PARALLEL PROGRESSIVIST ORIENTATIONS: EXPLORING THE MEANINGS OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION IN TWO ONTARIO JOURNALS, THE SCHOOL AND THE CANADIAN SCHOOL JOURNAL, 1919-1942

by

Theodore Michael Christou

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation arose from a need to derive an inclusive model for describing the historical meanings of progressive education. It considers reform rhetoric published in two widely distributed and accessible journals in Ontario, The School and The Canadian School Journal, between 1919 and 1942. These sources brought together a wide variety of educationists in the province, including teachers, school board representatives, members of the Department of Education, inspectors, and the staff of teacher training institutions, and were forums for the exploration of new and progressive educational ideas. Various conceptions and interpretations of what progressive education would entail were published side by side, in parallel.

This dissertation describes the rhetoric of progressive education, which concerned three domains—active learning, individualized instruction, and the linking of schools to contemporary society—and considers the distinctions within this language. Further, this dissertation argues that progressivist ideas were interpreted and represented in different ways according to conceptual orientation and context. Three distinct interpretations of progressive education are described in this thesis. The first progressivist orientation was primarily concerned with child study and developmental psychology; the second concerned social efficiency and industrial order; the third concerned social meliorism and cooperation. Hence, I draw not only on three different domains of progressivist rhetoric, but also on three distinct orientations to reform. What emerges is a description of how different progressivists understood and represented Ontario’s transforming schools, in a context affected by the forces of modernity, world war, and economic depression.
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To Aoedē, muse of song, who embraces all that has come and all that shall come, I give thanks. Glenda, dear wife, there is much cause to celebrate.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that all of the work described within this thesis is the original work of the author. Any published (or unpublished) ideas and/or techniques from the work of others are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

THEODORE MICHAEL CHRISTOU

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Today we live in a complex civilization which it is necessary to understand in order to be adjusted to it. Schools are the means by which we accomplish this period of adjustment.¹

Research Question and Thesis

This dissertation offers a model for describing the reform rhetoric related to progressive education in Ontario between 1919 and 1942. This dissertation addresses a need to describe distinct interpretations of progressive education and differentiate progressivist from traditional concerns for schooling. It considers how progressive education was received in a context affected by the forces of modernity, world war, and economic depression. The dissertation also discusses the revisions to Ontario’s program of study undertaken in the late 1930s and early 1940s from the perspective of various currents of progressivist thought.

As an educator, I have had the privilege of teaching in early childhood, public, private, and postsecondary schooling institutions. On multiple occasions, by colleagues and associates, I have been referred to as a progressive educator. The label itself was always a puzzling one for me, not in the least because I was uncertain about its meaning. What kind of progressive was I, and to what ends was I progressing? The literature on progressive education was equally baffling to me as I began this research, as it seemed to identify manifold, even contradictory beliefs and practices with the progressive camp. This dissertation became an effort to provide an inclusive framework for describing the

dominant themes of progressive education, in to provide a working definition for progressivist rhetoric to focus the field of investigation. Within this inclusive model, various orientations to and interpretations of progressivist themes could be compared and contrasted.

How progressivist ideas were interpreted and represented in the context of this study, I argue, differed according to conceptual orientation and context. As one editorial article from 1930 noted: “The meaning of progressive education, as the term is used in recent educational writings, is not easy to define. It is in the nature of the word that the types of educational activity to which it is applied should continually vary.”

Three distinct interpretations of progressive education are described in this thesis. The first progressivist orientation was primarily concerned with child study and developmental psychology; the second concerned social efficiency and industrial order; the third concerned social meliorism and cooperation. Hence, I draw not only on three different domains of progressivist rhetoric, but also on three distinct orientations to reform. What emerges is a description of how different progressivists understood and represented Ontario’s transforming schools.

Throughout this dissertation, the term progressivist is used to describe a specific educational standpoint toward educational reform in Ontario. Progressivist denotes the language and ideas of progressive education, entailing arguments that schools needed to provide opportunities for active learning, individualized instruction, and knowledge or experiences related to contemporary life outside the schools. The term relates to matters of pedagogy and rhetoric, not political or ideological trends of progressivism writ large in the provincial or national contexts. The aim of this usage is in accordance with my

working definition of progressive education, which unifies differing orientations to educational reform and examines various domains of progressivist concern.

This study draws on editorial articles published in two journals that were widely accessible and distributed between 1919 and 1942, The School and The Canadian School Journal. The editorials in these source journals presented progressivist visions for school reform that I examined in order to describe what educationists in the Ontario context considered the aims and objectives of progressive education. The sources are discussed at length in Chapter II. By educationists, I am referring to a broad spectrum of stakeholders in education including, but not limited to, teachers, administrators, professors of education, school inspectors, and officials within the Department of Education.

The central research questions in this dissertation inquire into the qualitatively different understandings of progressive education between 1919 and 1942. Specifically, I ask: What did progressive education mean to Ontario’s educational community in this period? More precisely, what do articles in the educational journals tell us about different orientations toward progressive education? The central themes, or domains, that I investigate—active learning, individualized instruction, and interrelating schools with society—and the distinct orientations that interpreted these domains—child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism—will be discussed at length below. The thesis here is that in Ontario’s educational journals between 1919 and 1942, progressivist rhetoric needs to be described both in terms of common domains and in terms of distinct orientations.

3 The interwar context is extended into 1942, the year of the death of Duncan McArthur, Minister of Education in Ontario. McArthur featured prominently in the province’s progressivist reform rhetoric.
**Working Definition**

In accordance with my reading of the two primary sources focused on in this dissertation, I have derived a working definition of progressive education that unifies different domains of progressivist concern in Ontario between 1919 and 1942. I use the term *domain* to describe a thematic area of interest common to all progressivist texts. I believe that this definition, encompassing areas of common interest, permits a description of the distinct orientations within those domains. In this dissertation, the term *progressivist* is used to designate distinct educational reform discourses in Ontario. As opposed to terms such as *educationally progressive* or *educational progressivism*, which are connotatively related to descriptions of school reforms, teaching practice, or political and ideological currents, *progressivist* here relates only to language. The progressivist rhetoric examined in this thesis concerned three broad domains—promotion of active learning, addressing individual student’s needs, and relating schools to contemporary society—depicting arguments for and descriptions of how Ontario’s schools should be reformed. Further, this dissertation considers three distinct orientations running parallel to one another within the progressivist rhetoric. Child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism are, consequently, treated as divergent orientations to progressive education in Ontario’s progressivist rhetoric between 1919 and 1942.

**Three Orientations Characterizing Progressivist Discourse in Ontario’s Educational Journals**

Historian Herbert Kliebard identified three divergent orientations to progressive education—child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism—as ways of describing the
curricular reform debates in the United States. I employ these three progressivist orientations as heuristics to explore how different readings of progressive education were published, often side by side, in Ontario’s educational journals. I use these distinct orientations to explore the following three domains: (a) concern for active learning, (b) preoccupation with individualized instruction, and (c) the desire to link schools with contemporary society. These themes represent the common concerns treated by the progressivist articles, and they frame the analysis of different orientations to progressive education in the province.

This study describes different tendencies within Ontario’s progressivist rhetoric and aims to broaden our understanding of what progressive education meant to educationists writing in two of the province’s journals between 1919 and 1942. This dissertation offers a model for describing distinct interpretations of progressivist themes, while retaining an inclusive classification of progressive education that concentrates on educationists’ language. It depicts different orientations to educational reform that were equivalent rather than at war, which is analogous to the way that differing opinions were published in the primary sources.

**Chapter Outlines**

The first chapter of this dissertation considers the historical context in Ontario during the interwar period (1919–1942). It concerns, rather broadly, the social, economic, and political changes within the context in order to draw a rough sketch of the system of schooling in Ontario at the time that the progressivist articles examined were being published. The separate schools, the Department of Education, the revisions to
curriculum, and the expansion of educational opportunity are discussed. This first chapter is intended as a general overview of Ontario’s system of schooling over the period with the aim of providing a context for the educationists’ progressivist discourse.

The second chapter begins by elaborating on the historical sources examined. It explains their importance to this study and to the province’s educational community at the time. What follows is an exploration of various approaches to the study of progressive education. What do the educational journals reveal about the qualitatively different understandings of progressive education in Ontario? Critical realism, my principal conceptual orientation, is explained as a means of exploring the meanings of educational language.

Chapters III, IV, and V represent the core of my thesis. Each examines one of the three domains of progressivist texts that I have identified: advocacy for school reforms that would promote active learning, individualize instruction, and relate schools to the realities of contemporary life. Each of these chapters entails three sections, which correspond to distinct progressivist orientations: child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism. The sections describe the ways that different types of progressivist articles depicted the aims and means of school reforms in Ontario between 1919 and 1942.

Chapter VI considers the decline of emphasis on humanistic and classical descriptions of educational aims within the sources. It also considers the critiques of progressivist reforms of Ontario’s education from within the established, traditional paradigm for schooling. In this chapter, the humanists’ advocacy of school libraries as havens for canonical texts and classical works of literature receives special attention. In this dissertation, despite the broad connotative associations of terms such as the humanities and humanistic study, the term humanist is used as a foil to the progressivist position. If
humanists’ arguments in defence of a classical curriculum, which humanists believed could develop intellect and train mental faculties, lost their dominance on the rhetorical level, humanists believed that at least libraries, which preserved traditional educational ideals, would remain closely associated with schools. Such humanistic arguments are considered here to be the principal critiques of progressivist discourse in the source journals.

Chapter VII concentrates on the broader context of Ontario’s political and pedagogical context. This final section bookends the dissertation’s opening chapter, which provided an overview of the province’s changing socio-political and educational background and set the stage for a closer examination of progressivist rhetoric. Chapter VII considers the period between 1937 and 1942. It opens by examining Ontario’s 1937 curriculum reforms, and it characterizes these revisions to the province’s program of study as an attempt to intertwine different progressivist concerns, including health, social studies, and cooperative activity, into a broad and comprehensive vision for the province’s schools. The chapter considers some of the effects of World War II on Ontario’s progressivist rhetoric, beginning with the swell of arguments defending the primacy of democratic ways of life and the promotion of active citizenship. Ultimately, the early 1940s, like the entire interwar context, thrust upon Ontario’s citizens the impetus of responding to what George Tomkins referred to as the “problems of economic recession, political confusion, sectional conflict … and fears of Americanization.”

Progressive education would be linked to the shifting needs of contemporary life, as defined by educationists within a particular context.

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4 George S. Tomkins, A Common Countenance: Stability and Change in the Canadian Curriculum (Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press, 2008), 144.
CHAPTER II
ONTARIO’S EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

It is, then, the responsibility of educators of every grade and rank, from the primary school to the university, to acquaint themselves with the facts of the present day world, and if possible, to determine a philosophy adequate for the construction of that new society which may emerge from the present chaos.¹

Synopsis and Introduction

This section considers continuity and change with regard to such matters as teacher education, curriculum reform, school organization, federations, and professionalization of the teaching profession in Ontario. Insofar as political and socio-economic factors in Canadian and Ontarian society affected educational matters, these will also be discussed. The expansion of education in the province is reviewed, and emergent themes, including child study, health, and social efficiency are introduced.

Post–World War I: Changes and Ruptures within the Context

The period following World War I in Ontario first revealed the influence of progressivist educational ideas in the province.² During the interwar period, progressive rhetoric and reforms flourished across the country. In the words of John Herd

² There would be a later, neo-progressive iteration of reform discourse and policy in the 1960s and 1970s, but the interwar period is one where Ontario’s educationists initially adopted and interpreted the rhetoric of progressive education. Living and Learning, published by The Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario, appearing in 1968 and commonly referred to as the Hall–Dennis Report, is perhaps the best example of this neo-progressive discourse in the province.
Thompson and Allen Seager, “the 1920s saw a flowering of the movement for ‘progressive’ education in Canada.”

By the early 1930s, the educational discourse in all Canadian provinces was beginning to reveal such influences. By 1919, in the wake of World War I, the social and economic effects of a sudden, dramatic increase in immigration and urbanization had taken hold across Canada; in Robert Patterson’s words, “after World War I, Canadians entered a new era, characterized by industrialization, urbanization and increasing emphasis on democratic development.”

Tom Mitchell explained that following World War I, middle-class Canadians dealt projected a national identity “by casting the post-war order in a particular idiom of nationalism informed by a common Canadianism rooted in Anglo-conformity and a citizenship framed in notions of service, obedience, obligation and fidelity to the state.”

World War II also provoked great change across the country, influencing notions of citizenship and the role of education in shaping a polity. The Great Depression of the 1930s, which nurtured the belief that educational reform could bring about economic and

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social change, also falls within the scope of this study.\textsuperscript{8} Despite at least two recessions in the decade following World War I, Ontario’s economy had benefited immensely from the exploitation and export of northern Ontario’s vast softwood lumber and mineral reserves.\textsuperscript{9} The automobile manufacturing and steel industries stretching across the “golden horseshoe” from Hamilton to Oshawa and in the province’s southwest also contributed to Ontario’s economic boom.\textsuperscript{10} The development of local and efficient hydroelectric power decreased the province’s dependence on imported coal and reinforced its status as an industrial hotspot.\textsuperscript{11}

The ideas of modernity and progress transformed the interwar period.\textsuperscript{12} Kieran Egan paints the following striking scenario in an effort to depict a changing landscape affected by rapid growths in population largely due to immigration, industrial expansion, universal schooling, and the emerging influence of the theory of evolution:

As your train carries you on, at a speed and with a comfort unimaginable to any traveler before you in history, you recognize that the physical and social changes you see are reflected in, or are products of, a ferment of new ideas. The number and novelty of those new ideas is disruptive on a scale never before experienced. The result creates anxiety in those who see the foundations of their old intellectual world being threatened but is exhilarating to progressive minds.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{9} Ian Drummond, Progress without Planning: The Economic History of Ontario from Confederation to the Second World War (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Egan, Getting It Wrong from the Beginning, 2.
Education, while often seen as out of touch with the changing and ever-evolving realities of life, was also taken to be a force for remedying ills, preparing for the future, and enabling upcoming generations to deal with the modern world. A new, progressive education was required for a modern, progressive world.

Soldiers returning from World War I, for example, found their homes and worlds transformed. Many of their wives and sisters had left home or entered the workplace, gained the right to vote in the federal elections, lobbied for temperance and prohibition of alcohol, and become active citizens. Moreover, a post-war industrial crisis meant many veterans found themselves unemployed upon returning home, while others could not work because of injuries and disabilities brought on by the struggles in Europe. This provoked a sharp increase in strike activity as well as “demands for social justice and decent living conditions.”

