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PLANNING THE FIELD TRIP

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As a method of teaching, the field trip is quite similar to the laboratory method. Often it is a laboratory exercise transferred out of school. However, there are phases peculiar to it which entitle it to be regarded as a separate problem.

The importance of the field trip is at once recognized if we consider the community in which an agricultural department is located as part of the equipment of that department. The teacher who utilizes the hardware store, the creamery, the local fair and the farms of the community is merely making use of available equipment. The field trip is a very important method of utilizing the equipment outside the school.

The Five Steps of a Field Trip Plan

If one follows through in his mind the field trips he has experienced as a teacher or a student, they fall quite naturally into five steps as follows:

1. Determination of the aim by the teacher.
2. Survey and arrangements by the teacher.
3. Preparation of the students.
4. Outline and organization of the work.
5. Discussion and summary.

I. Determination of the Aim by the Teacher

The teacher must have an aim for two reasons: (1) A clear aim is essential in any educational process. It is a prerequisite to definite accomplishment. (2) The aim affects the way in which a field trip is conducted. The first reason, it is safe to say, will be generally accepted; the second needs further explanation.

Field trips may be classified under at least three heads, as to aim.

- a. Field trips for observation and identification.
- b. Field trips for application or development of principles.
- c. Field trips for the teaching of skills.

See if you can classify the following field trips under these three heads.

1. Study of a poultry house.
2. Scoring dairy barn.
3. Selecting seed corn in the field.
4. Culling a poultry flock.
5. Study of grain drills at a hardware store.
6. Field study of the alfalfa plant.
7. Judging hogs.
8. Making cleft grafts on apple trees.
9. Field study of grasses and clovers.

It is possible that a more elaborate classification might be devised but the classification into three groups is sufficient for our present purpose. It is possible also that a field trip might have more than one of these three aims.

If there are different kinds of field trips as to aim, our procedure will be somewhat different in accomplishing each aim. Let us see how these field trips should be treated differently:

a. The study of grain drills in a hardware store.

- b. The construction of a poultry house.
- c. Learning to make a cleft graft.

The study of grain drills is an observation and identification field trip. *The important thing is to make an impression on the boy's mind which he will retain.* If we wish him to remember the different types of drills we should give him several impressions of each drill. Consequently, we may ask him to diagram the regulation of each type, compare them orally, perhaps score them, and recognize the types from a description. He will thus have four impressions.

The study of poultry house construction is a field trip which has as its aim the application of principles. We would like to have the students able to judge, for example, whether a poultry house is of the right size for a given flock. They must know the principle governing floor space per hen, the number of hens, and the size of the house. It is possible that they will know all these things but will not actually apply the principle. *The most vital part of this field trip is that application of principles be actually made so that the principles will become fixed.* Consequently, the discussion and summary will be of special importance, as compared with the other two trips.

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The field trip on cleft grafting has as its aim the teaching of a skill. *The teacher will therefore be concerned in giving each student ample opportunity to go through the operations of cleft grafting and in ascertaining whether each student has mastered each step in the process.* The outline and organization will be of special importance while the discussion and summary will be of little importance. Thus these three types of field trips must be conducted somewhat differently.

The first step in planning a field trip is the classification of the proposed trip as to aim for the sake of clear thinking and then to state the aim of the trip in as specific terms as possible. Take, for example, the trip to study poultry house construction.

Type of Aim.—Application of principles.

Aim.—To teach the principles of poultry house construction by comparing a poultry house with the requirements of a good poultry house.

STEP 1. Having selected the subject of the field trip, classify it as to aim and state the aim clearly in specific terms.

II. Arrangements and Survey by the Teacher

Arrangements and survey are included in one step because they are usually made together during a preliminary trip by the teacher.

The arrangements usually necessary are provisions for transportation and arrangements with the owner of the property where field trip instruction is to be given. The provision for transportation is a simple matter and depends on local conditions. Consequently, it need not be discussed. The arrangements with owners are more important than would appear on the surface. The fol-

lowing are examples of situations which may well be held in mind in making arrangements with the owner:

1. Will the cows to be judged be found in the barn or in the farthest end of the back lot?

2. How will you catch the hens for the culling exercise?

3. Can each boy obtain sufficient practice in the skills which are being taught?

4. Do you wish the class to ask questions of the farmer or do you prefer that he stay in the background?

5. Will the farm operation which you wish to study be in progress?

It is evident that the teacher must think through carefully what will happen during a field trip. The teacher's capacity for foresight will enable him to strengthen his plan in ways which otherwise must be learned through unpleasant experiences. His aim should be to plan the trip so carefully that there will be a minimum of time lost during the field trip and a maximum utilization of teaching opportunities. The majority of field trip plans are weak at this point.

A preliminary survey is also of great assistance in accomplishing this aim. In preparation for a field trip, the teacher should go over the ground carefully and do those things which he will later have the class do. It is a prerequisite to the successful management of details which is so essential to the effectiveness of a field trip. To disregard this principle will often spell failure for the inexperienced teacher.

Let us take for an example the field trip for the study of poultry house construction.

a. Arrangements

1. Select house.
2. Get permission of owner. Indicate that his presence will not be necessary.
3. Arrange so that hens will not be in the house when the class arrives.
4. Note the nearest approach to the poultry house by automobile.

b. Survey

1. Sketch front of house.
2. Sketch floor plan.
3. Sketch side of house.
4. Take all measurements which bear on construction.
5. Get strong and weak points in construction according to the owner.

STEP 2. Indicate in detail your arrangements and survey.

