privilege of witnessing their dramatization of parts of Hiawatha; (14) letters at Thanksgiving time such as the early colonists might have written to friends in Europe; (15) invitations to all in the building and to all supervisory officers of the schools to witness their Discovery Day exercises on Oct. 12; (16) making programs for Dis-

covery Day exercises; (17) writing play for Discovery Day program; (18) letter of request and later one of thanks to seventh grade for the loan of costumes needed in presenting Discovery Day program; (19) similar letter to a citizen for the loan of Indian relics; (20) letter of invitation and later one of thanks to the second grade teacher asking her to tell of her travels in connection with certain geography work; (21) letter of request and later one of thanks by girls to a local shoe dealer for shoe boxes in which to keep their sewing; (22) letter of request and later one of thanks to an old citizen for information about early pioneer life in Kentucky, needed in connection with history work; (23) letter of greeting accompanied by flowers to this same citizen on his eighty-seventh birthday; (24) working out story of life of Wagner to enable them to better understand some of his musical productions; (25) letters of reply to children in Stratford, England (Each child gave particular attention to some one thing in or about Decatur or Illinois that no other child was to write about. Gathering the information necessitated visits to factories, post office, waterworks, public library, Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., depots, coal shaft, etc., also letters of inquiry to newspapers, Chamber of Commerce, factories); (26) letter of sympathy accompanied by a basket of fruit, to a sick schoolmate; (27) letter of thanks to a citizen who loaned his Victrola at Christmas time, playing selections appropriate to Christmas season too difficult for pupils to sing; (28) Christmas greetings to teachers and supervisory officers of schools; (29) preparing a February booklet containing papers and programs pertaining to noted men born in February; (30) compiling booklet recording legends of St. Patrick's day; (31) replying to letters from Indian children; (32) letter of sympathy to a classmate at time of his grandfather's death; (33) compiling the history of the school this grade attended, it being the oldest school in the city; (34) compiling booklet of Easter legends; (35) writing essays in competition for a prize offered by a citizen on "The Attraction and Protection of Song Birds;" (36) girls answering an advertisement in local paper for "Girl Wanted;" (37) boys answering an advertisement in local paper for "Boy Wanted;" (38) letter of request and later one of thanks to superintendent of schools in connection with school picnic at close of year.

A careful checking of the technical work in language and grammar, assigned to this grade, showed it had all been covered in the meeting of actual situations requiring written work. Often times it was found necessary to refer to the books or take a series of lessons from the books in order to do successfully what was desired.

Geography

Motives in geography work spring from curiosity, the feeling of need for a larger and better understanding of the great world and its meaning, an appreciation of the economic and social value of geographic information, and from the way in which the facts and materials of geography may be used in games and contests.

Reports show: (1) maps were drawn on floor of school room enabling children to work over them as over country itself, getting directions, contour, size, relative size and position, slopes, drainage, products, industries; (2) sand maps were made bringing out above items and erosion; (3) school gardens were laid out to represent a country and its states and products, etc.; (4) a delta table was used to show erosion, formation of flood plain, wearing of banks, depositing, sifting, sorting, etc.; (5) a device was made to reproduce the formation of Niagara Falls gorge; (6) field trips were taken to clear up ideas of land and water forms and how produced, etc.; (7) games were used involving walking over states and naming them, putting puzzle map together, making product map, industries map, guessing the state or country by an oral or visual representation of it, sailor geography contest; (8) areas and relative sizes, heights and volumes were represented in cardboard and clay or wood blocks; (9) weather maps were made and weather phenomena were dramatized; (10) collections of postal cards, pictures from magazines, railway folders, guide books, etc., were made and used; (11) journeys were planned and taken in imagination, involving keeping of careful diaries and writing of letters giving careful reports of trips; (12) illustrated geography booklets were made; (13) real estate companies were organized to sell land in various localities, requiring a knowledge of climate, water supply, facilities for commerce, products, etc.

Arithmetic

Problems requiring solution arising in other work or needs for number ability appearing in efforts to play games result in highly motivated arithmetic exercises and problem material.

Motived work reported grew out of need to solve problems in (1) making calendars, clay pots, handkerchief boxes, glove boxes, jewel boxes, waste baskets for gifts, dictionaries, wooden boxes divided into smaller compartments by cardboard for holding collections of stones, furniture for doll houses, looms for weaving, penwipers, wigwams, Eskimo houses, crates to pack jellies and preserves made to present to parents at Christmas. bridges and clocks in manual training, sanitary henhouse for hens kept at the school; (2) caring for chickens kept at school, involving purchase of feed, the collection and sale of eggs and the marketing of the chickens raised; (3) cooking in domestic science, requiring measuring with scales and dry and liquid measures, purchasing ingredients needed, mixing same in right proportions and so on; (4) printing which necessitates purchasing paper, ink, oil, cutting paper economically, computing size of cuts and the number of quads and spaces in different lines, estimating the size of type and the spacing of matter for good artistic effects; (5) trying to appreciate the significance of data as to population, taxation, areas, and so on in history and geography; (6) playing games such as Changing Places, Simon Says Thumbs Up, Fireman, Hod Carrier, The Cave Man, The Boy Scouts, Arab Practice,

