

THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

Vol. XV

SEPTEMBER, 1927

No. 1

THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF SCHOOL

Minnesota has evolved a new system of organizing the vocational agriculture for the public schools. Selecting the content of the curriculum and co-ordinating the work of the schoolroom with the home work on the farm have been placed on a new basis. This system harmonizes better with the principles of education than do the plans heretofore prevailing in any of the states. The fundamentals of this system may be understood from the few brief statements in the paragraph which follows.

The agriculture subject matter for any given school year will be selected to fit the needs of the particular boys who constitute the agriculture class for that year. The work of the year will be directed toward preparing those particular boys to become more successful farmers and better members of the family and the community. Any boy of the class who becomes a farmer will probably farm in his present locality or in a locality whose fundamentals of farm procedure will not differ materially from those prevailing in his present locality. A course in agriculture for the year will be developed for each boy of the class. The content of this course will be determined by conference among the agriculture teacher, the boy, the boy's parents and any other members of the boy's family sufficiently interested to entitle them to a place in the conference. The content of the course and the home work to be undertaken by the boy for the year, will be whatever this conference decides is the most needful thing in the immediate future for that boy on the farm. The co-operation of the family with the boy in making these improvements is essential. When the teacher has such a course for each of the boys in his class, these courses are compared and all the items that are alike in the different courses are combined and with those additional items significant to the community constitute the core of the course of the entire class for the year. The items that are not common to the courses of all the boys constitute additional work for individual members of the class or for groups of boys who may have common items among themselves.

The practical home work of the boy for the year consists of putting into actual operation on the home farm the betterments agreed upon the the opening

of the year (or later if a change of procedure becomes advisable) and the school study of the boy consists of obtaining such an understanding of the principles, practices, and processes of agriculture as will enable him to make these betterments wisely and to understand their significance to home life and community activities.

The farm community survey, the home project, the study of the best prevailing local practices and a generous use of agricultural literature are all utilized as valuable auxiliary procedures in putting this system into operation.

This is but a skeleton of the outline of procedure. A volume might be written showing the educational soundness and explaining the details of the procedure to be followed in putting the plans into successful operation.

For a year or two under the leadership of Professor A. M. Field, this procedure has been discussed at conferences of the teachers now teaching in the state. The members of the faculty of the Department of Agricultural Education of the University of Minnesota have been teaching this procedure to the prospective teachers of agriculture in this institution. The last class taught was a group of graduate students in the summer session of 1927. Most of these were teaching agriculture in the public schools of Minnesota. Dr. F. W. Lathrop, who was in charge of the class, asked each member to prepare a paper showing just how he would proceed at the opening of the school year to organize his work for that year on this plan. The VISITOR is pleased to publish three of these papers in this issue, thinking that the suggestions of these men who are experienced teachers may be helpful to others. The VISITOR staff will appreciate comment or correspondence on the plans as printed.

A.V.S.

H. F. Betsinger—Deer River, Minn.

It may be well at first to mention the local conditions for the bearing they will have upon the practices, procedures and methods used. Our school district includes such a large territory in western Itasca County that it has been found advisable to maintain a dormitory in connection with the central high school. This, then, will give me boys to teach under three different conditions. There will be those boys who go home every

THE VISITOR

Published monthly by the Division of Agricultural Education, University of Minnesota, University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Entered as second class matter at the post-office at St. Paul, Minn., under the act of August 24, 1912.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized August 2, 1918.

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night, those who go home Friday nights, and those who are able to go home only for the holiday vacations. This naturally, will make matters more complicated, and necessitate a procedure modified accordingly.

However, as I now see the situation, it would seem that the following outline might work for the first two weeks, establishing the course for the entering freshmen upon a reasonable functioning basis.

Monday—Labor Day—No school.

Tuesday—Registration. Most of my time in the morning will be spent in the assembly helping the students to make a satisfactory schedule. Local practice has been for the classes to meet for about ten minutes each, school being dismissed early in the afternoon; therefore, little could be accomplished the first day except to secure the names of the pupils, their ages, location of homes, and names of parents. The afternoon is taken up with teacher conferences, schedule arrangements, and other routine school work. I shall have a chance possibly to start filling the data blanks for the boys. These blanks will have been made out previously with space provided for such items as name, age, parent's name, location of farm, opinions of previous teachers, intelligence records, etc. All data regarding the boys would be recorded as secured, for future reference.

Wednesday—Since classes meet for full time, it would be possible to make a start toward getting the boys adapted to their new surroundings. It must be remembered that many of the boys are away from home for the first time, and that it will be necessary to go slowly with them. The teacher will have to be encouraging, sympathetic, and have a willingness to look at things from the standpoint of the boys. A general talk upon the importance of agriculture, past, present, and future conditions, would precede any formal work. The educational value of learning by doing would be emphasized, as well as learning while

earning. The supervised farm practice or project would not be mentioned as such. A proper frame of mind would be brought about. One or two of the most promising agriculture students of previous years would be brought in to tell the class of the value that the agriculture course had been to them. This might be enough for this day, for the boys are fresh from the farm, their minds are not yet accustomed to or much inclined toward academic work. It is best to build a good foundation. Any available time in the afternoon would be spent in checking up on each boy as far as possible. Those boys staying in the dormitory would be called in for personal conferences after school.