The trend toward urbanization that began at the end of the last century continued unabated. Consequently, municipalities wrestled with the growing need to cope with unemployment, city planning duties, and an influx of settlers. Rural populations, composing 40 percent of Ontario’s population as late as 1921, saw their world and worldviews vanishing, and began to unite and fight for their values in the political

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14 Ibid.
16 The Act to Confer the Electoral Franchise Upon Women took effect January 1, 1919.
18 Ibid., 42–43. According to Naylor: “Unprecedented working-class militancy greeted the end of the war.” He backs up this statement with staggering statistics: “Strike activity, which tended to level off in 1917, albeit at a rather high level, climbed to new heights as the war drew to an end. In the region as a whole, the number of worker-days lost in strikes climbed from 25,000 in 1915 to more than 120,000 in 1918 and to an astounding 850,000 in 1919.”
sphere. The United Farmers of Ontario swept into power at Queen’s Park in 1919, buoyed by the vote in rural areas of the province. Labour groups increasingly united in the face of worsening work conditions, and strike activity rose dramatically in the years following the war. The All-Canadian Congress of Labour, the Canadian Federation of Labour, the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, the Workers’ Unity League, and the Congress of Industrial Organizations were, along with individual unions, active during this period in Ontario and across Canada.

**Planning for a Changing World and Coping with Contingency**

Many of these changes were undertaken in the name of progress, and reformers across Canada were “trying to provide more adequately for the present and future” within contexts that had altered significantly since 1914. Among the many reform causes, those of the farm communities were among the most influential in the immediate post-war period; in fact, “their concerns constituted the core of the Progressive movement in Canada.” A new progressive coalition led by E. C. Drury comprising United Farmers of Ontario and Independent Labour Party members won 55 seats in the 1919 provincial election. This party largely represented labour and farmer interest groups, but a growing intellectual elite in the country was also interested in social and political

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21 Ibid.
24 Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 360.
25 Ibid., 360.
policy reform. In the words of Robert S. Patterson, the United Farmers of Ontario felt that “the old national political parties were seen as allies of the commercial, industrial, and financial interests that were taking unfair advantage of the farm population.”

In the early 1920s, the strength of the rural reform interests was made evident with the success of the Progressive Party, which “won sixty-five seats to become second in strength to the Liberals. But the success was short-lived in the federal arena as their representation dropped to twenty-four in the 1926 election.” The Progressives’ failure to secure any entrenched position in federal politics, or Ontarian politics, was reflected in their failure to establish any substantial economic reforms. Dissatisfaction with political representation and economic policies was not limited to rural concerns; unrest was “apparent among other segments of the population. Women struggled for and gained new strength through suffrage. The labour population was the centre of a still greater uneasiness.” In part, this contributed to a growing tendency for working-class Ontarians to seek broader change through the ballot box. Parliamentary activity, seemingly a more feasible means of reaching for a new and better society than direct labour unrest, increased in Ontario immediately after the Great War; yet ethnic, local, and occupational differences made broad-based political reform movements difficult to build.

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28 Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 360.
29 Ibid., 361.
30 Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 361.
32 Ibid.
Strikes, demographic changes, immigration, political dissatisfaction, and rapid industrialization had all altered the way that Ontarians saw their world. As Patterson notes, “Strikes were frequent. A proposed national strike was not launched, but in Winnipeg in 1919 a city-wide strike vividly indicated how conditions had changed.” Economic breakdowns, most evidently the Great Depression that began in 1929, “convinced many Canadians that basic changes were inevitable … many of the changes considered in the twenties were implemented in the thirties.” Progress had to be made if social policies and government were to respond to the realities of life.

This broader push for progress affected various pieces of legislation that represented breaks in the laissez-faire style of government non-action into the domains of public good and welfare, including unemployment insurance (first attempted in 1940 on a national level) and the Depression-era (1929–1935) running of budgetary deficits for the funding of public works projects to stimulate economic recovery and employ citizens. Similarly, in education, reform initiatives linked to progressive reform signalled a changing relationship between government, citizenry, and modernity. Schools, like society, could be reformed and made “progressive”; they needed to educate citizens for the realities of a modern, not a Victorian, world.

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33 Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 360.
34 Ibid., 360.
Progressive Education for a Progressive Society

Brian Titley has argued that progressive education and its concern for child study, individualized instruction, and active learning emerged from and is “clearly linked with two related reformist movements that gripped North America early in this century: progressivism and the social gospel.”38 In his assessment, both progressives and social gospellers were concerned with changes wrought by modernity, industrialism, immigration, and fear of social instability; they were driven by a strong sense of middle-class Christian morality to reduce conflict, foster community, and build social responsibility.39 Robert Patterson, reflecting on the vastness of Canada, its internal diversity, the uniqueness of each province’s system of schools, and the multidimensional aspects of progressive education, is more hesitant to define causes and effects of the movement.40 However, Patterson was certain that progressive education affected Canadian schooling in a profound way:

Its principles and beliefs gained prominence in the rhetoric and writing of school officials, political leaders and social reformers. Throughout Canada, especially in the 30-year time span between the outbreak of World War I and the end of World War II, advocates of school reform relied heavily on the message of progressive education in their efforts to effect change. Curriculum reforms occurred in virtually every province, and the so-called new education became visible in the methodology and purposes of the schools of the nation.41

38 E. Brian Titley, “Editor’s Introduction,” in Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues, ed. E. Brian Titley (Calgary, AB: Detselig, 1990), 81. “This century” refers to the twentieth century.
39 Ibid., 81–82. Titley believes that the basic tenets of these movements were based on “reformist, not revolutionary, sentiments. Progressive education … became one of the instruments of these movements.”
40 Robert S. Patterson, “The Canadian Experience with Progressive Education,” Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues, ed. E. Brian Titley (Calgary, AB: Detselig, 1990), 95–110. In fact, Patterson believed it “virtually impossible to provide a simple, capsule statement about how the nation was influenced by and dealt with this phenomenon,” 95.
41 Ibid., 95.
Certainly, Patterson’s belief that the reform movement expanded both cautiously and slowly, culminating in the late 1930s, confirms my reading of the educational journals in Ontario. The most common and consistent progressivist refrain in the sources, as will be seen in the following chapters, is an acute awareness of changes wrought by modernity on the province and a call to arms for educationists to narrow the gap between schools and society.

In 1928, an editorial in the Canadian School Board Journal found it necessary to comment on that refrain, which was already widespread as a subject of discussion in the periodicals and at educational conferences. In response to the needs of a modern world, the article noted, educational aims were shifting: “A perusal of the printed volume of Proceedings from year to year would show the bearing the discussions, resolutions and addresses of the various sections have had in adapting the educational system of the province to meet modern needs.” Indeed, that same year at the Ontario Educational Association Conference, The Canadian School Journal reported labour leader Thomas Moore’s pronouncement that “educational systems must necessarily undergo changes to enable the youth to meet the demands of modern complex civilization.”

Progressive schools, it was argued, should respond to a fast-changing world. Telephones, electric motors, refrigerators, streetcars, telephones, films, automobiles, paved highways, airplanes, and radio all provided evidence that society was growing

43 Ibid., 2.
44 “The Aims of Education,” Canadian School Board Journal (June 1928): 4. The speaker cited was President of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. The article summarized events occurring at the 1928 Convention. Moore also, the article related, spoke of the League of Nations and introduced its publication, A New World. His speech is notable because of the expression he gave to the changes modernity wrought on Ontario, but also because he saw these changes as ongoing: “No one can possibly forecast what the educational needs of the next decade will be because of the rapid development in industry, agriculture, and science.”
increasingly complex; schools designed to relate to past societal needs were, in the present context, out of touch.  

Throughout the interwar period, the rhythmic thumping of the theme of modernity was constant. It lent impetus to the progressivists’ demands for educational reform and, at least in the sources examined here, was so frequent as to be nearly commonplace. Even in 1942, when Canadians were fully engaged with World War II, the calls for a new order in touch with modern times persisted—so much so that Professor R. J. McCracken of McMaster University felt compelled to comment on the “striking parallel between what is being said now about post-war aims and what was being said from 1914–1918.”  

From the end of World War I until the advent of World War II, arguments that life must be refashioned for modern times had become slogans—yet substantial changes, particularly in schooling, had yet to be made.  

**Expansion of Education Opportunities**

The interest in better relating schools to a changing, progressive society carried a different connotation when related to immigrant populations in Ontario. Education was a crucial means by which society could reach into the homes of new Canadians and assimilate them efficiently into the dominant model of citizenship propagated by the British Empire and Commonwealth. Bringing schools and society into closer alignment could promote democracy at the expense of Communism or Socialism, emphasize the necessity of English-language fluency, and fit students (as well as immigrant adults) efficiently into capitalistic industrialism. In the words of Rosa Bruno-Jofré, following the

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47 Ibid., 144–45, 166.
Great War “schooling was identified as the main agency to develop unity of thought, teach English to the new immigrants, educate them in Canadian ways, and generally to make them proper members of the national polity.” It was a position that gained added strength from social unrest throughout the interwar period.

Following World War I, the expansion of schooling and the extension of educational opportunity were identified by successive educational authorities as important aims for the province. As R. H. Grant, Minister of Education, reported in 1919, “the awakened interest in the training of youth is one of the few beneficial legacies of the War, and there is little doubt that the people of Ontario will prove themselves equal to the educational problems that confront them.” By 1923, Ontarians could “scarcely pick up a newspaper published in any part of the Province without reading an account of the opening of some new educational institution.” The railway-car schools, which started in operation on September 26, 1926, were one creative way of expanding educational opportunity. Howard Ferguson’s discussion of the inception and introduction of the province’s “School Cars for Isolated People” depicts the program as an unmitigated success.

The Minister describes how these schools on wheels were outfitted with basic classroom, cooking, and sleeping accommodations for the teacher. They were moved along the transcontinental railway system by Canadian National Railway steam engines, stopping for short periods in small hamlets along the way. The teacher would provide

52 G. Howard Ferguson, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1926 (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1927), xiii.
direct instruction for several weeks before distributing assignments for students of varying ages and moving on to the next stop. On the return trip, the teacher would have the opportunity to evaluate students’ learning and provide further instruction. Ferguson even reported that “two boys, living far from the railway line, journeyed forty miles to the car, set up an old tent in mid-winter, thatched it with balsam boughs and lived in it while the car was near.”

Many of the students were immigrants from Europe whose instruction concentrated not merely on English literacy, but also on Canadian citizenship. In 1927, the Department of Education initiated a review of the railway-car school program, which reported that 95 percent of learners were non-English, and “the School Car has become their social centre. It is exercising a wholesome Canadianizing influence. Parents and pupils are making contact with Canadian history, ideals, modes of life and government.”

Providing a democratic alternative to Bolshevism via educational opportunity is frequently cited by the Minister of Education as a purpose of the schools on wheels. At the core of English Canadian national identity was the notion of Anglo-conformity, a notion that was always being negotiated and resisted in various ways. This notion refers to the assimilation of new Canadians, including children and immigrant populations, to

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53 Ibid., xiii.
54 Ibid. In Ferguson’s words: “The foreign-born, both parents and children, trained in an atmosphere inimical to Canadian ideas of citizenship are quickly developing into loyal and law-abiding Canadians,” xiii.
55 G. Howard Ferguson, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1927 (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1928). The majority of immigrants were identified as having mid-European origins. The school car was “adding its quota to the loyal and intelligent citizenship of Ontario,” 6.
56 See, for example, George S. Henry. Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1931, vi.
British mores and behaviour.\textsuperscript{58} Well over three million people had immigrated to Canada since 1894, including many European farmers and labourers.\textsuperscript{59} Industries such as forestry and mining drew these new Canadians with the promise of work.\textsuperscript{60} The necessity of integrating these new populations into the Canadian context was imperative. As V. K. Greer, Chief Inspector of Public and Separate Schools reported in 1933, the railway cars served the purpose of “weaving the homes into the fabric of the social and national order. The parents are profiting almost equally with the child. At the inauguration of the service 90 percent of them were non-British; today 90 percent are naturalized citizens of Canada.”\textsuperscript{61}

Adult education and citizenship training was thus extended via the railway-car schools to northern rural Ontario. In urban centres, also, adult schooling was directed at immigrant Canadians as a way of teaching English language and citizenship.\textsuperscript{62} The broad goal of extended adult education programs was to provide “the labouring classes with liberal education designed to fit them for their role as citizens.”\textsuperscript{63} Anglo-conformity dominated conceptions of citizenship, albeit masked by the rhetoric of democratic citizenship and international cooperation. Even when the adult learners were involved in technical or vocational training or re-training, W. L. Grant of Queen’s University remarked that the “alliance between labour and learning is not technical training, nor

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 365.
even technical education. Its aim is social education, a training in citizenship; it is liberal, not technical, education.”

Another important extension of Ontario’s education system, related to the extension of educational opportunity in the early interwar period, was the introduction and rapid expansion of correspondence courses. Like the railway-car schools, these depended largely on the self-direction and self-motivation of learners. By the start of the 1930s, Ontario, as well as “Nova Scotia, and the four western provinces were successfully using correspondence courses to reach students in areas without organized school districts. The initial emphasis was upon elementary education.” To qualify for correspondence schooling, a student had to: (a) live in a remote part of his or her province, where there was not access to an educational institution; (b) be unable to travel to a school for the winter months because of severe conditions and isolation of residence; or (c) have a physical ailment that prevented travel to school, despite the mental ability to progress through the program. In Ontario, the first correspondence course began in 1926, and by World War II, 2500 students were enrolled in the program. The Department of Education boasted that many graduates of the correspondence system were able to pass their high school examinations; many did so at a quicker rate than students in the traditional program did.

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64 W. L. Grant, “The Education of the Workingman,” Queen’s Quarterly XXVII, no. 2 (1919): 163.
65 Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 364.
67 Ibid.
68 See, for example, G. Howard Ferguson, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1929 (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1930), x. Ferguson notes: “The lessons returned are examined by well-qualified teachers in the employ of the Department, who find that the majority of those taking these lessons make just as good progress as they would in a well-conducted school…. In fact, the general results have been successful beyond all expectations, and too much cannot be said in praise of the co-operation of the parents, and the perseverance of the
The extension of schooling also led to the formation of auxiliary classes for the developmentally delayed. Separate classes for slow learners were actually introduced in 1910. These classes were expanded in 1921 when special programs were designed for learners with physical and mental impairments, including speech impediments. These classes were a direct result of the rise of a mental testing movement, which was representative of an important development in Ontario’s education during the interwar period, namely, the rise of scientific management and planning of the school system. Prominent figures in the developing fields of experimental psychology and mental testing included Peter Sandiford of the Ontario College of Education. He had been a graduate student of Edward Thorndike, one of the notable patriarchs of the progressive education movement in the United States, at Columbia University.

