

THE NEGRO AND THE NORTHERN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



II



IN the March CRISIS we told of the need for a Vocational Counsellor for colored children in the public schools of New York and of how Mrs. Elise Johnson McDougald came to be appointed to that position. We now continue the account of her activities.

7. THE WORK OF THE FIRST YEAR

During the first year, the Counsellor (Mrs. McDougald) interviewed all girls over 14 from grades 6B through grade 8B. As a result of guidance at P. S. No. 119, the percentage of graduates going to high school, instead of to work was raised in one term from 62½% to 78%; the third to 85½, and the next to 89%. The number taking the general high school work showed the largest increase in numbers. For instance, in June, 1919, 11 girls went to Wadleigh High School, while in February, 1920, 25 girls went on to prepare for such work as teaching, high grade secretarial work, and the professions of medicine, etc. The number going to work was decreased to 11 from 16. Special attention was given to those girls who were forced to go to work and everything done to secure for them jobs at which they could have some training.

DISTRIBUTION OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL GRADUATES

| | Jan., '19 | Jan., '20 | June, '20 | Jan., '21 |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| To High School..... | 62½% | 78% | 85% | 89% |
| To Manhattan Trade..... | 16¼% | 8 | 8¼ | 6 |
| To Business School..... | 1¼% | 2 | 1¼ | 2 |
| To Work..... | 20 | 12 | 3 | 1 |
| Leaving City..... | 0 | 0 | 1¼ | 0 |
| To Music Conservatory | 0 | 0 | 1¼ | At Home 2 |

One criticism which this work brought from an official high in the school system was that too many Negroes were being encouraged to go to high school!

Besides this work with graduates, a number of girls in the 7th and 8th year were persuaded not to leave school and go to work but rather to take a one year's course at the Manhattan Trade School. Ten such girls entered the Trade School during that school year.

Figures do not give an adequate picture of the detail of the work necessary to bring about the above results. It entailed the explanation to parents of the meaning and use of psychological examinations which were given by the Educational Clinic of the College of the City of New York.

It entailed home visits; the securing of

scholarships from the Child Labor and the Henry Street Scholarship Committees, in order to raise the family financial status to the point where advice as to further schooling could be acted upon. Help was also secured from such organizations as the Charity Organization Society, Harlem Hospital, Clinics, Widows Pension Bureau, St. George's Society, Henry Street Visiting Nurses, etc.

8. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK

During the second year, every effort was made to further improve the technique of guidance. The invention of a system of symbols, showing the purpose and result of interviews, greatly helped in keeping accurate record of each day's work. The large sheets used for summarizing the vocational problems of an entire class were discarded and the use of a file card for each pupil, begun.

The routine work of interviewing and advising the graduating class and the girls over 14 and above 6B was continued in the second year. Besides the raising of the percent of graduates going to high school, 9 out of 20 girls in the 7th and 8th years were dissuaded from leaving to go to work and kept in No. 119. One graduate of the last year returned to get information about the Continuation School and was persuaded to enter High School. In addition, six girls who were especially suited to Manhattan Trade School, but who were not admitted upon application, were induced to remain in No. 119 rather than seek work when jobs were scarce.

During the second year, the Bureau began to receive calls from the High Schools in Manhattan and the Bronx who asked that guidance and placement work be done for their colored students. This work was in addition to the regular work mapped out but was gladly undertaken because of the need.

The third year of Vocational Guidance was begun with the re-assignment of the same Counsellor, as teacher-in-excess at School 119 and at the Counsellor's request, she was so assigned by the Board of Superintendents and the Board of Education that she could also work in the boys' school, 89, as well as in 119. Having reduced the tech-

nique of guidance to a habit, she felt that guidance in two schools would be quite possible. To the second school, the District-Superintendent added a third, and in September, 1922, work in the three schools was under way. The Bureau at 89 was completely equipped as an office, but at 5 the work went on without proper equipment. The Counsellor met with hearty co-operation on the part of all of the Principals, who expressed themselves as being completely in sympathy with the work which they consider vital.

Besides the work of holding group talks with the 8B students, the individual interviewing was continued. As the work progressed, the duties of the Counsellor resembled the work of the "Special Teacher": it was necessary to instruct the teachers in the methods of guidance, and to leave to the class teacher the guidance of those children who presented only the ordinary problems. Teachers have been doing vocational guidance but confess themselves in need of data and technique to avoid the poor results that follow incompetent advice. The Counsellor discovered through the files those children in circumstances which warranted special guidance. The standard of the Counsellor was to interfere with class work as little as possible and to get information, independently of the teacher's time, of those cases mentioned above (just as the nurse and other workers do). The teachers were encouraged and took advantage of the Counsellor's request that cases needing immediate attention be sent to the Bureau even before reached through the Counsellor's routine work.

9. INTENSIVE STUDIES

During this third year of work a study was made of 127 girl graduates of the classes of 1919 and 1920 of public school 119, who had entered high school or trade school after having received guidance at 119. This study was made by Dorothy Hendrickson, a colored teacher working for her Master's degree at Columbia University.

The homes of all of the 127 girls were visited and the following facts found:

27% of the 127 girls are still in high school. Of these, 75% of the girls are B+ or higher in the personality estimate of the school, including neatness, punctuality and attendance. Of 60 girls in high school 47 were found to be up to grade, 22 retarded one term, 5 two terms, and one three terms.

Of the 22 retarded, one term, 14 can graduate on time.

33% of the girls had left high school. There are 41 girls at work all day and three still in school working after school. Of these 44, 20 are working at the kind of work for which they have received training, 24 are working in lines other than that toward which they had been encouraged, but 14 had followed the general advice given by the Counsellor. There were 10 who did not take the Counsellor's advice. Of these 10, 7 were retarded and finally changed to the choice suggested. Five of these girls dropped out of school.

Another special study was made by the Counsellor herself on the "Use of the Intelligence Test in Solving the Problems of Vocational Guidance." Three groups were studied: The over-age group choosing to take up domestic and personal service. The group choosing stenography, the group of 28 students facing the problem of choosing high or trade school or work.

When it used to be asserted that no difference was made among pupils in the schools this resulted in the colored group being almost entirely without special guidance or notice. Mrs. McDougald's work was to take into account the special needs of this group and present it to the authorities so that attention could be paid to it. Many of them soon became willing to give every consideration to these needs. The responsibility, however, of finding out just what the needs were, was placed upon the shoulders of the colored citizens.

10. THE VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE COMMITTEE

As the result, the Vocational Guidance Committee for Harlem was formed with colored and white members from the educators and citizens of the district. They induced the United States Department of Labor to make the vocational survey of New York City which has covered 5,000 employers and 1,000 colored employees. It is thought that this survey will show the broad range of employment of colored people and be a definite answer to the attempt of the Manhattan Trade School to narrow Negro training.

11. INTELLIGENCE TESTS

This report illustrates the whole problem. Here is a group of people who need intelligent sympathy and attention; they need all grades of education; and, most of all, enlarged vocational opportunity. They are