Playing Store, Bean Bag, Ten Pins, Ring Toss, Tumble In, Spin the Top, Going into Business, Banking, involving measuring, counting, writing and reading numbers, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing in all phases of arithmetic, constructing various geometric forms, computing perimeters, circumferences, areas, making change, depositing money, balancing accounts, opening and closing accounts, keeping accounts, organizing a company and bank, figuring discounts, profits, losses, and interest, loaning and borrowing, preparing orders and bills, remitting money by draft, check, or postal order; (7) planting a school garden, involving measuring up the plot, dividing it between rooms and then into beds or plots, purchasing seeds, marketing produce and expending income; (8) managing school excursions and picnics, requiring estimating time needed, cost of transportation, food and so on; (9) conducting school enterprises such as a fair, supper, entertainment, necessitating purchasing, paying expenses, keeping the account, expending the proceeds; (10) determining for the use of the superintendent the cost of books and supplies purchased by the pupils in the school; (11) figuring up the items of the teacher's statistical report for her; (12) keeping account of money given or earned by each pupil and of ways of expending it; (13) entering up data under correct dates in diary; (14) sorting material for first grade boxes so as to get right amount in each box; (15) measuring up school properties as to size, size of rooms, amount of blackboard, etc., for reporting to superintendent.

More remote motives mentioned as operating were: (1) desire to learn early table work accurately so later arithmetic work will be easy; (2) desire to work with speed and accuracy so as to be chosen to a responsible position in the games played; (3) desire to become proficient in mathematics because it is so essential in a business career.

Writing

Reports showed following needs supplied motives: to write legibly and rapidly in meeting requirements in other work of school, to surpass specimen of preceding year's work, to produce neat, attractive books for school exhibit at close of year, to write letter to Santa Claus, friends, to make booklet of good writing for present to parents.

History

Motives reported: writing imaginary diaries of great men, making supposed speeches of statesmen, representing their constituency in the legislature or congress, dramatizing scenes, stories and epochs, arranging a pageant, preparing to debate some question congress had to settle, learning structure of a mediaeval castle in detail so as to rebuild it in clay, model cave, tools, etc., used by early cave men, working on period of discovery and exploration to acquire knowledge necessary to participate in a conference of the different nations which settled America.

Music

Motives reported: (1) desire to sing at home for parents and guests; (2) to provide music for the school assembly, memorial evening at G. A. R. hall, mothers' club meeting, evening school social; (3) wish to learn a beautiful song they have heard; (4) want to learn to write music expressing own feelings; (5) desire to be able to read music as well as stories; (6) writing melody to fit into that of Thanksgiving program; (8) organizing a school orchestra.

Manual Training, Domestic Art, Domestic Science

Motives reported: (1) making things actually needed for use, as a bird house for school and home grounds, a playhouse for first grade children, furniture for this house such as chairs, tables, couch, rug, doll's dress, doll's hammock, doll for sick child, a dress for poor child, articles needed by a charitable institution, a tea table, costumer, community rug, couch cover, cushion, a book case, or a davenport for the school, pencil cases, bags, mats, foot rests for small pupils, sand tables, pointers, window boxes, specimen boxes, filing shelves or a glue table for the shop, playthings for the school and home use, presents for friends at Christmas or on birthday occasions, articles for sale at school bazaar such as shoe polisher, cake beater, pen and ink stand, picture frame, tea mat, motto, fancy blotter, writing desks, easels and standards for supporting studies in drawing lessons, binding in book form interesting stories brought for reading; (2) patching, mending and darning actual garments brought from home; (3) making candy to sell at school fair; (4) serving a luncheon to Board of Education; (5) making a booklet on sewing containing compositions on thimble, needle, cotton, linen, etc.; (6) making infants' clothes for use of school visiting nurse; (7) allowing students to use shops out of hours, after knowledge of tools is acquired to make things they want.

Drawing

The following needs were reported to have appeared and meeting them has called for drawing lessons: (1) to illustrate bird prize compositions; (2) to make posters advertising art exhibits, ball games, entertainments; (3) to paint some pictures suitable for decorating a doll house, some scenery suitable for use in staging a play written by the class; (4) to design a cover for Miles Standish booklet at Thanksgiving time, booklet on "Early Days in Macon County," the February compositions, booklets in geography, nature study, language, the school garden diary, the flag book; (5) to design a decoration for a picture frame, a pattern for the rug the children wish to weave, for the curtains for the school office or for the office table cover; (6) to win the local paper's prize for the best weather cartoon; (7) to produce the design which will be chosen to decorate the cover for the Mothers' club programs, the report of the Board of Education, or for the school paper; (8) to make a design for the decoration of the school room blackboards; (9) to develop

a poster to assist teachers and visiting nurse in their campaign for cleanliness and neatness; (10) to make a motto to decorate school room; (11) to decorate a Christmas tree to send to a sick child; (12) to design covers for stories bound in book form.