Sandiford, in Robert Patterson’s assessment, emerged as one of the “educational experts in a variety of specialized areas [who] made recommendations based upon what they felt were sound research techniques and findings.” While John Dewey’s work is associated with the pedagogically progressive (or child-centred education) camp, Thorndike’s contributions are more closely related to the administratively progressive (or mass education) camp exemplified by the rising science of educational testing and by the growth and centralized authority of large bureaucratic school districts. Sandiford, like Thorndike, was drawn to the more scientific and administrative concerns of progressive education. J. G. Althouse, Dean of the Ontario College of Education, remembered children in carrying out this work, no doubt, in many cases, under very unfavourable circumstances,” x.


Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 372.

Sandiford as someone who almost single-handedly “secured funds to establish the first university department of educational research in the Dominion.”\textsuperscript{72} Indeed, by securing funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, he was able to establish a Department of Educational Research at the Ontario College of Education, the first of its kind in Canada, which “laid the foundations for a range of standardized group intelligence and achievement tests that were to dominate the field and exert considerable influence on educational practice in Ontario and in other provinces for many years.”\textsuperscript{73}

According to W. G. Fleming, Sandiford’s Research Department spearheaded work in educational test development and standardized ability testing throughout the 1930s and early 1940s.\textsuperscript{74}

In 1919, a provincial report requested compulsory medical examinations for students that would identify students whose mental ages were below their actual ages, so that learners requiring auxiliary education could be identified. The Department of Education referred to these students, set apart by their intelligent quotients, or I.Q.s, as mentally handicapped, retarded, and feeble-minded.\textsuperscript{75} Beginning in 1929, Inspector of Auxiliary Classes H. E. Amoss reported that the Department of Education would use the

\textsuperscript{72} “Peter Sandiford,” The School (November 1941): 186.
\textsuperscript{73} W. G. Fleming, Ontario’s Educative Society, vol. 5, Supporting Institutions and Services (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 166.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 166–67. Fleming comments on the expanding role of the Research Department during World War II, including the application of intelligence testing to military assignments: “Test development, of course, remained an area of primary emphasis. During the war a contribution was made toward the practical problem of selecting suitable armed forces personnel for special tasks. Investigations into measurement theory began at the same time to add a new dimension to the work.” The use of standardized intelligence tests for the streaming of military personnel is consistent with the way these instruments were described as being useful tools for diagnosing student’s individual abilities in schools. See, for example, the discussion of this topic in Chapter V, “Standardizing Assessments and the Collection of Data on Individuals.”
\textsuperscript{75} Levin, “Debate over Schooling: Influences of Dewey and Thorndike,” 71–75.
term *direct learners* as a less offensive designative alternative.\(^76\) By that point, there were more than 200 auxiliary classes in the province, involving 2500 new students.\(^77\)

Another form of expansion in the Ontario school system related to the educational program and infrastructure. A series of federal industrial, vocational, and technical education acts, starting in 1911, had lent financial support to new programs in the province’s public schools.\(^78\) Courses in manual training, household and domestic science, as well as vocational training and guidance grew in degree and complexity throughout the 1920s. Despite provincial jurisdiction over education, the Technical Education Act was passed immediately following World War I by the Dominion government. It appropriated “$10 million for any form of vocational, technical, or industrial education which would promote industrial development or enhance the lives and/or contributions of the workers.”\(^79\) Revisions of secondary school curricula and infrastructure in Ontario took advantage of the monies made available through the legislation to offer a greater range of courses and to build facilities to support studies in vocational and technical education. By 1932, some twenty-seven thousand students were in vocational schools; when the Act “expired in 1929 only Ontario had utilized much of the available monies.”\(^80\) The Act was renewed three times, each for a five-year interval, ending in 1944.

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\(^{78}\) Ibid.

\(^{79}\) Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 362.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 362.
Child Study and Child Health

In the words of Frank T. Sharpe, General Secretary for the Big Brother Movement in Toronto:

Teachers should be more like gardeners than mechanics. Knowledge of the forces of life adjustment shows us where we may improve the conditions for growth. As a gardener gives water, controls insect pests, lifts a stone around which a young plant is trying to grow, so should we study each of your young charges, plan and direct them for the very best that life has to offer.81

Child study, stressing mental hygiene, social adjustment, and developmental psychology, emerged in the interwar period as a field of study. Its advocates argued that health and the holistic study of children should be at the centre of Ontario’s schooling. Dr. William E. Blatz and Helen MacMurchy Bott, two prominent figures in the instigation of the movement based in the University of Toronto’s Institute of Child Study, stressed that “the main emphasis in the technique we have to offer will, therefore, be upon prevention rather than cure, to grasp certain principles, which can be utilized to facilitate the normal adjustment process.”82

William E. Blatz, developmental psychologist and pioneer of child study in Canada, was the founding director of the Institute of Child Study and the figurehead of the child study movement.83 It has been said that he “guided the hands that rocked the cradles of a whole generation of Canadian children. From the mid-1920s to the mid-

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82 William E. Blatz and Helen MacMurchy Bott, Parents and the Pre-school Child (Toronto, ON: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1928), v.
83 The Institute’s idea was consistent with the progressivist advocacy for interrelation and integration of subject areas and topics. As an interdisciplinary centre for study, it was designed to bring different academic areas, including medicine, psychology, education, and sociology together for research on problems of mutual interest—in this case, children and human development.
1950s, Blatz was Canada’s own world-renowned expert on raising children.”\(^{84}\) Despite overlap and similarity with other interest groups, Blatz, a prolific writer and speaker, was intent on carving out a distinct terrain—institutionally, methodologically, and rhetorically—for child study. The Institute of Child Study, which will be discussed in Chapters III through V, bore a seminal influence on the increased attention paid to developmental psychology in relation to education in Ontario.\(^{85}\) It began with a grant by the Laura Rockefeller Memorial Foundation, and was first named the St George’s School for Child Study when Blatz was named its Director in 1925.\(^{86}\)

Parents, school medical inspectors, and the province’s Division of Child Hygiene also stressed physical and mental health.\(^{87}\) Healthy growth and development of children depended on sanitary schools, clean homes, appropriate levels of exercise, and a healthy

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\(^{85}\) W. G. Fleming, *Ontario’s Educative Society*, vol. 5, *Supporting Institutions and Services* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 187. Fleming acknowledges the influence of the Institute on Ontario’s child study research in relation to education, but situates its inception within a broader context beginning in the United States before World War I: “The beginning of the movement that led to the founding of the Institute of Child Study may be traced to the establishment of the Child Study Laboratory at the State University of Iowa in 1911 through the efforts of Carl E. Seashore and associates. The experiment was sufficiently successful that similar steps were taken at other leading universities such as California, Minnesota, Harvard, Yale, and Columbia.”

\(^{86}\) See, for example, E. A. Bott, “Founding of the Institute of Child Study,” in *Twenty-five Years of Child Study: The Development of the Programme and Review of the Research at The Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto, 1926–1951*, ed. Karl S. Bernhardt, Margaret I. Fletcher, Frances L. Johnson, Dorothy A. Millichamp, and Mary L. Northway (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 15–17. The foundation of St. George’s School for Child Study is discussed in “Context of Child Study in Relation to Active Learning” in Chapter IV.

diet. Instructional information regarding the resources and benefits of preventive medicine was disseminated through booklets, advertisements, and parent education seminars. On an administrative level, the child health lobby targeted four domains: more intensive local health administration, the expenditure of more money on health work, better cooperation from the medical profession, and increased efforts in health education. As Frederick Minkler from the Ontario College of Education noted, “physiological needs—health and happiness—are the first concern of the progressive school.”

Minkler, noting the child study movement’s concern for educational reform, explained that “progressive education demands a most comprehensive programme of health at all times. Indeed, the progressive programme must include mental hygiene.”

The child study researchers promoted in-school health examinations as well as surveys of buildings and educational practices; by the late 1930s, the emphasis had turned to preventive discipline and health as a curriculum subject. To disseminate the message to parents and teachers that educationists needed to put the child’s health and development before anything else, a number of initiatives were undertaken. These included the launching of a magazine, Understanding the Child, for teachers, as well as the publication of a manual for teachers and a bibliographic service to assist them “in understanding the

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90 Ibid., 313–14.
92 Ibid., 379.
93 W. Line and J. D. M. Griffin, “Education and Mental Hygiene,” *The School* (April 1937): 647–48. Surveys concerned classroom organization, punishment, and rewards. In terms of discipline, it was commonly acknowledged that intrinsic interest in the school work itself could be regarded as the key to preventative discipline.
nature of child development and the problems frequently encountered in the classroom.”

Certainly, the promotion of physical health, welfare, and prevention of disease affected school programming (health and physical education), school construction (open yards and playgrounds for exercise outdoors), and administration (school health and medical inspections). In fact, Howard Ferguson, Minister of Education in 1929, boldly announced his “conviction that the year 1930 will take its place in the list of years marked by progressive measures in education on account of the change in inspection alone.”

The increased concern for inspection and health examinations was a persistent theme throughout the interwar period, including campaigns by organizations such as the Canadian Dental Hygiene Council, the Health League of Canada, and the Ontario Society for Crippled Children. Such groups militated for healthy teeth and medical checkups, and against such diseases as typhoid, diphtheria, and tuberculosis. The child study movement’s supporters in Ontario, as in the United States, emphatically supported physical exercise and extolled the virtues of nature and fresh clean air.

George S. Henry, who followed Howard Ferguson as Premier of Ontario and Minister of Education, argued in his 1932 Annual Report that reforms to the scheduling of school timetables could free up more time for children to get outdoors for play and

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94 Ibid., 647.
96 Howard Ferguson, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1929 (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1930), vii.
In the same year, the province’s high school inspectors reported that great progress had been made in Ontario’s schools with regards to health and child study. Spacious rooms, increased lighting, extracurricular activities, auditoria, gymnasium, physical education classes, and health study were proof of this progress; they concluded that the “question of the physical well-being of the pupils in relation to their mental alertness is an important one, and teachers are wisely giving considerable attention to it.”

Health education was increasingly seen as an issue of grave national importance. The aim of physical and health education was to be the development of habits and attitudes that would form the basis of a healthy life. The Deputy Minister of Health secured, in 1930 from the Rockefeller Foundation travelling scholarship, funds for the Director of Health Education, who would visit teacher training institutions and schools in Ontario to lecture on health education. Further, a joint committee sponsored by the Ministers of Health and Education was organized in 1936 in order to develop a manual on health teaching, to distribute health teaching aids to educators, and to find ways to provide added instruction in secondary schools on health education, among other tasks.

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99 George S. Henry, *Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1932* (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1933), vii. See also “The Depression and Its Impact on Education” in this chapter, as well as Figure B in the Appendices for reference to the Premiers and Ministers of Education in Ontario throughout the context of study.


102 Ibid. Bad health habits in children were seen as emerging from inadequate knowledge of hygiene; left unchecked, they would be repeated in the adult population.

103 Ibid., 6–12.
Efficient Schools for an Efficient and Progressive Society

Efficiency as an educational aim remained an influential and persistent theme throughout the interwar years.\textsuperscript{104} In Peter Baskerville’s assessment, an industrial ethos infused all of Ontario’s society, so “the ideals of the factory—such as the efficiency pursued through time-and-motion studies by the American engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor—invas[ed] the home.”\textsuperscript{105} Elimination of educational waste—whether defined in terms of educational costs or curricular congestion—could be facilitated by the principles of efficient management promoted by and perfected by industry.\textsuperscript{106} “Education should be considered a business,” explained secondary school teacher H. M. Cooke. Costs, he argued, could be reduced without impairing standards:

Idealists, humanists, radicals, and labour unions have been one in the spending of the taxpayers’ money, the result being our huge overhead of today. Appraisal of our position calls for action. The advice of trained business economists should be obtained and followed before our educational costs get out of hand.\textsuperscript{107}

The pupil, a ward of Ontario’s system of schooling, needed to be trained for useful employment.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{104} This can be attributed to growing concern over the effects of modernization and the need to exercise careful management and control in times of change and unrest. Its influence can also be attributed to the growing interest between correlating business and industry with schools. The ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor, who promoted the scientific management of factories for the promotion of increased production at decreased cost, as well as for better regulation and order, were particularly influential. For Taylor’s seminal text, see Frederick W. Taylor, \textit{The Principles of Scientific Management} (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1911).

\textsuperscript{105} Baskerville, \textit{Ontario: Image, Identity, and Power}, 35.

\textsuperscript{106} For an elaborate description of how social efficiency, modelled on the ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor affected educational aims and reforms, see Raymond E. Callahan, \textit{Education and the Cult of Efficiency} (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962). See also “Surveying Costs and Researching Waste” and “Eliminating Educational Waste” in Chapters IV and V of this dissertation, respectively.


\textsuperscript{108} G. F. Rogers, “Present day problems in education,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (May 1933): 173.
Society’s needs and structures had altered and, in the view of many educationists, such as George F. Rogers, Ontario’s Chief Director of Education and later Deputy Minister of Education, planning and management of schools was as required in educational matters as it was in industry, where progress was largely controlled, directed, and efficient. In educational contexts, a Canadian School Journal editorial explained, it was important to help “pupils whose characters are developing, not only to make it possible for each student to discover his proper place in the educational scheme, but to direct him into it as soon as his aptitudes and capacities are known with reasonable accuracy (and that is surprisingly early).” Efficiency, the hallmark of success in industrial and business contexts, could be promoted in schools. Progress in education required such efficiency and demanded such management. By 1940, an editorial in The School was expressing the same sentiments in more dramatic terms. Canada, it argued, had entered “the scientific age. In government, industry, and even retail business, experimentation, study, and planning are the order of the day…. So in education—the day of haphazard idiosyncrasies in the little red schoolhouse is gone.”

By the end of the interwar period, the efficiency movement as a “progressive” interest and lobby had achieved significant gains. From the eleven reports submitted in 1940 by Departments of Education to provincial governments across Canada, as well as to then-independent Newfoundland, marked tendencies were clear. “Educational

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109 Ibid. Rogers, while recognizing the changing needs of schools and school organization in Ontario, maintained that the study of classics and history provided a common foundation for the province’s students. See, “School Libraries, Last Bastion for the Humanists,” in Chapter VII.

