COPYRIGHT / USAGE

Material on this site may be quoted or reproduced for personal and educational purposes without prior permission, provided appropriate credit is given. Any commercial use of this material is prohibited without prior permission from The Special Collections Department - Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore. Commercial requests for use of the transcript or related documentation must be submitted in writing to the address below.

When crediting the use of portions from this site or materials within that are copyrighted by us please use the citation: Used with permission of the University of Baltimore.

If you have any requests or questions regarding the use of the transcript or supporting documents, please contact us:

Langsdale Library
Special Collections Department
1420 Maryland Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21201-5779
http://archives.ubalt.edu
December 31, 1947

Dear Mrs. Fenner:

Of course it is all right to use the excerpt from my "Parents' Magazine" article if space permits in your homework symposium. The article appeared in "Parents' Magazine" in February, 1945.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Mildred Sandison Fenner,
Assistant Editor,
National Education Assn. of the United States
1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W.
Washington 6, D. C.
December 22, 1947

Mr. Hans Froelicher, Jr., Headmaster
The Park School
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Mr. Froelicher:

With your permission and if space permits, we should like to use the attached excerpt in the "Our Readers Write" columns for February. If we do not hear from you to the contrary, we shall assume that you have no objection.

Very sincerely,

(Mrs.) Mildred Sandison Fenner
Assistant Editor
Some homework is sensible and educative; some is not. Regardless of controversy and variation in quality, homework can be a busy wire of communication between home and school and as such, can be made to function in the growth and learning of a child.—Hans Froelicher, Jr., headmaster, The Park School, Baltimore, Md.

(Mr. Froelicher is the author of an interesting article, "Fresh Slant on Homework," which appeared in Parents' Magazine, )
WHY PRIVATE SCHOOLS?

Do private schools belong in a democratic educational system? Is it democratic to have them? Can we show that the existence of good private schools is of direct tangible value to all education? In the realm of pure theory the argument against the existing dual system of public and private schools can be persuasively maintained. Actually, however, it can be proved that the privately supported schools contribute much to educational ways and means and to the getting of high standards in the scholarship and the living outcomes of children's education.

Are private schools democratic in the largest sense of the word? If a school's faculty works as a democratic group, taking and sharing responsibilities, arriving at conclusions in unity, its democratic testimony is plain. Where this democracy includes the students, giving them a voice in the plan and its carrying out, giving them a feeling of genuine consequence, then that school is democratic in nature no matter where its students come from. This democracy comes out of essential respect for the other fellow, giving him voice and place and responsibility. It begins in the smallest unit, which is the classroom. There is the simplest place outside of the home in which a child can feel that he belongs and belongs responsibly. There is something for each one to do and it is his own. There is, for instance, opportunity for proceeding by discussion; there is the opportunity for unifying the efforts of the several into a common purpose of value to the individual and to the group. And whether it is a project or the organization of ideas in learning, democracy works in the classroom at all ages if the teacher intends that it shall. The private school is well suited to follow democratic practices because of its independence and small classes—groups small enough for accuracy in guidance and completeness in training and experience; fewer pupils per teacher.

Parents who choose private schools for their children frequently do so for the reason that classes are small enough so that each child has a chance to be himself—large enough so that class atmosphere is a challenge from pupil as well as from teacher. Able teachers in the public schools have said to me, "It must be wonderful really to get to know your children." You can know the children usually met in the day of a private school teacher and you can find time to work with them individually—the medium children as well as those who need friendly warmth and those who can give it. There are time and capacity to muster the different powers in each group to the advantage of the class.

The most desirable result of any class or course is the discovery and development of a child's unique capacities and insights—and the discovery must be to him as well as for him. There is no subject matter or material in educative use which cannot be so offered and employed as to give each member of the class a self-respecting feeling of identity and uniqueness. This is the simplest and strongest reason for the patronage of private schools and, therefore, how the privilege of small numbers is employed is the first and the acid test of that school's worth to education and of its appropriateness for individual children.

Wartime asks the question, "Why private schools?" in several ways. Did our boys—and for that matter, our girls, too—have the hardihood they needed or was the private school protective and debilitating? And, did they know what they were fighting for well enough to give themselves honestly to their country's service? The answer here is that when private schools had made democracy vital, the thing for which we are fighting was in those who came out from our schools to fight. Examination on this point of hardihood brought out one very interesting finding. Private school membership is a "tough racket," as tough as needed. In a private school and in its smaller group a child cannot evade impact and association with "all sorts and conditions" of people. If he does not meet much poverty, he does meet the timid, the bold, the compassionate, the overbearing, the musician, the writer, the small, the large, the strong, the weak, the beautiful—and him of curious appearance. He simply cannot escape them. And if the school fulfills its duty he must meet each colleague on that colleague's own ground, giving and taking and gaining respect and offering respect. Now this is a "tough racket" even where the impact is
It is a small fragment of the population which the private schools serve. Excluding the parochial systems such as those of the Lutheran and Catholic churches, private schools muster but one percent of the school children of the country. Yet we are making an important contribution because of the way we are using our independence and our small numbers. As one public school superintendent put it: "It would be a sad day for Democracy if independent schools were no more. Some of them, of course, are snobberies but the principle of educating children as parents—not the State—want them taught is at the root of democracy."

To private education we can attribute the introduction of the secondary school, the kindergarten, the nursery school. Through them come standards of scholarship, physical education for all, a concept of mental hygiene and the first uses of the arts and activities. In recent years, however, public education has also made unique contributions. For public schools can perform educational experiments with controlled scientific techniques, with enough children to arrive at valid statistical results. No private school can muster numbers enough to develop valid statistics, but with the flexibility that comes from independence and small numbers the truth that is sifted from large-scale educational experiments can be more quickly and more completely adapted and adopted by the schools with the smaller numbers.

It is a small fragment of the population which the private schools serve. Excluding the parochial systems such as those of the Lutheran and Catholic churches, private schools muster but one percent of the school children of the country. Yet we are making an important contribution because of the way we are using our independence and our small numbers. As one public school superintendent put it: "It would be a sad day for Democracy if independent schools were no more. Some of them, of course, are snobberies but the principle of educating children as parents—not the State—want them taught is at the root of democracy."

Reprinted from the June 1944 issue of
PARENTS' MAGAZINE
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York 17, N.Y.