Thursday—A start would be made on checking the activity lists in class. The purpose of this list would be explained so that no confusion would result. Too much time would not be spent on this the first day of checking. A report on each boy's farm would be made after explaining what is meant by major, contributory, and minor enterprises. Students would be told to think over conditions and be ready to make a revised report the next day. If time permitted in the afternoon, the boys' reports may be checked. After school one of the boys' farms would be visited, father and boy being consulted in regard to activity list, and home conditions noted as far as possible.

Friday—The activity lists would be further checked, and a revised report made on farm enterprises on each boy's farm. In the afternoon the reports would be checked, and a beginning made on a common basic core of material for those boys staying in the dormitory. It is expected that these will be treated more as a group, while those who are staying at home will be treated more on the individual basis. Another boy's home farm would be visited after school, conditions permitting.

Saturday—Further study on basic core of study for dormitory pupils. One or two visits made to boys' farms.

Monday—Activity list checking completed, and a beginning made on outlining a calendar of activities for each boy. Special provision would have to be made for those boys not able to go home every day or every week. A study test would be given to all students on the first unit of the common course for dormitory students. Since all pupils are given the Terman Group Intelligence Test in high school, I shall need to secure only the records of the boys. If a good vocabulary test can be worked out, it would be a good plan to give this to all the boys. Visits to home farms continued, and any

information that could be secured regarding traits, habits and characteristics of the boys would be noted. It is to be hoped that a standardized method of procedure can be worked out, upon which the boy's needs, interests and abilities can be determined.

Tuesday—By this time we might call the group together for a conference and the need and use of a program of supervised farm practice discussed. This would not be run into the ground at this time, but a motivation set up. Continued work with study exercises or reading tests would be conducted. The first unit of work for the dormitory boys would be assigned and they would be started on their work. The other boys might not have their plans well in hand, so that considerable help might need to be given individually. Continued work with the calendars would be in order, and as soon as the boys were lined up with their major interests and needs manifest, a unit of work would be outlined for their guidance for the first class room exercise. Visits continued to home farms. Lesson plans and exercises worked out.

Wednesday—Continuation of Tuesday's work. Group called together for social contact, and problems of interest to all. Continued work with parents and boys on the farm.

Thursday—Reading or study test. Individual reports on progress of study of unit of work assigned. Revision of calendars where found necessary. Farm home visited. New assignments worked out.

Friday—Class work on individual assignments as above continued. Group conference if needed. Continued search for data about boys. Farm visits continued.

No stereotyped plan can be made out ahead of time, but it might serve as a guide, and show what ought to be done.

Earl Springer—St. Peter, Minn.

Sept. 5—All freshmen meet at the high school at 1:30 for enrollment. I shall be there to help them make out their schedules, which, of course, includes enrolling them for Agriculture I.

Sept. 6—A. Teacher activity: Short introduction or remarks from the instructor. B. Student activity. Have each pupil stand and give his name, and location and size of his farm. Now we shall discuss activities and interests of the several boys in regard to their home farms. Out of this we shall discover general interests and special interests. I shall give each boy a Farm Survey blank which he is to fill out at home, after discussion in class, to be returned to class-room Wednesday.

Sept. 7—A. Teacher activity: Collect Farm Survey sheets and we shall draw a few conclusions from them; for instance, "How shall we go about our problems?" Now we are ready to discuss activities, skills, projects and supervised farm practices, or, in other words, explain how we might proceed in our new work. Hand each boy an activity list to be checked. This will give him a better idea of the things he ought to do. Visit boy and parent. B. Student activity; students will check a part of their activity lists.

Sept. 8—Student activity: Continue checking activity list. When completed, have each boy decide upon the activities which will need consideration on his farm. Also have him decide upon the most important ones that will need first consideration. Visit boy and parent to make out calendar.

Sept. 9—Teacher activity: Give boys a typewritten list of the activities which they have chosen to carry out on their farms. Now explain the idea of making a calendar and go through the work with the boys so they will have some idea as to how they should go about it. They may be able to give "Dad" some idea of what is expected of them so that when the teacher comes all will understand the problem before them. Select definite projects and farm practices. Now that the boy has (should have) a setting of what is to be done, I think that he might be encouraged by pointing out the work done by some of our best farmers. Perhaps they can suggest some of the local farmers who are recognized as *good* farmers. I might have some of the older boys review their work and tell of the benefits received from the course.

Sept. 10—I shall call at the home of several of the boys, especially those who want first aid in starting their activities.