110 “Secondary School Costs,” The Canadian School Journal (January 1933): 15. It is worth noting that this editorial was presented at the very height of the Great Depression. The effect of the Depression on schools will be considered in “The Depression and Its Impact on Education” in this chapter.

111 “Educational experiments, research, and progress in Canada,” The School (December 1940): 278.
progress” was most predominately marked by two domains: “vocational and practical subjects [and] trades schools.”\textsuperscript{112} It was highlighted that two issues “gaining ground” and becoming of prime importance to educationists were larger administrative units and increased vocational guidance.\textsuperscript{113}

**Forging Educational Organizations**

Robert Patterson observes that in the period between 1916 and 1920 “teachers in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Ontario established provincial organizations.”\textsuperscript{114} In July of 1920, at the Calgary Public Library, these provincial organizations forged a national coalition, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, with the mandate “to provide machinery by which the various provincial and territories [sic] organizations could be kept in touch with one another, and through which mutual assistance could be quickly and readily given.”\textsuperscript{115}

Ontario’s teachers did, in fact, join the national coalition of four provinces that formed the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, but on a provincial level, they were “organized in a manner unique among Canadian provinces, with recognition given to the four distinguishing features of level, sex, religion, and language.”\textsuperscript{116} Differences between

\textsuperscript{112} “Supplement: Reports on educational progress in Canada and Newfoundland, 1940–1941,” *The School* (June 1941): 907.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 907. Certainly, the war effort accounted for much of the concern for practicality and industrial need, but the trends noted in 1940 were, generally, those that dominated conceptions of social efficiency.

\textsuperscript{114} Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 362.

\textsuperscript{115} Canadian Teachers’ Federation, “CTF History,” http://www.ctf-fce.ca/e/organization/about/ctf_history.asp (accessed April 14, 2009). The 1920 mandate established by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation remains in place today.

the federations notwithstanding, all of Ontario’s teacher organizations were “concerned with the protection and welfare of their members, giving continuous attention to salaries, job security, superannuation, and other such matters.”

The various teachers’ federations were: the Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario, the Ontario Public School Men Teachers’ Federation, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association, and L’Association des Enseignants Franco-Ontariens.

Parent groups also began forming across the country into various home and school associations. The first “was established by Mrs. A. C. Courtice in Toronto in March 1916. The Ontario provincial organization came into existence in 1919.” The voices of representatives from these organizations, from both the teachers’ federations and the parent associations, were prevalent in the source journals throughout the period being studied. By 1926, interest groups such as these were common across the country, but they were systematically organized only in Ontario and British Columbia. Their aims and purposes included promotion of cooperation among stakeholders in educational matters, inquiry into educational problems, and the development of a healthy Canadian citizenry.

A formal structure for the Home and School Council in Ontario was legally constituted in 1933, when the managing Board of Directors grew exponentially, from 9 to 115 members in a few years, representing a growing concern for linking the province’s schools to contemporary social concerns.

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117 Ibid., 38.
118 Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 362.
119 Ibid.
120 Fleming, Educational Contributions of Associations, 124.
Child study and child health advocates also forged organizations to support their causes. “Mergers are the order of the day,” announced the newly founded Association for Childhood Education through the *Educational Research Bulletin*, explaining that, everywhere, “educational institutions are joining to form larger more powerful combines.” The International Kindergarten Union disbanded in order to join the Association, and the National Council of Primary Education also merged its identity with this larger entity in order to create a more formidable union that could combine the interests of the nursery school, kindergarten, and primary teacher. The organization explicitly stated that its greater size could make its attacks on educational policy more potent, “promoting progressive nursery school, kindergarten, and primary work throughout this country.”

**The Depression and Its Impact on Education**

In 1930, Premier Howard Ferguson stepped down to take a post as the Dominion of Canada’s High Commissioner to London. His timing was impeccable. George S. Henry, his successor in the Conservative Party, assumed leadership of the province just as Ontario was entering the worst and most sustained period of economic chaos in its history. Like his predecessor, Premier Henry held onto the Education portfolio for himself and remained Minister of that department until his party’s political collapse at the polls in 1934. Henry’s first and second annual reports to the province on behalf of the

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122 Ibid., 39.
123 Peter A. Baskerville, *Ontario: Image, Identity, and Power*, 186. See Figure B in the Appendices for a list of Premiers, Ministers of Education, Deputy Ministers, and Chief Directors of Education throughout the context.
124 Ibid., 186–90.
Department of Education optimistically pointed to progress being made in the schools in the midst of the province’s economic storm. In fact, he reported “the check to material prosperity which displayed itself during 1930, but which is hoped to be a temporary depression only, produced no visible effect upon the schools.”\textsuperscript{125} In 1932, Henry reported that in the previous year, “education in Ontario has continued to make its usual progress, in that the conditions of the schools, the supply of teachers, and the attendance of pupils are alike satisfactory, in spite of the financial stringency and the pressing need of a prudent economy.”\textsuperscript{126} Peter Baskerville has observed that the Depression would not bottom out in Ontario until the latter part of 1933; in the years that immediately followed, the province’s Department of Education would be, by necessity, less concerned with progress than it would be with the maintenance of acceptable working efficiency.\textsuperscript{127}

Municipalities and local school boards suffered for lack of funding.\textsuperscript{128} The decreases in government support were complicated by the ballooning unemployment and financial distress in people’s homes. Taxes, a principal source of funding for the schools, in many cases could not be collected. The ratepayers were unable to make up for the shortfalls in provincial funding; they were also often unable to keep themselves out of bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{129} Building projects were suspended. School repairs, unless utterly essential, were halted. Equipment was no longer readily purchased for the new science labs, domestic science classes, and manual training shops. New textbooks became rare.

\textsuperscript{125} George S. Henry, \textit{Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1930} (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1931), v.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1931} (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1932), v.
\textsuperscript{128} Stamp, \textit{The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976}. Chapter 7 of Stamp’s text, titled “The Ontario Taxpayer and the Depression,” pages 143–63, is a particularly rich source of information on the impact of the financial crisis on the province’s schools.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
artifacts, and the growth of school libraries was stunted. Hardest hit were the small urban centres where populations were small and incomes were smaller still, and the even more remotely placed rural schools.\textsuperscript{130}

Attendance figures in Ontario’s secondary schools, which had been growing steadily since the Adolescent School Attendance Act of 1919, rose even more steadily.\textsuperscript{131} Many students who could have left school at the age of 16 did not. Others, who might have assumed part-time employment, went to school full time.\textsuperscript{132} Throughout the 1920s, retention rates in Ontario’s secondary schools “were higher for boys than for girls; this is attributed to male-oriented school programs, traditional societal expectations, and job availability … [and] retention rates were much higher in academic programs.”\textsuperscript{133} This has been attributed to the relative newness of vocational programs and to the limited availability of jobs during the Depression years.\textsuperscript{134} Charles Phillips noted that between 1921 and 1948, the number of students in secondary schools rose from 84,000 to 278,000, while elementary school enrolment actually declined.\textsuperscript{135} In his assessment, the trend could be attributed to:

Greater wealth, smaller families, less need for immediate wage earning, more need in business for educated employees, fewer jobs in depression years, new secondary school courses of utilitarian value, more consideration of pupils’

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid.
\item W. G. Fleming, \textit{Ontario’s Educative Society}, vol. 1, \textit{The Expansion of the Educational System} (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 93. Fleming notes that the Adolescent School Attendance Act actually went into effect in 1921, contributing to “a rapid subsequent increase” in the school population.
\item \textit{Report of the Minister of Education of Ontario} (1917, 1927, 1934, and 1942). For a statistical table, see Figure A in the Appendices.
\item Ibid.
\item Charles E. Phillips, \textit{Development of Education in Canada} (Toronto, ON: W. J. Gage, 1957), 225.
\end{enumerate}
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interests and needs, and the cumulative effect of a growing appreciation of the value of education in successively better-educated generations.\textsuperscript{136}

According to Robert Stamp, with unemployment rates rampant and skyrocketing, the job markets were glutted with trained and mature adults.\textsuperscript{137} These individuals were now forced to take the lower-paying and entry-level jobs that adolescents would normally have assumed. As a result, the modern technical institutes and the one-room schoolhouses were equally filled to capacity. Class sizes in some schools swelled to fifty or more. At the same time, by 1934, provincial funding to schools had actually plummeted by a third.\textsuperscript{138}

The actual burden of doing more work in education for less pay fell upon the teachers. Dramatic salary reductions rocked the profession. In the 1932–33 school year, nearly $250,000 less was paid to teachers in the province.\textsuperscript{139} As George S. Henry put it, “one effect of the above situation is that the teachers have readily accepted greater responsibility and additional duties. Their financial sacrifices have been of great assistance to municipal authorities.”\textsuperscript{140} The following year, cutbacks doubled, nearing half a million dollars.\textsuperscript{141} This translated into a decrease of between 5 and 33 percent per teacher, based on the school district.\textsuperscript{142} On average, male teachers lost $353 each and female teachers’ salaries decreased by $281.\textsuperscript{143} The difference can be explained by the fact that female teachers’ salaries before the pay cuts were less on average than their male

\begin{footnotes}
\item[136] Ibid.
\item[137] Stamp, \textit{The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976}, 143–51.
\item[138] Ibid, 143–144.
\item[142] Stamp, \textit{The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976}, 146–47.
\end{footnotes}
counterparts’. V. K. Greer reported these cuts by explaining that Ontarians’ dwindling incomes necessitated taxation relief. Assuaging the teachers, he posited that “no body of people has accepted the loss of income more graciously and with less open complaint than the teachers. They responded with their best work.”

Despite the presence of three strong teachers’ federations in the province at the time, Ontario’s public educators appear to have accepted these losses with relative quiescence. This speaks to the depressed and singularly devastating conditions throughout the province. Teachers who maintained their jobs, even after the pay cuts, fared relatively well in comparison to Ontarians employed in agriculture and industry. Further, there had never before been such an oversupply of trained and qualified teachers. Between 1927 and 1933, the number of teachers who earned permanent teaching certificates in the province rose from 133 to 519. No one’s job, it appeared, was safe.

The teachers’ federations might not have initiated strikes or labour unrest, but they were far from passive. They sustained a public relations campaign to promote the cause of education, in general, as an investment for the future. The federations’ bulletins made frequent reference to the importance of keeping educational matters in the public

144 Ibid., 10.
146 Ibid. Stamp explains: “Although salaries slipped, they decreased much more slowly than for wage earners and salaried employees in the private sector, with the result that the average Ontario teachers’ income possessed more equivalent real purchasing power in 1933 than in 1929–$1050 to $797.” See also Canadian Teachers’ Federation, Trends in the Economic Status of Teachers, 1910–1955 (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Teachers Federation, 1957), 58.
147 Howard Ferguson, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1929 (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1930), x–xi; Leo J. Sampson, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1934 (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1935), 3–4. A permanent certificate, First or Second Class, depending on educational background, required completion of normal school and practice teaching in a model school, leading to a teaching position in either a high school or an elementary school.
eye and drawing ratepayers into the schools.\(^{148}\) So-called Education Weeks were established, becoming important parts of the teachers’ campaigns to reach out to parents and draw the ratepayers into the schools.\(^{149}\) Extracurricular activities, including fairs, clubs, and sports teams, thus became important ways of connecting education and community.\(^{150}\) The school and society were tied in an iterative relationship.

### The Separate Schools of Ontario

Relating the educational system to the needs and interests of society had a different connotation in Ontario’s separate, Roman Catholic, schools. In the opinion of Premier Mitchell Hepburn’s biographer, the separate school issue represented an ongoing political dilemma for provincial governments.\(^{151}\) Yet, education as a political issue is not evident in the source journals. It is, perhaps, because of the sometimes politically charged atmosphere surrounding separate schools—their funding and administration, particularly—that discussion of the separate school issue is muted. Based on a reading of *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal*, one would have very little understanding of the tensions and complexities inherent in what might be termed the separate school problem.

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\(^{148}\) The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation publication, *Teachers’ Bulletin*, for instance, ran an article throughout the Depression that was written by the Federation’s publicity representative, A. D. R. Fraser. See, for example, A. D. R. Fraser, “Our Publicity Man,” *Teachers’ Bulletin* (June 1931): 16–18. In this article, Fraser reviews media coverage relative to teacher salaries in a section titled “News Notes.”


From the turn of the century to the 1930s, the number of pupils who annually attended separate schools had more than doubled, reaching a hundred thousand.\textsuperscript{152} This trend “increased the separate school proportion of the total elementary population from 10 to 17 percent.”\textsuperscript{153} This is partly due to the overall growth of the population in Ontario. More significant to the spread and growth of separate schools was Premier Howard Ferguson’s repeal of the controversial Regulation 17 in 1928. This Regulation had been passed in 1912 when Ferguson was a supportive backbencher in the provincial parliament of James Whitney. It had restricted French-language instruction after the first year of schooling and prohibited French instruction after Grade 4.\textsuperscript{154}

Regulation 17 had been supported by many Protestants, but it caused dissent both internally and with the neighbouring province of Quebec.\textsuperscript{155} Ferguson’s modifications to Regulation 17 improved relations between the provinces and facilitated negotiations with Quebec Premier Louis-Alexandre Taschereau over trade and the development of hydroelectric power, mining, and the pulp and paper industry in the largely rural north.\textsuperscript{156} Yet, as Robert Stamp observes, separate school attendance “was largely urban—76 percent as opposed to 56 percent in the public school system—due to the historic and continuing urban destinations of Roman Catholic immigrants.”\textsuperscript{157}

It was not until 1929, the year following the repeal of Regulation 17, that doubts concerning the “constitutional rights of Roman Catholic separate school boards to operate secondary schools” were removed by the Judicial Committee of the Imperial Privy

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Stamp, \textit{The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976}, 151.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Drummond, \textit{Progress without Planning}, 343.
\textsuperscript{157} Stamp, \textit{The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976}, 151.
Council in London, England. Further to that landmark, the Act to Amend the Assessment Act, passed in 1936 and surrounded by a fair deal of controversy, was “the first really significant financial and legislative concession since the Scott Act of 1863.”