III. Preparation of the Students

The teacher has already determined his aim. It is equally necessary that the students should have an aim. If the teacher, by means of a skilful questioning, can lead the class to set the aim, so much the better. He should indicate at this point in what ways the attainment of this aim will be worth while. State in the plan how you will develop aim.

Students need to have certain directions previous to a field trip. Occasionally the time and place can be announced so that the class can meet at the scene of action, especially if the class is scheduled the first period in the morning, thus gaining time and saving effort for boys who live near the place where the exercise is to be conducted. Usually each boy is required to bring certain articles of equipment, clothes, or lunch. In case a report is to be required, it may be better explained at this point than in the field.

On some trips warning must be given in regard to conduct. Examples of this are warnings against eating fruit without permission, criticising the practices of a farmer in his presence, climbing fences, frightening stock.

For example, the students might be prepared for the poultry house trip as follows:

a. Development of an Aim. Questioning as follows:

1. How many have poultry houses at home?
2. What effect would a poultry house have on egg production in winter?
3. Can we make a good poultry house from a poor one by remodeling?
4. How can you prove that it pays to remodel old poultry houses?
5. How can we learn how to remodel a poultry house?

The aim of the students will be to learn how to remodel a poultry house.

b. *Directions*

1. Meet at _____ at 9 a.m.
2. Bring pencils.
3. Be careful about frightening hens.

STEP 3. A. Indicate the aim you desire the class to have and show in detail how you will develop it.

B. List directions which you will give the class before the start of the trip.

IV. Outline and Organization of the Trip

The biggest single problem of the field trip is to keep students profitably active. Such a profitable activity means also the elimination of the discipline problem.

On a trip of the skill type it is relatively easy to keep a class occupied, provided each student is afforded opportunity to practice the skill or skills to be learned. On a trip of the observation and identification type or the application of principal type, a careful planning of what each student will do is essential. A trip which consists in wandering about a farm making observations suggested by the teacher is the acme of futility. The opposite of this is a trip on which the observations required are specific, accurate, and a matter of record.

The teacher must decide first what the students are to do or what observations they are to make. For example, the activities of a trip to study poultry house construction may be outlined as follows:

Field Trip to Study Construction of Poultry House

Number of hens in this house in winter
..... Breed.....

1. Sketch floor plans, giving dimensions.

2. Sketch front of the house, giving dimensions.

3. Sketch side of the house, giving dimensions.

1. *Floor*.—Kind..... Square feet per hen.....

5. *Glass and Muslin*.—Square feet of glass..... Square feet of muslin

..... Square feet of muslin per square foot of glass

6. *Kinds and Sizes of Lumber*.—Siding..... Uprights.....

Rafts..... Plates.....

7. *Ventilation*
(Diagram)

8. *Foundation*.—Kind.....

9. *Roof*.—Kind

Material.....

When the outline has been determined, the teacher should next *organize* what is to be done or observed. He will need to consider such questions as:

1. What will be the order of procedure for each student?
2. Which students are to work together?
3. What are those boys to do who finish before the rest?
4. What materials will be needed?

For convenience, this organization may be divided into (a) procedure and (b) materials needed. In planning a trip of the skill type, the outline part of Step IV would be relatively less important; the planning of procedure and materials would be important in all types. For example, the procedure and materials for

the poultry house construction trip would be:

Procedure

1. Students to work in pairs, each pair to have a tape. One student in a pair record measurements. When they are taken, the recorder will read the measurements back to the measurer, who will put them on his outline.

2. The pairs are Smith and Brown, Jones and Johnson, etc.

3. The pairs who finish first will spend their time calculating such items as floor space per hen, square feet of glass, etc.

Materials

1. Seven tapes.

STEP 4. Plan the trip as to (a) outline (b) procedure (c) materials necessary.

V. Discussion and Summary

Much of the teaching which results from a field trip occurs during the discussion and summary. A body of facts has been accumulated, the class has been in contact with a real situation; the time is ripe to have the class draw some conclusions and to drive these conclusions home. Hence the futility of conducting a field trip without a thorough discussion and summary.

There are several ways of working out a discussion and summary, two of which will be indicated. The class may be assigned a reading which discusses principles underlying the subject of the field trip. The discussion and summary will thus be a checking of the facts and data of the trip with the principles developed in the text. The floor space per hen, for example, in the poultry house construction trip, will be compared with the amount of space recommended in the text. In this way the important principles may be developed.

A second way may be to require a written report of the field trip from each student. The discussion and criticism of these reports would constitute the final phase of a field trip. The class should make the summary rather than the teacher. The teacher, however, should have definitely in mind the main points which he desires the class to bring out.

It should be noted that the discussion and summary is the most important part of an application of principles field trip, but as a step of the skill type of field trip it is relatively unimportant.

The discussion and summary of a poultry house construction field trip would be conducted as follows:

(a) In preparation for the discussion and summary, the class is to study in *Practical Poultry Production* by Lamon and Kingshorne, pages 132 to 144, with special attention to the points observed on the trip.

(b) The class will criticise the poultry house which was studied by comparing their data with what they have studied from the text.

(c) The following conclusions should be included in the summary:

1. Depth of house
2. Floor space per hen
3. Height of house, front and back
4. Kind of floor
5. Amounts of glass and muslin
6. Sizes of lumber
7. How to ventilate
8. Kind of foundation
9. Type of roof
10. Roof material

(d) The assignment for the following day will be to sketch poultry houses at home and be prepared to draw a plan for remodeling.

STEP 5. Plan by steps the discussion and summary of your field trip.