Sept. 12—Now that he has already decided upon what he is going to do, assign readings to cover the first point in mind. I shall make a reading test of the material he is reading, also a reading rate test and a vocabulary test. Make farm visits to make calendars.

Sept. 13—Continue study activity. Make study exercise. Make farm visits to make calendars.

Sept. 14—Conduct group conference. If culling poultry is the topic taken up, have hens available to illustrate the points taken up in culling. Make farm visits.

Sept. 15—Give Miller Mental Ability Test and Haggerty Reading Test. Make farm visits.

Sept. 16—Boys (some of them) are ready to take up second assignment. Give references, pages, etc.; everything to encourage the boy in his work. Make farm visits.

Sept. 17—Call on boys who have immediate problems to solve. All calendars should be completed by now and some agreements made with the fathers. This should insure interest and co-operation to see the several enterprises accomplished. If time permits, I believe that I shall use at least one period to take the class to visit one or two good farmers so they might get higher ideals of the farming occupation.

H. O. Anderson—New Richland, Minn.

I. Monday, Sept. 5—Enrollment. A. Assist boys in registration. B. Assist faculty with enrollment problems.

II. Tuesday, Sept. 6—Getting boys acquainted with agriculture department. A. Outline briefly the work in agriculture. 1. Subject matter. 2. Methods: a. Lectures, b. Study periods, c. Laboratory, d. Field trips, e. Examinations. B. Discuss general high school procedure. 1. Library, periodicals. 2. Problems brought out by boys. C. Have each boy introduce himself to the group stating name, age, school district, size of farm, type of farming, special farming interest. D. Have boy put above data on paper and give to teacher of agriculture. E. Compile data given during day. F. Visit two boys after school to get layout of the farm and the attitude and interest of the father, and for beginning an outline of activities to be carried on by the boy.

III. Wednesday, Sept. 7—Checking farm activities. A. Have boys check activities in major enterprises. 1. Explain the function of the activities list. 2. Explain how to use activities list. 3. Have boys check one or two major enterprises after a discussion on each point if necessary. B. Tabulate the checked lists. 1. Note the activities engaged in by all, part of or none of the boys. C. Visit two boys as before.

IV. Thursday, Sept. 8—Supervised farm practice. A. Motivate supervised farm practice. 1. Stress points which have not been mentioned to the boys in previous discussions. 2. Bring out interesting facts about various farm practices which may be carried out. 3. Illustrate with examples of previous good supervised practice work. 4. Interest boys in the work through examples of improved practices which may increase profits on the farm. B. Discuss extracurriculum activities. 1. Agriculture Club. 2. Judging trips. C. Compile data gathered to date. D. Visit two boys as before.

V. Friday, Sept. 9—Make calendar of activities. A. Have boys make a list of activities they wish to carry on during

year. 1. Where the boys have been visited, have the boys make out the calendar of activities. 2. Make out the calendar by months, listing the things that ought to be done each month. 3. Teacher should advise where the boys seem to need it. Teacher work on calendar of activities. 1. Grouping activities in which all or a number of boys are interested. 2. Work out a core of study for this material. C. Visit two boys.

VI. Saturday, Sept. 10—A. Visit remainder of the boys if possible. B. Make a job analysis for the core of study with a list of minimum essentials for all students on the important phases of major enterprises.

VII. Monday, Sept. 12—A. Check the remainder of the activities lists as before. B. Tabulate data. C. Work on job analysis and core of study.

VIII. Tuesday, Sept. 13—Mental ability tests. A. Give the Miller Mental Ability Test. 1. Assignment of first problem. B. Score test material. C. Compile data.

IX. Wednesday, Sept. 14—"Regular" class work begins. A. Work on first unit of farm problems. 1. Get boy used to method of study: supervised study, use of references. 2. Give reading tests on material used in study of problems. (a) Tests for speed. (b) Test for comprehension. B. Compile data on reading tests. C. Compile data on reading tests and other material.

X. Thursday, Sept. 15—No school—Dairy Days.

XI. Friday, Sept. 16—No school—Dairy Days.

XII. Saturday, Sept. 17—A. Finish compiling data on boys. 1. Age, interest, I. Q., Reading ability. 2. Attitudes of parents; major, contributory, and minor enterprises. Length of farm experience.

XIII. Monday, Sept. 19—A. Continue with class activities, problems. B. Give Monroe Speed of Reading Test. C. Make outlines for course of study and lesson plans. D. Begin second round of supervised farm practice visits for the purpose of direction of the beginning of new farm activities of the boy.

Remarks: 1. This plan is not to be considered absolutely final. 2. Changes may be made accordingly to the needs for a greater or smaller amount of time for each activity. 3. The number of boys enrolled may influence the amount of changes necessary. 4. The main use of the calendar is to guide the activities of the first week so that there is the least possible waste of time, and to prevent the omission of important activities through forgetfulness.