This Scott Act, officially titled *An Act to Restore to Roman Catholics in Upper Canada Certain Rights in Respect to Separate Schools*, enabled constituencies to establish separate schools in each ward. A century later, the 1936 Act required that a proportion of taxes “be divided according to ownership or assessment, but not according to attendance; separate school boards were still denied access to public utility taxes.”

Following a political maelstrom and the defeat of a Liberal candidate in a 1936 by-election in the district of East Hastings, Premier Mitchell Hepburn announced that he would support the repeal of this controversial act. At this point, by the end of 1935, Ontario’s separate school population stood at 77,928 pupils. Winning re-election in the province, Hepburn found ways of securing financial assistance for the separate schools via provincial equalization grants and, in so doing, held fairly true to his 1934 campaign promise that Catholic education “should be maintained at a level of efficiency equal to that of the public schools.” Consequently, “by 1938, the total money committed to provincial school grants surpassed pre-Depression highs; by 1941 it doubled, rising from 10 to 20 per cent of the provincial share of total education costs.”

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159 Ibid., 13.
160 Ibid., 13.
161 McKenty, *Mitch Hepburn*.
162 Stamp, *The Historical Background to Separate Schools in Ontario*, 29. Stamp notes, as mentioned earlier, that this represents an increase of 10 to 17 percent in the proportion of the total elementary population since the turn of the century.
164 Ibid., 30.
During the Depression, economic affairs had brought the separate school debates back into the forefront of the political arena with similar intensity to the 1880s when, as Robert Stamp remarks, the Liberal government of Sir Oliver Mowat staked out a middle position between Catholic spokesmen “calling for full control of Catholic Schools on the model of Quebec’s dual confessional system” and “equally militant Protestant opponents who sought the total abolition of separate schools.” Ultimately, the constitutional status of secondary schools was accepted, and Catholic interests now pushed for the improvement of this status. The Catholic Taxpayers’ Association (CTA) was formed in 1932 and “campaigned for a permanent, legislated settlement rather than one dependent on the whims of future governments.” It consistently lobbied for a guaranteed share of the local proportion of public utility taxes. The CTA and the complicated realities of Ontario’s separate school system played an important role in smothering any attempts to decentralize provincial education and move it “to municipal control, for neither public nor separate school ratepayers were willing to hand over control of their schools to city councils which in all likelihood would include both Protestant and Catholic aldermen.”

Beyond the separate school system, Ontario maintained a small, but robust, network of private schools. With the notable exception of Joseph McCulley, Headmaster of Pickering College, editorials from stakeholders in Ontario’s private school system were generally absent in the sources canvassed for this thesis. W. G. Fleming noted that

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165 Stamp, *The Historical Background to Separate Schools in Ontario*, 26.
166 Ibid., 29.
168 Ibid., 146.
169 McCulley was a fervent meliorist progressivist. His opinions will be discussed at greater length in Chapters IV–VI. William Blatz, Director of the Institute of Child Study, also features in Chapters IV–VI. The Institute, while later affiliated with the University of Toronto, can also be considered part of the separate school network. The discourse community enabled by the
Canadian private schools never garnered the same proportion of students as did those in Great Britain, the United States, and Australia: “In 1921 one pupil attended a private elementary or secondary school for every twenty-three who attended publicly controlled day schools; in 1948 the ratio was one to twenty-two.”¹⁷⁰ Part of the reason for this relatively small proportion of students attending private schools relates to the Roman Catholic system’s classification as public. This designation distinguishes Ontario’s schools from those of, say, the United States, “where parochial schools are private.”¹⁷¹

**Changes within the Department of Education**

Robin S. Harris’ study *Quiet Evolution* is perhaps the most detailed source to consult in examining the developments influencing the structure and pattern of schooling in Ontario over the period examined in this dissertation.¹⁷² According to Harris, in 1919, the position of Superintendent of Education was abolished when John Seath, who as Superintendent of Education had dominated the education scene, died.¹⁷³ The Superintendent’s position had been created to “afford the Department the constant assistance of professional experience and knowledge disassociated from the full administrative control which remains in the hands of the responsible Minister.”

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 59.
¹⁷³ Ibid., 110.
Ultimately, it had led to the concentration of much authority within the Department.\textsuperscript{174} Following the Great War, the Superintendent’s responsibilities were delegated to a number of department heads, including an Inspector of Public Libraries, a Registrar, an Inspector of Manual Training and Household Science, a Chief Public and Separate School Inspector, a Director of Industrial and Technical Education, an Inspector of Elementary Agricultural Education, a Director of Professional (Teacher) training, an Inspector of Auxiliary Classes, and, lastly, a Provincial School Attendance Officer. The last three positions were established in 1919, whereas the others had existed, with varying responsibilities, as far back as 1882.\textsuperscript{175}

The shuffling of positions and titles over the next twenty-five years produced a fair deal of confusion in the Department, prompting George Drew, the new Premier and Minister of Education to revert, in 1943, to the 1906 departmental organization.\textsuperscript{176} Harris’s description of this shuffling is best recounted verbatim:

In 1923, the Superintendent’s position was revived again, this time under the title of Chief Director. The appointee was F. W. Merchant … Merchant reached retirement age in 1930, but continued for four years as Chief Adviser to the Minister. George F. Rogers was appointed Chief Director in his place in 1930 but with the accession of the Hepburn Government in 1934 reverted to High School Inspector … He was replaced by Duncan McArthur, until then a professor of history at Queen’s University, who a few months later also became Chief Director. Then in 1940, to make matters even more confusing, McArthur was appointed Minister of Education, and Rogers came back as Deputy Minister.\textsuperscript{177}

In the midst of all the shifting within the Department, a number of significant structural changes were made within the school system at the secondary level. In 1921, following

\textsuperscript{174} R. A. Pyne, \textit{Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1906} (Toronto, ON: Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1907), iii.
\textsuperscript{175} Harris, \textit{Quiet Evolution}, 110.
\textsuperscript{176} For a table of Premiers, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and Chief Directors of Education, see Figure B in the Appendices.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
the recommendations of the Royal Commission on University Financing in Ontario, six years of secondary schooling in the province were reduced to five. This limited upper school to one year and effectively did away with an entrenched distinction between honour junior matriculation and senior matriculation. The status of Grade 13, which had been parallel to the first year of four-year Bachelor of Arts programs in universities, was elevated, ultimately becoming the only route to university.

**Summary**

Between 1919 and 1942, Ontario’s educationists were concerned with how schools could respond to and prepare students for a context that was evolving and fraught with change. The two world wars, along with the Great Depression and the effects of rapid industrialism, immigration, and urbanization, made Ontarians increasingly attentive to the changing circumstances and realities of contemporary life. Progressivist educators saw the schools as out of touch with the modern world. Various scientific approaches to educational reform, including developmental psychology, child study, health promotion, and social science were increasingly associated with the aims and means of progressivist schooling. In a fast-changing social context, scientific management and control were seen as reasonable aims for many progressive administrators and schools. Educational organizations, such as teachers’ federations and home and school associations were forged in order to lobby for and represent particular interests in Ontario’s schools.

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While most stakeholders in Ontario’s separate schools—including the Catholic public system as well as the network of private institutions—were not necessarily part of the same discourse community as were representatives of the English public schools, the province maintained a small but robust separate system. The Department of Education underwent significant changes, while Ontario’s schools expanded their mandate and scope. Adult education programs, correspondence courses, and auxiliary programs were some of the means for extending the educational franchise to more citizens. In the following chapter, the primary sources for this study, *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal*, will be considered. Chapter II will also explore the problematic nature of defining, analyzing, and approaching progressivist discourse in education.
CHAPTER III

THE SOURCES, THE ISSUES, AND THE APPROACH TO PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

What was the progressive movement? This deceptively simple question, posed in different ways, holds prominent rank among the many controversies which have consumed historians’ patient energies, spawned a flurry of monographs and articles, and confused several generations of students.¹

The Sources

The two primary sources of principal interest to this dissertation were both educational journals in Ontario. *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal* had an audience and a discursive community of a relatively broad range of Ontario’s educationists. Despite different publishers, the similarities between the two journals far outweighed the differences. In fact, on a few occasions, a number of editorial pieces published in one source were reproduced in the other several issues later. Journals such as these were not isolated to the Ontario context. *The Western School Journal* and the *Atlantic Canadian Teacher* are two similar publications in provinces to the west and east of Ontario.² In the United States, also, educational journals were important sources for publishing substantial pieces by educational leaders and intellectuals, editorial articles, and news reports on matters affecting schooling. John Dewey’s “My Pedagogic Creed,”

² The *Western School Journal* was published by the Manitoba Department of Education. In 1963, it changed its name to the *Manitoba School Journal*. The *Atlantic Canadian Teacher* was published in Halifax, Nova Scotia, by the Atlantic Institute of Education.
for example, was first published in the *School Journal*, a publication from the University of Chicago with a similar audience as the Ontario periodicals.³

Structurally, both sources contained reports, as well as notes and news relating to educational matters in the province, other provinces, and, occasionally, other countries. Articles as well as editorials on educational issues were staples of both *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal*. These editorial articles, which consistently expressed opinions on matters of current interest, were of most interest to me during my analysis; it is in such opinionated explorations of ideas and developments that the idea of progressive education was most frequently discussed. Letters from subscribers, reports on government legislation or publications, book reviews, advertisements for educational supplies, and announcement of conference proceedings were common to both periodicals.

Each was published monthly. *The Canadian School Journal* produced eight issues a year, and *The School* produced ten issues a year. Circulation numbers for both source journals are recorded in Figure C in the Appendices section. From 1930 to 1940, each of the journals reached at least five thousand readers per year.⁴ Both of the source journals sent copies of their publications to all school boards and districts across the province, individual students in teacher training programs, as well as to individual subscribers. Both, also, had a relatively strong aversion to discussions of politics. Pelham Mulvany’s assessment of another, expired, educational journal published in Toronto with a similar name, *The Canada School Journal*, is an appropriate description of the sources being

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⁴ For more precise statistics, see Figure C in the Appendices. See also McKim’s *Directory of Canadian Publications* (Montreal, QC: A. McKim), Editions 12 to 35. McKim’s was published annually and recorded a complete list of newspapers and periodicals published in Canada and Newfoundland, including circulation ratings and listings of advertisers. The source lists no circulation figures for *The Canadian School Journal* until 1928.
discussed here: “The general tone of the journal is decidedly liberal; it does not meddle with party politics, but confines itself strictly to educational issues.”

The Canadian School Journal

The Canadian School Journal was the official organ of the Ontario Educational Association (O.E.A.), which W. G. Fleming has labelled a broadly based educational association “concerned with a wide variety of issues cutting across educational levels.” With regards to the formation of various educational organizations and associations following World War I, affiliation with the O.E.A. was seen as advantageous. Fleming describes several categories of membership in the O.E.A., which indicate who the readers of The Canadian School Journal most likely were. Associate members, who were students registered in one of Ontario’s teacher training institutions, were exempt from all fees. Ordinary members, belonging to one of the sections of the Association, paid annual fees. These sections, which could each adopt constitutions and elect officers, were divided into four departments: Elementary, College and Secondary, Supervising and Training, and

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5 C. Pelham Mulvany, Toronto, ON: Past and Present, A Handbook of the City (Toronto, ON: W. E. Caiger, 1884), 206. Mulvany’s uses the term liberal to denote a position unfettered to any particular political party or platform. The journal, in his view, was educational, not political. It ran from 1879 to 1883.

6 W. G. Fleming, Educational Contributions of Associations: Ontario’s Educative Society (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 7:1. In recognition of the “preeminent status in the field of voluntary educational effort,” the Ontario Educational Association is the first organization that Fleming discusses in his text.

7 Ibid., 5. Further, Fleming noted: “The federations, however, continued their separate existence, remaining independent both of one another and of the Association. The result was that the latter paid less attention to protective concerns than would otherwise have been the case.” It is not surprising under the circumstances that the federations maintained their own publications and that federation representatives were not among the contributors to The Canadian School Journal. The post-war formation of educational associations was discussed in “Forging Educational Organizations” in Chapter II.

Trustees. Corporate members, those educational associations or federations affiliated with the O.E.A., which included the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, also paid annual membership fees.\(^9\)

E. C. Guillet’s centennial history of the Association, *In the Cause of Education*, is the most detailed source on the O.E.A., covering the period between 1861 and 1960. Guillet discusses the Association’s involvement with educational affairs in the province, moving chronologically through a century of data.\(^10\) Besides publishing *The Canadian School Journal*, the O.E.A. organized an annual educational convention in the province. The magnitude of these conventions, reaching as they did to all stakeholders in Ontario’s educational system, including teachers, officials in the Department of Education, school inspectors, academics, and lecturers from abroad, is beyond that which we see even on the national level today. The conventions were held in the summer holidays, so that many educators who were occupied in instruction could attend and participate as stakeholders in the province’s educational franchise. “The prestige of the O.E.A. appears to have been very high,” W. G. Fleming remarks, reflecting on conventions during the 1920s and 1930s, for “among the speakers of current or later prominence were university

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presidents, cabinet ministers, premiers, Prime Minister R. B. Bennett, and … the Governor-General, Lord Tweedsmuir.”

The scope and intentions of these conventions shed some light into the mission and concern of The Canadian School Journal. The proceedings of the O.E.A. conventions were published in the source journal, and much space was devoted to articles discussing or editorializing speeches and developments occurring at the annual sessions. Certainly, the aim of involving Ontario’s educational community in reading and contributing to the journal was important, given that, as Guillet notes, “the problems of selecting, condensing, and editing articles and other materials” were numerous. The O.E.A. was formed in 1892 after the union of the Ontario Teachers’ Association and the Public and High School Trustees’ Association of Ontario. In 1921, a constitution was drafted, involving the adoption of a name, the Ontario School Trustees’ and Ratepayers’ Association (O.S.T.R.A.), for the organization of school trustees and stakeholders involved. The interests of the O.S.T.R.A., then, which represented the taxpayers and school board trustees and involved them in the dissemination of ideas and news in education, were also those of The Canadian School Journal.

The source journal began in 1921 under the name Ontario School Board Journal with the following two aims:

1. To co-operate with the Trustees and Ratepayers to secure the best interests of Ontario Schools and Scholars.
2. To keep the readers of the Journal informed upon subjects connected with the welfare of the School and the Scholar, considered particularly from the viewpoint of Trustees and Ratepayers.

