

# Sex Education with the Aid of Parents

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The general plan of presenting sex education as a part of a biology course is in no way new. The simplicity of the plan used in the Robinson Township High School is so safe from criticism by even the most conservative citizens that teachers may be willing to use it in other schools.

The plan presented below has been in use in the author's high school for seven years. Convinced that a well-rounded biology course could be the basis for a program of social hygiene education and recognizing the dangers of a poorly organized attempt, the author made a cautious start in 1932.

The first step was self education. For several months the author studied all available books and pamphlets on sex education and the general field of social hygiene. After a plan had been outlined, conferences were held with the principal and dean of girls. The approval and cooperation of the school administration was considered essential. Following the periods of preparation, planning and approval the plan was set in operation without *any* publicity.

The biology course was revised to include reproduction in its place with the other fundamental life processes. Care was taken to give no more emphasis to reproduction than to digestion, respiration or any of the other life processes.

Because first impressions have so much

influence on later attitudes toward sex, careful attention was given to the introduction of each new term or concept. For example: sexual and asexual were discussed as the two types of reproduction with examples from a wide range of plants and animals. Male and female were first used in connection with a study of algae. Sperm, egg and fertilization were introduced in the study of mosses. The first embryo discussed was a seed. Testes and oviducts were first seen in the frog.

A series of chick embryos was used. Discussions including student questions included the following topics: embryo food supply, twins, birth marks and abnormalities. For the study of heredity, examples were used from plants, animals and humans. A brief study of eugenics was introduced by having each student make a family chart on which they noted some characteristics in their families. Charts of famous and infamous families were shown and discussed.

When the subject of reproduction had been completed, a letter was sent to the parents of biology students. The letters were sent out from the high school office and were signed by the dean of girls and principal as well as the author. The following points were included in the letters: value of scientific information about sex and human reproduction; this knowledge should be given at home with the

guidance and knowledge of the parents; a foundation has been laid in the biology course and perhaps this is the time for that further instruction; this is a very difficult subject for parents who have not had the opportunity for special training; the school has a supply of pamphlets for parents, boys and girls, and these pamphlets will be sent free to parents who request them on the enclosed post-card form. The pamphlets will not be distributed at school. Suggestions and conferences with parents were invited.

Pamphlets used to fill the requests have been changed as new ones have become available. Advice from the staff of the American Social Hygiene Association has been helpful in selecting pamphlets. The ones now in use are:

FOR PARENTS—*The Parents' Part and When and How to Tell the Children*. Both from the Illinois Department of Public Health.

FOR BOYS—*The Wonderful Story of Life* (boys) and *Keeping Fit*. Both from the Illinois Department of Public Health. *In Training*. From the American Medical Society.

FOR GIRLS—*The Wonderful Story of Life* (girls) and *Healthy, Happy Womanhood*. Both from Illinois Department of Public Health. *How Life Goes On and On*. From the American Medical Society.

A form letter was enclosed with the pamphlet sets suggesting that the parents keep them as long as they cared to, but that when they were through with them they should be returned. Approximately one-fourth have been returned. The cost of the project is not great. It is considered as an item in supplies.

During seven years the requests from

parents for pamphlets has varied from 18% to 55%, with an average of about 40%. In over 60% of the cases parents requested pamphlets for both boys and girls. This results in a much greater coverage than would be indicated by the 40% requests.

Reactions have been entirely favorable. Expressions of appreciation have been oral, written, public and personal. One mother expressed her appreciation, and in explaining why she had not returned the pamphlets said that since she had received them, the pamphlets had been used in the homes of ten different friends and neighbors.

Community interest has expressed itself in the formation of an active social hygiene committee, of which the author was elected chairman.

The Illinois State Department of Public Health has purchased 150 copies of this plan for distribution to other schools. A number of other schools in the state have made modifications to meet local conditions and are using a similar procedure.

## Exchange Service

I wish to exchange my lessons in taxidermy for specimens. The plan being: I will send the first lesson to a teacher or student. When the lesson has been mastered I am to receive a prepared skin, and so on until the course is finished. I have been teaching taxidermy in a club here for eleven years and the lessons are the outgrowth of this work.

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