Good Attendance

Motives reported: seeking to win the school pennant for the best record in attendance for the week or month, securing favorable mention in the superintendent's bulletin noting the best records of attendance, having name written in list of pupils attending well, wishing to have a record worth pointing to, striving to get on published honor roll by having no grade below E, seeking to make building record better than for previous year, desiring to advance with associates, boys and girls competed in regularity and punctuality of attendance, attending regularly so as to miss nothing of value, win pennant for best attendance.

Good Conduct

Motives reported: Being allowed to go home at first afternoon dismissal, having name placed in honor list, organizing a self government plan, being trustworthy enough to help check up library and supplementary books and to work in groups without supervision in office, halls, on lawns, to do right for pleasure it affords, allowing pupils who show most care for politeness and courtesy to attend telephone, assist principal, do errands, and so on, pleasure of good conscience and feeling of self-respect, pupils organize a self-government system.

Wealth of Motivation From a General Problem

A number of reports indicated how almost all phases of the school's work may be motivated by the handling of a large problem or school enterprise.

A May-day Party—Third Grade

A very interesting lot of work grew out of the decision of one of the third grades to give a May-day party to which their mothers were to be invited. Under the skillful management of the teachers, the children carried the responsibility for the party from its inception to its completion. They wished to earn the money necessary to defray all expenses and to manage the development of the program, the reception of the guests, the presentation of the entertainment, and the serving of the refreshments. While the work was in progress and following it, the teacher based much of her school work upon the problems the children were finding it necessary to solve. Interesting compositions were written in which each told how he earned his money and in which the success of the party was reported. Notes were written asking the first grade to make colored paper chains with which to decorate the room, another grade to make programs for distribution to the guests, the other grades for flowers for decoration and for chairs to seat the guests.

Finally a formal invitation was written to send to each person invited. After the party was over, all who assisted were thanked in a written note or in a personal message borne by some pupil. A gentleman who contributed some paper napkins received a very courteous and detailed note of thanks. Problems solved during the **manual training** and **art** lessons grew out of the need for a May basket and a program for each guest. Many problems in **arithmetic** arose in estimating the cost of the party and in figuring up the purchases made. The largest problem was developing the program rendered at the party. This called for singing and added to the interest in the **music** lessons. It also called for a little play and led them to dramatize some of their Greek **history** work.

Operating a School Garden—Third and Fourth Grades

Language work was necessary in keeping garden diary, in writing the Flower Mission for order blanks, in ordering seeds, and in writing letters of request for help in things children could not do and later letters of thanks for help received.

Arithmetic appeared in keeping account of garden's progress by dates, in measuring up garden and figuring up its size, dividing it between rooms, providing paths, determining space to devote to each vegetable, figuring up amount of seed needed and cost of same, marketing produce and expending proceeds.

Much interesting **reading** was done in learning how to make and plant a garden and in understanding the phenomena of plant life which appeared as the garden developed.

The necessity for markers for the beds provided some **manual training** problems.

A School Bazaar—All Grades

The aim was to raise money to further equip and beautify the playground. The parents' association co-operated actively .

Manual training work produced for sale, 100 salt cups in first and second grades, 1 tooth brush holder, 2 picture frames, 10 cake paddles and 27 iron holders in fifth grade, 1 jardeniere stand and 22 dusting caps in sixth grade, 9 button bags and 15 sewing bag aprons in seventh grade.

Language work was provided in requests for help and later in thanks for help, requests being for articles for sale on fancy table and in plain sewing booth, for articles of food needed in supper, for help in kitchen and for waiters in serving supper, for some one (the baker) to roast meat for supper.

Much meaningful **arithmetic** work arose from the need of figuring out the amount of candy needed at candy booth, determining amount of candy to ask each of several persons to furnish, estimating the amount of gingham to purchase to make aprons for plain sewing booth, deciding price at which all articles should be sold to make a reasonable profit, deciding amount of popcorn needed and how much to sell for 5 cents, concluding how to apportion money for things wanted.

The School Assembly as a Source of Motives

In the school assembly, all of the children on a floor or in a building meet for a brief series of simple exercises, growing out of their daily school work. It possesses for the entire school many of the values afforded by a general problem for a grade. Some of the features of the program are contributed by the entire school. Each room feels a pride in doing its part well alongside of the other rooms in the school. Usually some room is responsible for the remaining features of the program. It results in supplying motives for good **singing,** improved **compositions,** since only the best are chosen for reading in assembly; better **reading** and **memorizing,** as only the exemplary is presented before the assembly. In the development of dramatization for the assembly, excellent **composition** work is provided. The preparation of programs for the audience calls for neat **writing,** accurate **spelling** and punctuation, and good **drawing.** Reporting the conduct and attendance and other significant facts in the life of the school and awarding a pennant, perhaps, to the most deserving room, in assembly, tends to motivate the formal requirements of the school for the children. No one agency of the school is more effective in reaching the student body and in inspiring it with new and loftier ideals than the school assembly. It possesses all of the advantages arising from the co-operation and competition which numbers render possible and it affords the enthusiasm of "the crowd."

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