13 Guillet, In the Cause of Education, 377.
14 Fleming, Educational Contributions of Associations, 172.
15 “Introductory,” Ontario School Board Journal 1, no. 1 (December 12, 1921).
Further, the major concerns of the journal and the O.S.T.R.A. included: high school and collegiate institute fees, methods of financial support for public and high schools, assessment in school, holidays, payment of grants, the character and usefulness of the curriculum, amalgamation of school boards, election of trustees, teachers’ contracts, school attendance, health supervision, and school building and equipment.\textsuperscript{16} Between 1921 and 1923, the \textit{Ontario School Board Journal} was published monthly, with each issue being typically under thirty pages. The source journal did not include advertisements in this period, and its circulation numbers are not reported. The journal reported on conventions, educational issues of interest, printed letters from ratepayers, and legislation. The source was first printed in Port Perry with the support of Samuel Farmer, publisher of \textit{The Port Perry Star}. Even when the official publisher, the O.S.T.R.A., was listed at 1104 Bay Street in Toronto, the journal continued to be printed in Port Perry.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1923, two years after its inception, the journal was renamed \textit{The Canadian School Journal}, reflecting a concern to broaden the mandate of the publication to include all members of the O.E.A., the O.S.T.R.A., as well as the concerns of teacher trainees and members of various school boards. Among its new mandates for addressing the needs of rural school boards was “provision of graded lists of books considered suitable for school libraries, which helped to remedy the inability of many trustees to make appropriate choices. Books on the list were recommended by the Department of Education or by an inspector.”\textsuperscript{18} The total cost of resources listed was ten dollars, which was seen as the minimum expenditure for proper maintenance of libraries. Such directly applicable

\textsuperscript{17} See, for example McKim’s \textit{Directory of Canadian Publications} (Montreal, QC: A. McKim, Limited, 1929), 266.
\textsuperscript{18} Fleming, \textit{Educational Contributions of Associations}, 175.
articles were published beside the kinds of opinion-based discussions of educational progress, which were of most significance to my research. In June of 1927, the objectives of the O.E.A. and its official organ, The Canadian School Journal, were characterized as twofold: advancing the interests of the teaching profession and promoting the cause of education in Ontario. Its concern with progressive education explicitly addressed the adaption of provincial education to suit modern needs.

The Canadian School Journal was much more compact than The School was, most notably because it excluded sample lesson plans, instructional articles addressing particular school subjects, and teaching aids or model classroom assessments. The space devoted to advertising was also substantially smaller and, as a result, most issues were less than thirty-five pages long. The journal did not pay for articles; contributions were “invited on any topic of real educational value” to Ontarians. That said, the journal’s content and tone were very close to the positions espoused by the Department of Education. Apart from reprinted conference speeches, minutes from school board meetings, letters written from individual taxpayers, and occasional contributions from

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20 Ibid.
21 The October 1934 issue, for example, included: editorials (one page), extracts from addresses at local trustees’ meetings (two pages), general articles on university extension, music, high schools in British Columbia and New Brunswick, homework, and the course of study in Ontario (sixteen pages), book reviews (three pages), reports from district association meetings (five pages), gleanings from a local educational conference (two pages), and advertisements (eight pages).
22 In October 1933, an editorial in The Canadian School Journal commented on the actual relationship between the Department of Education and the periodical. The two were closely allied, the article explained, in part because the journal received financial assistance from the Department: “The Ontario School Trustees’ & Ratepayers’ Association is linked up with the Department of Education only through the closest co-operation. At no time has the Department of Education dictated or hinted at dictation, or even advised how or what our Association should do. Had it not been for the assistance the Department has given us financially we could not have functioned as we have.” “Educational News,” The Canadian School Journal (October 1933): 370. According to the editors, both the OSTRA and the O.E.A. were “thoroughly democratic” and not subservient to the government.
educational organizations outside the O.E.A., many of the published voices were state employees.\textsuperscript{23} \textit{The Canadian School Journal} remained the official organ of the O.E.A. until 1968, when it merged with the journal \textit{Argus} and was renamed \textit{Ontario Education}.

\textit{The School}

The second source journal analyzed in this dissertation, \textit{The School}, also had a heavy practical component to it. This is because the journal was published in Toronto through the Ontario College of Education at the University of Toronto, the principal institution for secondary school teacher education in the province. It consequently had the onus of presenting to its readership instructional materials and references that could be used in classrooms across the province. \textit{The School} featured sample lessons, examinations, tests, and resource reviews along with editorial notes, notes and news, and current events. Publishing in the journal were educators, administrators, school inspectors, academics at the College, and other stakeholders in education.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Articles by contributors outside the state were common, but their positions were never overtly controversial or oppositional to the Department. See, for example Arthur Herbert Richardson, “Trees for Town and Rural Schools,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (May 1932): 188–92; “Kindly Reference,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (March 1933): 86; and W. J. Cairns, “What To-Day’s Business Man Asks of To-Day’s Young Man,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (October 1936): 285–86.

\textsuperscript{24} See Charles E. Phillips, \textit{College of Education, Toronto, ON: Memories of OCE} (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1977). Incidentally, Phillips’ study of the Ontario College of Education, considering the period between 1920 and 1972, is an insightful study of an educational institution’s role within the context of the emerging development and expansion of both the City of Toronto and the University of Toronto. Phillips also assumed the editorship of the journal in 1940. Phillips recalls that apart from regular features, the editor “had to obtain, without payment to contributors, something like 300 articles per year,” 100. He later notes: “To ensure a steady supply of articles for readers, with every type of interest, I kept getting the names of possible contributors from public school inspectors for the elementary edition and from the colleges staff and other sources for the secondary edition…. A large amount of correspondence was necessary, but we never had a shortage,” 102.
Every month, noted Charles E. Phillips, “apart from the advertising and paid announcements there were about one hundred and twenty-five pages, or fifty thousand words to be edited.” Each issue varied in length from approximately 80 to 120 pages, including advertisements. Less than 10 percent of the content related to this study; interpretations of progressivist ideas were typically confined to editorials, news and current events, items of interest, and, occasionally, general articles espousing progressivist teaching methods for a particular discipline or subject. Less than 1 percent of these articles could be described as humanist or critical of progressivist ideas.

The periodical was distributed to all school boards and organizations in the province. Each copy was sold for twenty cents, and a personal annual subscription could be purchased for $1.50 per year. By 1941, “the Government of Ontario purchased subscriptions for all teachers-in-training and the Government of Manitoba had for a second year purchased 1,800 subscriptions to the elementary edition.” The practical, classroom-oriented emphasis of The School was so important that in the 1935–36 school year, following the death of the periodical’s editor, Professor W. E. Macpherson, the journal was divided into two editions. Elementary and secondary school volumes were published concurrently, containing level-appropriate educational resources while

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25 Ibid., 100.
26 Ibid., 98. Phillips offers an analysis of the contents of one issue, that of December of 1920, which held consistently throughout the period. An exception of note was the publication of a fifty-page supplement on educational progress, research, and experiment in Canada in January 1941. Phillips’ analysis was as follows: “short editorials (two pages), accounts of recent appointments (two pages), items of interest chiefly from books (three pages), book notices (five pages), current events (five pages), news items from other provinces (nine pages), full-page half-tones (two pages), Red Cross (three pages), general articles on measuring intelligence (seven pages), other articles on the Hudson’s Bay Company, war poetry, teaching reading, seat work in the primary grades, teaching proportion and perspective (twenty-two pages), hints and helps used as fillers (two pages). Four of the articles were from Alberta,” 98.
27 The ratio of articles expressing progressivist-to-humanist rhetoric was approximately 15:1.
maintaining, as Charles E. Phillips observes, “about fifty pages of common interest, including news, editorials, and articles of a general professional character … this significantly increased the appeal of The School to teachers.”

The School was published monthly, September through June, throughout the context of my study. Articles cover an incredible range of topics, from sample lessons on art written by elementary school teachers to profound meditations on citizenship and schooling written by the Minister of Education. This source, committed to creating a forum for the dissemination of educational developments and ideas, as well as the professional development of teachers, provides a fascinating window on the changing ways in which educational thinking has been mediated across Ontario. In the context examined here, however, expertise in educational affairs was certainly more centralized than the many opinions of people contributing articles to The School. For forty-five years following the closing of Faculties of Education in Kingston and Toronto in 1920, the Ontario College of Education “was the sole institution in the province preparing secondary school teachers and it was directly funded and controlled by the Ministry of Education.”

In light of the Ontario College of Education’s funding sources and management, its expressed aversion to discussing politics is understandable. The articles and editorials in The School did not always agree with the reforms or progress advocated by the Education Department, but the language expressing any criticisms is always moderate and the outlook cautiously optimistic. It thus came as a shock to Professor Charles Phillips when his first editorial in The School, published during the 1940–41 year, caused

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29 Ibid., 101.
uproar. Phillips’ editorial, “Declaration of Faith,” propounded a meliorist progressive thesis that was summarized in the sentence, “This is the philosophy of liberal democracy and the new education to which we ascribe.” At the staff meeting following the editorial’s publication, four or five of Phillips’ colleagues called for his dismissal.31

To his critics, the journal was a pedagogical forum, not a political one.32 This example indicates the extent to which openly oppositional discourses were deemed *ultra vires* of the periodical’s mandate.33 Ultimately, Phillips learned the lesson that, in his position of editor, he had responsibility for the content and positions taken in the journal; but this prestigious influence came with the proviso that the journal sell enough subscriptions to remain in business.34 Of course, as noted, the Department of Education paid for the bulk of subscriptions.35 It was, ultimately, financial stringency and “the high cost of materials and labour” that led to the decision to stop publication of *The School*,

32 The masthead of the journal, presumably to reinforce this pedagogical emphasis noted: “Editorial Board: The Staff of the Ontario College of Education, University of Toronto.”
33 What Phillips did not recall when recounting this story in his text, *College of Education*, is that his editorial had actually anticipated a negative response from certain readers. In his conclusion, he asked readers to “please delay an unfavourable verdict” of his thesis until they read other editorials explaining how the new education applied to contemporary educational problems. See “Editorial: Declaration of Faith,” *The School* (September 1940): 2.
34 Phillips, *College of Education, Toronto*, 101. Phillips refused to acknowledge the names of his accusers, and he did not summarize the accusations or defence. At the following staff meeting, six weeks later, he notes: “The dean simply closed the meeting by saying that the editor had full responsibility for what went into the magazine, provided only that he sold enough subscriptions to keep it going.”
35 Phillips suggests that the readership of the journal increased throughout the interwar period. Subscription income neared six thousand dollars by the mid-1940s, but the figure is deceiving because the journal was sent free to all schools and to all teachers in larger schools who applied for it. Maintaining a steady authorship of educators entailed balancing the articles related to theory, psychology, and general concern with devices and techniques for teaching particular subjects or topics.
which had been in press since 1912, following the 1947–48 school year.\textsuperscript{36} It had been an influential voice for 45 years.

**The Problem of Progressive Education: Approaches to Understanding and Describing the Field**

Both these journals treated progressivist thinking as central to educational reform in Ontario, and this section considers various approaches that educationists and historians have taken in their attempts to define or explain the meanings of this elusive concept. The problem of progressive education, here, amounts to a problem of defining and understanding the field of investigation. Progressive education, as a subject of historical research has been, at various times proven, rejected, corralled, set adrift, and denied.\textsuperscript{37} More recently, many educationists have turned the problem into a global one by asking how the educational philosophy of notable progressives such as John Dewey has been adopted, received, and interpreted in different contexts.\textsuperscript{38} My concerns rest, predominately, with the context of Ontario.

Ontario’s progressivist rhetoric reveals opposing and conflicting visions for reform. It is precisely this lack of clarity regarding the meanings and interpretations of progressive education that drew me to the work of Herbert Kliebard, whose study of school reforms

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 104.

\textsuperscript{37} Theresa Richardson has given the topic’s ambiguous shape an apt description: “Progressive education was pluralistic and often contradictory in its missions, motives, and degrees of success as was progressivism in general.” Theresa Richardson, “Rethinking Progressive High School Reform in the 1930s: Youth, Mental Hygiene, and General Education,” *American Educational History Journal* 33, no. 1 (2006): 77.

in the United States led him to the following conclusions regarding the progressive education movement:

In the end, I came to believe that the term was not only vacuous but mischievous. It is not just the word “progressive” that I thought was inappropriate but the implication that something deserving a single name existed and that something could be identified and described if we only tried. My initial puzzlement turned to scepticism, my scepticism to indignation and finally to bemusement.39

Certainly, confusion regarding what progressive education means is not newly sprung, and a review of the literature in the field reinforces the hypothesis that the lack of clarity emerges from the wide variety of historical approaches and definitions.40 One of the earliest and most significant reflections on progressive education was John Dewey’s Experience and Education (1938). The text was written in response to what Dewey felt were narrow misinterpretations of his writings, which had attempted to describe a more comprehensive theory of experience. Dewey provides an analysis of both traditional and progressive education, and he demonstrates fundamental flaws in each extreme. As Joseph Schwab noted, much “of what has been said by and for educators in the name of Dewey has consisted of distorted shadows and blurred images of the original doctrine—epitomes, diverse in content and tending to oppose or exclude one another.”41 Experience and Education insists, explained Alfred Hall-Quest in his editorial introduction to the text, “that neither the old nor the new education is adequate. Each is miseducative because

40 See, for example, Filene, “An Obituary for ‘The Progressive Movement,’” 34. Note the epigraph to this chapter and the following, which concludes his essay: “The ‘progressive’ frame of reference, carrying with it so many confusing and erroneous connotations, must be put aside. It is time to tear off the familiar label and, thus liberated from its prejudice, see the history … for what it was—ambiguous, inconsistent, moved by agents and forces more complex than a progressive movement.”
neither of them applies the principles of a carefully developed philosophy of experience.”42

So-called “traditional” education, for Dewey, lacks a holistic conception of the learner and focuses instruction on content and disregards process. Progressive schools have been too reactive, Dewey noted, focusing on educational activity and process without adequately stressing disciplinary content knowledge. They incorrectly developed “opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without.”43 This opposition “so far as practical affairs of the school are concerned, tends to take the form of contrast between traditional and progressive education.”44

For Dewey, the dichotomy of “traditional” and “progressive” schools is problematic:

The general philosophy of the new education may be sound, and yet the difference in abstract principles will not decide the way in which the moral and intellectual preference involved shall be worked out in practice. There is always the danger in a new movement that in rejecting the aims and methods of that which it would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively rather than positively and constructively.45

Progressive educators who had proceeded according to this principle of continuity had neglected questions central to the pedagogical project, including:

What is the place and meaning of subject-matter and of organization within experience? How does subject-matter function? Is there anything inherent in experience which tends towards progressive organization of its contents? What results follow when the materials of experience are not progressively organized?46

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44 Ibid., 17.
46 Ibid., 20.
According to Dewey, then, educational experiences are the bases of learning but are individually, not inherently, meaningful or necessarily educative for everyone. The pedagogical value of experiences is determined by their effect on an individual learner’s present and future, and by the degree to which they enable the learner to contribute positively to society. Dewey challenged progressivists to be more critical of their own pedagogical principles and claims. Despite professing the importance of educational means and the stress on an individual learner’s freedom or interest, progressive pedagogy was, according to Kliebard, in danger of becoming “as dogmatic as ever was the traditional education which it reacted against.”

