THE UTILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES
IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

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The ultimate and inclusive aim of instruction in the social studies is to help the students come to understand social, economic, and political problems and trends. The extent to which an individual comprehends the various phases in the development of the world in which he lives determines their significance in his thinking and the degree to which he is able to participate constructively. There is a vast difference between the apperceptive powers of an infant to whom the world is a "blooming, buzzing confusion" and those of a mature adult who—as a result of a continuous and lengthy educational process in which experience and extended study have been vital factors—has built up a wealth of meaningful concepts by which he interprets elements in his environment. Teaching objectives may be accomplished most effectively through the utilization of tangible instructional materials with which the student possesses some familiarity.

The local community as a source of educational materials easily available to both teacher and pupil has been long neglected. In the first place, it has been taken for granted, the assumption being that students already know all there is to be known about their respective localities; and, in the second place, it has been only within recent years that there has grown up an awareness of the fact that the community is a cross section of society, reflecting both its growth and its present structure.

A community is composed of people of various ages, occupational interests, religious convictions, and political opinions who coöperate in the interest of their common economic, social,
and cultural welfare. Within its roughly defined geographical boundaries are such physical elements as dwellings, streets, parks, monuments, stores, factories, schools, and churches. Each community, while it possesses certain characteristics in common with other like units, invariably has an individual history differing at least in detail from that of every other community. Scrutiny is sure to disclose a rich fund of interesting educational materials valuable in the study of the social sciences. In the analysis of any specific community the following suggestive points may prove helpful:

1. Historical development of the community
   a. Settlement—persons and circumstances as factors
   b. Outstanding persons, movements, and events in the growth of the community; these in many cases relating the community to larger developments in the surrounding area, state, and nation
   c. Tangible evidence in the form of historical sites and landmarks, monuments, memorial tablets, old buildings and their furnishings, museum collections, documents, and newspaper files

2. Geographic aspects of the community
   a. Location—from which are necessarily developed a sense of direction and a concept of distances
   b. Area—within which is necessarily developed a sense of geographical space and proportion
   c. Climate, topography, and natural resources
   d. Population—age, sex, nationality, density, and trends

3. Transportation facilities of the community
   a. Highways, railroads, airlines, and waterways
   b. Automobiles, buses, wagons, trucks, street cars, trains, airplanes, and boats

4. Communication facilities of the community
   a. Telephones, telegraph, and radio
   b. Newspapers and magazines
   c. United States mail service

5. Occupational, industrial, and commercial aspects of the community
   a. Occupations, trades, and professions of the people
   b. Industries, utilities, and farms
c. Chambers of commerce, trade associations, and labor organizations
d. Warehouses and merchandizing establishments
e. Banking, insurance, and real-estate services

6. Governmental and political aspects of the community
   a. Public buildings, streets, and parks
   b. Public health and safety—sanitation, zoning, traffic control, fire defense, and police protection
   c. Public opinion, political parties, campaigns, and elections
   d. State and federal agencies and services

7. Social and cultural aspects of the community
   a. Standard of living—housing, conveniences, and economic security
   b. Education—schools, libraries, study clubs, and public forums
   c. Religion—Sunday schools and churches
   d. Protective agencies—health and welfare
   e. Recreation and amusement—parks, playgrounds, clubs, and theaters.
   f. Attitudes and beliefs in respect to religion, home life, morality, politics, law enforcement and property

It should be remembered that communities vary as to type. The differences between an agricultural village, which is largely mercantile in character because it serves the surrounding countryside, and an industrial village, which centers around one or more small industries and serves a more restricted area, must be considered. Governmental towns such as county seats and state capitals present certain scopes of study, while large urban communities, which include coastal and inland river, lake, and railroad cities given largely to trade and merchandizing and others given largely to manufacturing, present certain other special lines of thought.

Obviously some communities are richer than others in historical content because they have figured more prominently in the development of the nation as well as of the region in which they are located. Some are richer than others in economic content, and some in cultural contribution. But no community is barren of interest, for "favored communities are no more real than unfavored communities." Every community must have a
history, possess certain geographical elements, and engage in some economic activity and social cooperation. In fact, an analysis of a community in accordance with the foregoing suggestions will invariably reveal more socio-economic and political elements characteristic of the world at large than have generally been recognized.

In the unit procedure which characterizes progressive instruction throughout the country reference may be made to these local materials as points of departure during the periods of exploration and presentation. Mention should be made of them in the study-guide sheet to be used by the students during assimilation. They should find a place in the organization of student learning following assimilation. To present such materials in this manner is the very least a teacher can do in capitalizing upon local resources. Even this much will prove to be worth while, for it is one means of clothing the verbal and intangible with a sense of reality by relating classroom learning to concepts which are connected with the student’s observation and experience.

The use of community resources may be increased by bringing the community to the students and by taking them to the community. The former may involve accumulation for use in the classroom of books and newspapers, pictures, forms, and documents relating to past and present community life; collection of relics and community products; and discussions in the classroom by community leaders on various aspects of community activity with which the students are not familiar. Students may be taken to the community by means of class visits to local factories in connection with the study of industry or to post offices and health departments in connection with the study of governmental functions and services. These two approaches may be combined through delegation of student committees to interview community leaders in various fields of endeavor. Thus students may be given direct contacts with their community in its manifold aspects and at the same time be provided with an abundance of material to be used in their studies.

