

Excerpts on

"TEACHABLE MOMENTS -- AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH TO HEALTH"

Talk given by Jay B. Nash, Professor of Education, New York University, at State Convention of K.H. & P.E.A., McPherson

Just talking about qualitative outcomes of education does not guarantee them. This has become axiomatic with all good teachers where the desired outcome is something more than a mere memorizing process. The qualitative outcomes of education: character, with its accompanying elements of tolerance, politeness and social qualities; citizenship; and health are largely caught, not taught -- at least not in any conventional way: Much of our classroom hygiene is particularly useless not only because it has little or no effect upon desirable health behavior but because it is likely to set up negative attitudes.

Teaching hygiene in schools is likely to be an opiate given to administrators to ease their consciences while the school violates most of the known conditions of wholesome living.

Making the child self-conscious about health is one of America's most unhealthy procedures.

There need be nothing mysterious about normal health patterns. The real skill is needed to restore normality after it has been lost. For most children, health constitutes just a simple, happy way of living.

The various phases of children's health patterns are all things that involve doing something, and much of the doing is an adult responsibility.

Talking to children about things over which they have no control is a bad educational procedure as it sets up strain and fear. The elements of the health pattern are somewhat as follows:

(A). Freedom From Infectious Drains.

This means, specifically, freedom from infected teeth, adenoids, and tonsils. It likewise means that the child should be free from any of the ill effects which might follow influenza, common colds, or any of the so-called childhood disorders. The detecting of these disorders and the remedy of the same are tasks of the medical profession. Therefore, the question arises "how can this medical service, including diagnosis and treatment, be provided for every child in the public school system." We do not talk to children about those things. It is an adult problem and action to remedy is the answer.

(B). Freedom From Strains. The child must not be subjected to undue strains such

as throw off the normal functioning of the body. This means that the child must be protected from undue rush and noise, irritating lights, fear and worry. The child must be freed from fears which cause tenseness, that lower organic resistance, thus opening up the opportunities of malnutrition with all of its attendant hazards. This is an educational task, in which the medical profession is, of course, interested -- but it is primarily educational. We do not talk to children about these "modern race destroyers." Removing these is an adult function and action to remedy is the answer.

(C). Health Habits Should Be Encouraged. Here great controversy as to what are facts and how they should be taught confront everyone. Facts alone are known to have little influence upon behavior unless there can be an emotional drive or want to use these facts. So-called facts should probably be thrown into the three following groups:

(1). Things we are fairly sure of. The need of rest, sleep, nutrition and exercise with joy and happiness can probably be placed in the first group. Adults organize these, but much talk is of little value. (2). Practices which fall into the realm of aesthetics and are not health fundamentals. Certain questions of manners and morals: washing neck and ears, standing in line, being pleasant, fall into this class. These may be desirable but have practically no connection with health values. How can we detect these and how can they be encouraged without leading them on to the health program, (3). Things that are not true. In this group we have many things which are not true or contain only a grain of truth, such as "A clean tooth never decays" and "Exercise before breakfast if you want to smile after dinner." How can these part-true statements be run down and eliminated?

(D). Exercise. Upon the basis of these three conditions, power for health is built through exercise. It is the age-old law of life. "Practice makes perfect." "You learn that which you practice." "Power is built through use." Therefore, the whole program of physical