For Dewey, it still needed to overcome a fundamental problem: “What does freedom mean and what are the conditions under which it is capable of realization?” This question, in Ontario’s progressivist discourse, had a number of potential answers, which I intend to explore.

While I had settled on exploring different orientations within Ontario’s progressivist discourse, the way of defining my approach to the data was of prime importance. Circumnavigating the blurry borders of what progressive education meant began with charting out how other historians had approached its shores. One such approach might best be described as strictly celebratory. The history of education, from

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47 Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 271. In his afterword, “The Search for Meaning in Progressive Education,” to the third edition of this text, Kliebard considers the history of texts dealing with progressive education. His historiography was a beginning point for my reflections on the field. He comments, “the effort to depict a melange of reforms we have come to lump together as progressive education has itself developed something of a history; that is, apart from the history of the reforms themselves, the way historians have defined progressive education has acquired a kind of story of its own.”


49 The progressivist concern for asserting individual freedom, development, and interest over the constraints of a strictly academic curriculum will be discussed in “Freedom, Happiness, and Psychological Well-Being” in Chapter V.

50 Kliebard, “Afterword,” *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*.

51 This has also been described as “house history.” Tyack, *The One Best System*, 8–9.
this perspective, was one of increasing sophistication, complexity, and improvement. As time passed, schooling evolved, and progress was made. Progress in education was, strictly speaking, a positive matter, signifying improvement over time. Such histories typically have justified or rationalized the present state of affairs envisioning the present as the culminating point. This approach is best characterized by Ellwood Cubberley’s *Public Education in the United States* (1919).\(^{52}\) Cubberley’s approach set the tone for four decades of educational historiography.\(^{53}\)

From Cubberley’s perspective, education, the hallmark and the triumph of democracy, was ever improving. This improvement, he argued, was intertwined with the betterment of American society. For Cubberley, the education system was both the result of progress and the key to future progress. One of his guiding principles was the search for connections between the past and the present policies or problems in education. His institutional, celebratory history was intended to instill pride in the profession for teachers and those involved in teacher preparation.\(^{54}\) However, by narrowing the field of vision to concentrate on matters of relevance to educators, educational history grew increasingly irrelevant to other historians. In addition, Cubberley clung to the idea that he could develop a “science” of education that could accurately depict the past despite the obvious anachronism of this view.\(^ {55}\)

A wave of reform in the 1960s swept away the celebratory and instrumentalist historiographies associated with Cubberley’s work. Bernard Bailyn’s *Education in the Forming of American Society* (1960) outlined a very different approach to the historical


\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Ibid. The anachronism is particularly apparent from the present perspective.
analysis of progress in education. This orientation generally approached education in terms much broader than those limited to schooling and saw it as the broad process of social and cultural transmission.\textsuperscript{56} Bailyn’s approach brought educational history closer to social and cultural history than it had been in the past. The same can be said of Lawrence Cremin’s \textit{The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957.}\textsuperscript{57}

Cremin’s approach broadened the scope of educational history. It characterized progressive education as the convergence of three trends. The first of these related to the expansion of school curricula and programs. The second trend saw the application of scientific principles to school organization, administration, and management. The third involved greater tailoring of instruction to individual learners or groups of students.\textsuperscript{58} These trends are broadly situated in the movement toward the professionalization of teaching and the creation of a modern educational superstructure, which preceded the interwar period and continue today. The movement is too broad and diverse to discuss in depth here, but it involves questions of teacher education, professional knowledge, certification, the feminization of teaching (primarily in the elementary system), unionization, salary, tenure, and regulation.\textsuperscript{59}

A different approach to progressive education has involved developing a working definition that narrows the field of description to certain, sometimes delimiting, terms.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
This approach excludes or marginalizes reforms that do not fit within the criteria established by the historian. Arthur Zilversmit, for example, argued that progressive education meant only certain core values, including the meeting of individual student’s needs and the establishing of nurturing pedagogical environments. He identified a limited set of progressive ideals: the beliefs that learning should be active, individualized, child-centred, and holistic, in the sense that instruction involves more than content. John Dewey, Francis Parker, and William Heard Kilpatrick were truly progressive according to such narrow definitional parameters, whereas other, conflicting reform initiatives, deemed pedagogically regressive and repressive, such as the mental testing and efficiency movements, were left out of the analysis. Vocational education, manual training, scientific management of schools, and mental testing are not considered aspects of progressive education in accordance with this definition. The constraints of this position, while enabling to the historian to probe certain ideas, are among the most problematic in my view. Overly narrow definitions of progressive education have added to the conceptual confusion concerning what progressive education was. If each account sets its own parameters on what is progressive, the entire field of study has become normatively constructed.

Certainly, defining what progressive education could mean is a necessary means of restricting the focus of analysis and of allowing for detailed explications of particular orientations; however, it also excludes much of the slipperiness and complexity of the past by removing one orientation from the very messy context in which it was embedded. Dewey is at the forefront of Zilversmit’s explanation of progressive education, at the

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expense of major figures in pedagogical history such as Edward Thorndike. This reading seems particularly narrow in light of the studies presented by many historians who have considered Thorndike’s impact and approach to educational progress as profound and wide-ranging. Ellen Lagemann’s oft-quoted statement that “one cannot understand the history of education in the United States during the twentieth century unless one realizes that Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost” makes this point quite clearly.\footnote{Ellen Lagemann, \textit{The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy} (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 185.} The point here is that the criteria historians have used to define progressive education have resulted in the highlighting of different reactions to traditional education.\footnote{In this case, as already noted, Thorndike’s progressivist concerns used experimental psychology and administrative concerns as referents for change, whereas Dewey was more concerned with developing a comprehensive and pedagogically oriented theory of experience.}

David Tyack, who differentiates between administrative and pedagogical progressives, seems to have approached the field with an aim of demarcating differences within the progressive movement without excluding elements that do not fit within very narrow parameters.\footnote{Tyack, \textit{The One Best System}.} Tyack’s approach had the effect of hyphenating progressives, including them within the broader framework of progressivist concerns while differentiating different clusters of concerns. According to Tyack’s historical analysis, the so-called administrative progressives were successful at reforming schools and policy. Their influence over actual pedagogical reform dwarfed that of the pedagogical progressives.\footnote{Thorndike can be included in the administrative camp and Dewey in the pedagogical one.} There are two criteria at play here: “The first indication of success comes when and if the policy is translated into a concrete program of action and the second when the policy is weighed in terms of the extent to which it actually succeeded in
accomplishing the stated purpose.”

Tyack, then, assessed progressive education according to criteria that would enable him to identify a relatively coherent ideology enacted by particular individuals.

Tyack’s approach, the division of progressivists according to their area of interest—administrative or pedagogical—seems to say little about their actual orientation toward those domains. According to David Labaree, “the heart of the tale is the struggle for control of American education in the early twentieth century between two factions of the movement for progressive education.” The developmentalists, both Tyack and Labaree argued, were divided between those two groups. They were principally concerned, in other words, with either classroom practice or administrative matters: “the conservative and social efficiency groups fit more or less within the administrative category and the liberal and social reconstructionist groups fit roughly within the pedagogical, with child development straddling the two.”

The orientations discussed above have in common a concern for discerning whether, and to what extent, progressive education actually affected classrooms and systems of schooling. In a related sense, other historians have taken for granted

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66 David Labaree, like David Tyack, conceptualizes progressive reformers as either administrative or pedagogical. The former group affected schools and administrators, while the latter influenced teacher educators in universities. For further reading, refer to David Labaree, “Progressivism, Schools, and Schools of Education: An American Romance,” Paedagogica Historica 41, nos. 1 and 2 (2005): 275–88.
67 Further, it neglects the social meliorist domain, which was identified by Kliebard and which is a concern of mine.
69 Ibid., 279.
70 For examples of Canadian studies concerned with ascertaining the degree to which progressive education affected education in this country, see Paul Axelrod, “Beyond the Progressive Education Debate: A Profile of Toronto Schooling in the 1950s,” Historical Studies in Education 17,
progressive education’s impact on education and concentrated their research on unearthing elements of it that remain embedded in contemporary schools.71 The work of Daniel Levine, however, represents a different approach, which concerns varying interpretations of progressive education and tries to address the historical problem of coexistent definitions defining the field.

Levine argued that, in light of these coexistent complexities and the relativity within the field, progressive education, as a concept, was misleading and, consequently, useless.72 Peter Filene, likewise, questioned whether the progressive movement could be considered a movement at all since it lacked a coherent program, ideology, or membership.73 He offered the model of “shifting coalitions” of reformers who mobilized on different issues according to their particular interests to replace the vision of a unified or consistent ideological movement.74 Filene’s position established grounds on which the ambiguities and complexities related to progressive education could be explained. In his view, the kinds of thinking that had led to narrow definitions of progressive education had to give way to a realization that educational reforms can best be understood in terms of shifting coalitions of interests.75

James Fraser, Julia Wrigley, and William Reese, evidently following Levine’s and Filene’s critiques of a singular progressive education movement, identified multiple progressive subgroups in their historical examinations of educational reform in the United

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
States.\textsuperscript{76} Between them, these three historians identified and explored, in sum, ten progressive subgroups—social gospellers, populist parties, socialist groups, labour unions, parent associations, women’s organizations, school administrators, middle-class municipal reformers, militant teachers, and curriculum reformers.\textsuperscript{77} Raymond Williams’ *The Long Revolution* (1975), which examines a European context, is another example of this approach. Williams argued that the nineteenth-century curriculum in British schools was a compromise of three competing perspectives: the public educators, the industrial trainers, and the old humanists.\textsuperscript{78} A final example of this approach is Kieran Egan’s *Getting It Wrong from the Beginning: Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget* (2002), which explicitly addresses conflicting progressivist visions implicated in education. Each, he argues, represents a fundamentally different worldview and, consequently, undermines, rather than shores up, the others.\textsuperscript{79}

Other historians, dealing at length with the tensions and ambiguities involved in education, constructed critical or revisionist accounts of progressive education. Many, in the spirit of Lawrence Cremin, situated educational reform discourse in relation to larger social and political orientations that affected schooling. The work of Edward Krug, Michael Katz, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, and Joel Spring are examples of educational histories on reform and progress, which view the field more broadly, often


\textsuperscript{77} For a more descriptive summary, see Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*.


\textsuperscript{79} Egan’s approach is, perhaps, more conceptual and philosophical than strictly historical. Still, he describes three educational aims that coexist in modern education—academic idealization, individual development, and socialization—and he associates these with the progressivist concern for modern schools that relate more closely to individual learners.
exposing economic, social, and political elements previously ignored in educational history. These historians, the so-called radical revisionists, all questioned the ideological and political roots of educational progress. Their studies have even offered Marxist (in the case of Katz, Bowles, and Gintis) and anarchist (in the case of Spring) explorations of progressive education.

The last historical approach to be considered in this section, Herbert Kliebard’s, is the one from which I borrowed the heuristics for considering differences within progressivist discourse. Kliebard aimed to debunk the claim that any unified progressive education movement existed in the United States. The progressive era, he argued, was an age of criticism and debate directed at the established order of schooling. Like Peter Filene, who proclaimed that “the progressive movement’ never existed,” Kliebard saw the field of progressives as populated by shifting coalitions of competing interest groups, each competing for influence over school reforms. As Kliebard argued, the very term progressive education begged a question:

I was frankly puzzled by what was meant by the innumerable references I had seen to progressive education. The more I studied this the more it seemed … that the term encompassed such a broad range, not just of different, but of contradictory, ideas on education as to be meaningless.

Kliebard identified three distinct and divergent progressive interest groups embroiled in a struggle for the curriculum and school policy, each advocating a particular

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83 Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum,* xi.
reform aim: efficiency, social reconstruction, and developmental psychology. The developmentalist interest group held, Kliebard argued, an almost romantic faith in nature and the unfolding stages of child development. The developmentalists traced their “ancestry as far back as Comenius, most prominently to Rousseau, and then to the work of Pestalozzi and Froebel.” Pedagogically, the orientation, which was geared principally toward the scientific and psychological understanding of human development, had a central principle of striving “first of all to keep out of nature’s way.” The social efficiency advocates saw scientific management of schools as the best means to reform schools and make them more progressive. “Of the varied and sometimes frenetic responses to industrialism and to the consequent transformation of American social institutions,” Kliebard noted, “there was one that emerged clearly dominant both as a social ideal and as an educational doctrine. It was social efficiency.”

The third interest group that Kliebard considers in relation to progressive education are the social meliorists, whose zeal for confronting social injustice in society through educational reforms reached its zenith during the Great Depression.