Further use of community resources may be made by the organization of an entire unit of learning around community life or some phase of it. In this case the primary object may be to develop in the students an understanding of the nature of the community in which they live. On the other hand, the aim may
properly include not only a comprehension of the problems and trends which characterize the life of the community but also a desire and a plan to enter constructively into the life of the community.

Regardless of the specific ways in which community resources are used in the classroom it should be remembered that almost every topic or problem in the field of the social studies may find its starting point in the local community; that the local community affords an abundance of illustrations by means of which to clothe verbal abstractions with reality; and that the utilization of community resources serves to keep learning within the range of student experience and observation.
PILGRIMAGES in every community are making Pennsylvania public-school children of today conscious of the state’s great abundance of historic shrines. The commonwealth is rich too in interesting personalities, many of whom have been almost completely neglected. Among these is Dr. Elizabeth Reifsnyder, teacher and server, whose life is worthy of grateful comment.

Elizabeth, daughter of John and Nancy Musselman Reifsnyder, was born in Liverpool, Perry county, Pennsylvania, on January 17, 1858. Her father, at one time justice of the peace in Liverpool and later an associate judge of Perry county, owned and operated a tannery. When Elizabeth was a child, the stagecoaches of Caldern, Kapp and Company dashed gayly through the town. Just beyond the highway flowed the Pennsylvania canal, its burdens pulled slowly along by mules on the towpath. Not far from the Reifsnyder home, which is still standing on South Front Street, were two of the great locks of the canal, beside one of which was located the famous Ferry Tavern, now the Owens House. John Huggins was the original owner of the old ferry that operated for more than a century between Liverpool and the east shore of the Susquehanna.

Market Square in Liverpool, like the squares in Northumberland and Sunbury and other towns in central Pennsylvania copied after the English, had in its center a public park. There picnics were held, and the village band gave concerts on the stand. There the Reifsnyder children played with others of their generation, and there they attended the Methodist Episcopal church. The towering maple trees that today shade the square and the bandstand (where concerts are still given) were planted when Elizabeth was very small.

One by one the seven boys and girls of the jolly, well-to-do Pennsylvania Dutch family graduated from the local public school. Cordelia and Margaret went off in turn to the old Moravian school.
at Lititz in Lancaster county, but Elizabeth chose the Millersville State Normal School, where she eventually decided to become a medical missionary. For a woman to study medicine in those days was unusual, but for one to study the profession with the idea of practicing the healing art in an unchristian land was without precedent. Nevertheless Elizabeth Reifsnyder after completing her work in the normal school entered the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, from which she graduated in 1881.

After a year of service as an interne Dr. Reifsnyder, then a tall brown-eyed, brown-haired young woman of twenty-three, sailed for Shanghai, China, where she opened one of the first hospitals in the country. The institution was housed in a low one-story building, dimly lighted and inadequately ventilated. Operated under the auspices of the Women's Union Mission of America, it was interdenominational and was known as the Margaret Williamson Hospital, in honor of a generous donor to the cause. At first the people were suspicious, and few came for aid. Then one day a shapeless woman suffering from a huge ovarian cyst was carried on a litter to the hospital door. Dr. Reifsnyder, in a difficult and hazardous operation that has since been lectured on in medical colleges over the world as a unique operative feat in gynecological surgery, removed the cyst, which contained twenty-two gallons of fluid. The story of the marvelous cure soon spread, and the hospital became so crowded that new buildings were necessary. Under the personal direction of Dr. Reifsnyder the institution eventually grew into one of the greatest hospital units of the Far East. Rich and poor alike asked for medical help. Among the more affluent patients was Madame Wu Tin Fang, wife of the famous Chinese ambassador to the United States. At the time of the hospital's twenty-fifth anniversary more than eight hundred thousand patients had received treatment therein. Often as many as two hundred and fifty people a day were cared for.

In spite of rebellions, famines, and other tragedies that swept unfortunate China, Dr. Reifsnyder, supported by a loyal staff, stuck to her post. She made several journeys to America to seek funds with which to carry on her work. In 1914, overtaxed by long years of service, she at last returned to Liverpool for a brief rest. The return trip which she planned many times was never made. She died at her old home on February 3, 1922, and was
buried in the cemetery on the hill overlooking the Susquehanna. A simple stone marks her last resting place.

In Liverpool, under the maple trees in Market Square beside the central path over which the town children today trudge to the school on the hill, the Perry County Historical Society has erected on a boulder a bronze tablet telling the important facts of the life of Perry county's most distinguished daughter. In Shanghai the Chinese government has erected in her memory a monument which stands outside the maternity hospital bearing her name. This unit in the Margaret Williamson Hospital group was built by the Chinese people, using as a nucleus money which Dr. Reifsnyder had left in China and which before her death she had willed to the institution where she had worked so many years.