The social meliorists, the developmentalists, and the efficiency advocates, Kliebard argued, represent fundamentally distinct interests and, as such, cannot be seen as belonging to one movement. This might not seem in itself controversial, but what differentiates Kliebard most notably from his predecessors is the daring conclusion that he draws from his analysis. In the absence of any cohesive vision for reform among the

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86 Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 76.
87 Ibid., 151–74.
interest groups that he examines and in light of the confusion fostered by the coexistence of competing, multiple definitions of progressive education, he dismisses the entire concept of progressive education as meaningless, dangerous, null, and void.\textsuperscript{88}

Kliebard’s challenge to historians was a serious one. If progressive education meant, as Kliebard posited, many different things to many different people and if, furthering the point, many of these meanings represent fundamentally different things, then a big bag category may be a meaningless one. In Kliebard’s assessment, it has been rendered “a loose, largely unarticulated, and not very tidy compromise” of divergent aims and interests.\textsuperscript{89} This thesis is largely interested in addressing Kliebard’s challenge by isolating progressivist language within the journals and probing it for its meanings within the parameters of common themes, or domains.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{Progressivist Discourse in Ontario’s Educational Journals}

Progressivist articles, the material basis of my dissertation, were published monthly in the province’s educational journals. They advocated changes to the province’s system of schooling and did so under the banner of progressive education. Charles Phillips has noted a fundamental difference between an educational publication that provided educators with “ready-made busy work and other aides” and those primarily concerned with the exploration of “ideas for the improvement of education.”\textsuperscript{91} Both \textit{The School} and

\textsuperscript{88} The long quotation cited above is, perhaps, the most clear disavowal of progressive education.
\textsuperscript{90} As noted in the introduction, these domains—active learning, individualized instruction, relation of schools and society—taken together, are encompassed by my working definition of progressive education.
\textsuperscript{91} Phillips, \textit{College of Education, Toronto}, 102.
The Canadian School Journal were forums in which educationists could put forward visions for progressive educational reform. With regards to the editorial content, there is very little to distinguish between the journals, as both presented various progressivist visions for Ontario’s schools. The tone and language, likewise, consistently strove for what Phillips referred to as “the rather high intellectual level appropriate” for educationists. The most notable difference between the two journals is not the editorial content or opinions, it is the intended audience. Whereas The School was primarily packaged for educators and teacher candidates, The Canadian School Journal was aimed at administrators and trustees. The editorials, and to some extent the speeches from educational conventions reprinted in the periodicals, are the key sources for this exploration of progressivist discourse in Ontario. This is not to say that Kliebard did not attend to language in his search to understand the meaning of progressive education. He dismissed the discourse and writings of progressive educationists as mere rhetoric “not … influencing the course of events.”

This led to my first significant digression from Kliebard’s analyses. My dissertation is concerned with a careful consideration of the language expressed by progressivists in its own right, independent of any pragmatic tests of its causes and effects.

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92 Ibid., 102.
93 The audiences were not mutually exclusive. Most telling, with regards to audience, is the content outside of the editorial articles. In The School, the non-editorial articles addressed issues of relevance to educators such as model lesson plans, book reviews and notices, teaching suggestions, current events, sample assessments or resources, and useful hints and suggestions for teachers. The Canadian School Journal, outside of the editorials, reported on local trustee meetings, provided book lists for libraries and school administrators, gave account of appointments and promotions, described happenings at educational conferences, and responded to questions posed by taxpayers with regards to such issues as school organization or finance.
94 A notable limitation here is that the sources do not include many sources of oppositional discourses. Articles by socialists, Marxists, and separate school advocates are not evident. Editorials from educationists from universities and private schools are rarely evident.
95 Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, x.
Sol Cohen, likewise, has argued that the language of progressive education is itself a meaningful source for uncovering historical meanings. In his words, a study of progressivist rhetoric:

… is not about claims of truth: that there really was a ‘progressive education’ or that there wasn’t. A category or concept like progressive education is just an instrument. The questions are: Does it still illuminate? Is it still useful? My answer to both questions is in the affirmative. To accept Kliebard’s position would mean the end of an important historiographical discussion.\(^\text{96}\)

In this last point, Cohen is saying that if, in fact, Kliebard’s claim concerning the vacuity of progressive education is correct, there would be no point in continuing to explore the topic. Cohen’s appeal to explore the meanings of progressivist discourse, however, steers the discussion away from instrumentalist concerns of cause and effect in order to focus on the meanings embedded in the extant language. He takes up the call of John L. Rury, who takes for granted the belief that progressive education existed but claims that its history has not yet been written, largely because it has been greatly concerned with the transformations of schools.\(^\text{97}\)

There are a number of further reasons why this study concentrates exclusively on progressivist language. The first reason relates to what David Labaree calls “the four levels of school reform,” which is a nested model for conceptualizing educational reforms.\(^\text{98}\) Each one has its own actors, media, and discursive community. He refers to the top level, the one where most reform efforts begin and typically end, as the level of


rhetoric. My research addresses precisely this tier where progressivists make “statements of principle, educational visions, rationales for change, frameworks for representing that change, and norms for reconstructed educational practice.” The actors at this level, as well as their primary media, which Labaree describes as enabling a broad range of educationists to contribute and interact, match the context and sources of my study with relative accuracy.

The last note in reference to this nested model is that histories addressing the level of educational rhetoric can typically say little about reforms at other levels, for example, those of enacted practice. Labaree’s caveat was foreshadowed by Rosa Bruno-Jofré’s qualification that “historically there has always been a gap between educational aims and policies in the form of statements, documents of various sorts, curricula, and what actually happened in schools.” These statements make clear that my concentration on the rhetorical meanings of progressive education within Ontario’s educational journals has certain limitations. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to find material evidence of classroom practice or policy being transformed along progressive lines, nor is it possible

99 The remaining three levels are called the formal, the curriculum in use, and the received. See also, Chapter 7 in David Labaree, Education, Markets, and the Public Good (London, UK: Routledge, 2007). Larry Cuban uses a similar framework to discuss levels of educational reform, which he calls rhetorical, intended, taught, and learned curricula. See, for example, Larry Cuban, “Curriculum Stability and Change,” in Handbook of Research on Curriculum, ed. Philip Jackson (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1992).
101 Ibid., 3. In the words of Labaree: “The rhetorical level is the most open to reform efforts, since the actors are part of the same discourse community and thus are in tune with rhetorical currents running through this community.” The School and The Canadian School Journal were forums for a progressivist discourse community—although the community excluded a variety of oppositional discourses and communities emanating from, for example, Communists, socialists, political groups, Catholic and Protestant organizations, and many academics or private school representatives.
102 Ibid.
to fully explain why particular explanations are undertaken and how those evolve over time. The aim here, to reiterate, is the exploration of distinct orientations to progressive education published in two of Ontario’s educational periodicals between 1919 and 1942.

Another limitation particular to the context and sources of my study represents a significant digression from Kliebard’s model for examining divergent progressive orientations. By examining the entire United States context over a period of over sixty years, Kliebard was able to depict a fierce struggle for the curriculum, fought by warring interest groups that were commandeered by public intellectuals engaged in debate.\(^{104}\) The situation in Ontario, in the sources that I have examined, reveals a different dynamic entirely. These educational journals were not media particularly conducive to debate. High drama, if it existed to any significant degree, is sparsely reported. The periodicals presented parallel views, not firestorms and debates.\(^{105}\) Progressivists used these forums largely to lay out their reformist visions and to critique and deride humanists and their so-called traditional and outmoded visions of schooling. Polemical exchanges between progressivists were not featured in the source journals, and they are not the concern of this thesis.

If prominent intellectuals or interest groups did publish articles, their publications were not accentuated over those of other educationists’ sharing the space in any particular issue. Within the purview of Ontario’s educational journals’ main concerns

\(^{104}\) Kliebard’s title explicitly notes that he was concerned with The Struggle for the Curriculum, and his story is largely one of a competition for influence by prominent educationists, including Boyd Bode, George S. Counts, Harold Rugg, David Snedden, Arthur Bestor, Ralph Tyler, William Heard Kilpatrick, and George Stanley Hall.

\(^{105}\) See, for example, “Two Sides to a Question: Is It Desirable that Pupils Should Always Be Required to Stand When Answering Questions?” The School (September 1941): 2–3. This article is an example of a piece in which the authors could have debated a pedagogical question. While divergent opinions are presented beside each other, neither author mentions the other. The respondents to the question argue their positions, and the source journal published these as parallels, allowing readers to compare the articles and agree or disagree with them.
were the presentation and dissemination of ideas. No homegrown George Counts emerges from the sources to lead meliorist brigades, and no local David Snedden becomes the voice of social efficiency in the province. Kliebard saw the period of progressive reforms in the United States as an epic battle fought on the terrain of the curriculum but, in Ontario, the educational journals provided parallel opinions on educational progress, relatively little of which was combative and polemical. Consequently, in this study, I have given greater regard to similarities and differences of progressivist orientations than I have to individual educationists’ politics or personalities.

Method of Analysis

Sol Cohen’s position, introduced above, that the language of progressive education holds great potential for historical study was particularly appealing given the type of analysis this thesis pursues. Cohen argues that language itself is a fruitful historical source and object of examination. A necessary caveat here is that my concerns with language do not endeavour to “textualize the whole of reality.” By considering only the rhetorical level of progressive education in Ontario’s periodicals, I do not deny, disprove, or dispute that progressive education can be a meaningful historical concept at

106 The Ontario Educational Association, which published The Canadian School Journal, for example, explicitly describes itself as a clearinghouse of educational ideas in many issues throughout the period.
107 Kliebard depicts Counts as a standard bearer of the social meliorist interest group and Snedden as a leading voice for the social efficiency movement.
108 Where possible or relevant, such details are noted, but it would be a Herculean task to trace the particulars of hundreds of voices in the preponderance of cases. Such an effort would not be worth the return, considering my particular research interest.
other levels of analysis. No doubt, there were schools, pedagogues, and classrooms enacting, to varying degrees and in varying times, innovative and progressive practices; however, I make no claims regarding these.¹¹⁰

My study of the language in Ontario’s educational journals, then, aims to open up a new way of exploring the educationists’ explorations of progressive education while attempting to make sense of what Cohen calls “the conflicting interpretations of progressive education.”¹¹¹ Further, because the educationists published in the periodicals were presented in parallel, or on equal footing, I have played down the importance of personality by playing up the significance of texts. Cohen comes close to expressing this cogently:

I think it is possible to preserve the category ‘progressive education’ and open up different and perhaps more fruitful lines of historical study and historiographical debate if progressive education is redescribed solely as a language and its influence … is tracked solely in terms of language.¹¹²

Again, Cohen comes close. In his enthusiasm to respond to Kliebard’s challenge, he transforms all of reality into a discursive realm, oversteps his bounds, and commits the same sin for which he condemns Kliebard. If Kliebard erred by contesting the existence of progressive education because he was using the sources to explain a tangible and cohesive reform movement, Cohen errs by denying progressive education can be understood outside the level of rhetoric.

¹¹⁰ Despite a great deal of literature considering the impact of progressive education on other levels of reform, such as school practice, I find that those fields remain unfocused, either defining progressivism too narrowly or broadly, or concentrating abundantly on statistics or tables.
¹¹¹ Cohen, Challenging Orthodoxies, 108.
¹¹² Ibid., 112.
My analyses attempt to occupy a middle ground between these positions, at least with respect to the claims they can make about the meanings of progressive schooling.\textsuperscript{113} I am, consequently, inclined to reject Cohen’s assertion that “a category or concept like progressive education is \textit{just} an instrument.”\textsuperscript{114} While he is certainly correct in his assessment that historical concepts are useful as instruments for understanding the past, he goes too far in denying that it might have any material referent. Although the materiality of progressive education in practice is not within the scope of this study, I hesitate to deny its existence.\textsuperscript{115}

It is in this space that the overall conceptual framework of critical realism is of greatest importance to my research approach. Critical realism, like postmodernism, was an intellectual response “to the same two significant philosophical developments of the twentieth century: the positivist understanding of natural science and the ‘linguistic turn’ in the attempt at understanding social phenomena.”\textsuperscript{116} However, while “there is a relativism and social constructionist aspect to critical realism as well ... it emphatically argues that one can have good rational grounds for the preference of one theory over another.”\textsuperscript{117} In other words, it opposes “self-defeating relativist scepticism” but denies that knowledge can “be reduced to its sociological determinants of production. Truth is relative to be sure but there is still both truth and error.”\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{113} It is worth reiterating that my concentration on the rhetorical level of progressivist meanings makes no claims regarding the existence or non-existence of other levels of progressivist reforms in interwar Ontario.
\textsuperscript{114} Cohen, \textit{Challenging Orthodoxies}, 110. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{115} Certainly, articles in the source journals discussed progressivist programs for learning, such as the enterprise and project methods. See, for example, Chapter IV.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 9.
Critical realism, then, engages the epistemic fallacy—the reduction of ontology (what is) into epistemology (what we know about what is). It reasserts the fundamentality of ontology to the research enterprise and aims to demonstrate that all arguments necessarily presuppose some ontology.\textsuperscript{119} There are no guarantees that our knowledge of what is real accumulates progressively and linearly; in fact, it does not. The critical realist position acknowledges the existence of meaning as well as the ability to study and explain these meanings. It empowers me to consider the material bases of history without subjecting them to and filtering them through either a positivistic or a postmodern framework.\textsuperscript{120}

With reference to the educational journals in Ontario and their mediating role in the construction of meanings concerning progressive education, this research has looked...

\textsuperscript{120} See Chris Lorenz, “Historical Knowledge and Historical Reality: A Plea for ‘Internal Realism,’” \textit{History and Theory} 33 (1994): 297-327. In this article, philosopher of history Chris Lorenz argues that “internal realism” is a useful model for conceptualizing historical research, which intends neither to be objectivistic nor relativistic in its approach. Lorenz explains: “Like all brands of realism, ‘internal realism’ rests on basic presuppositions: first, that knowledge exists independently of our knowledge thereof; and second, that our scientific statements—including our theories—refer to this independently existing reality,” 308. Reference and correspondence, which are criteria of historical meaningfulness rather than verification or control, “must be interpreted as relative and internal to specific conceptual frameworks,” 309. The progressivist themes treated in Chapters IV through VI emerged from my reading of the sources, and my analytic concern was with an accurate description of these within the inclusive framework of progressivist domains that I established. Consequently, my approach to the data, which concentrated on content analysis of progressivist concerns framed by Ontario’s educationists in the source journals, was deductive. I appealed to the critical/internal realist approach to research, and in particular to Chris Lorenz’ explanation for the possibility of objective descriptions in historical research. Lorenz credits Thomas Haskell, for pointed out a crucial difference between objectivity and neutrality: “Striving after objectivity is not at all the same as striving after neutrality, although the two issues have often been conflated. Objectivity is the collective result of respecting the methodological rules of the discipline, open-mindedness, detachment, mutual criticism and fairness. These conditions for objectivity are social and individual at the same time. Striving after objectivity in this sense has nothing to do with neutrality,” Chris Lorenz, “You Got Your History, I Got Mine” \textit{Österreichische Zeitschrift Für Geschichtswissenschaften} 10, no. 4: 582. See, also, Chris Lorenz, “Can Histories be True? Narrativism, Positivism, and the ‘Metaphorical Turn,’” \textit{History and Theory} 37, no. 1 (1998): 309-330.
to develop a way of identifying and naming kinds of progressivist texts, based on the particular aims for reform that they advocate within the canopy of progressive education. In part, the analysis involved recovering and identifying what Cohen termed progressivist “key words and terms of the moral-intellectual discourse of education.”\textsuperscript{121} To this end, the categories that Kliebard used to describe divergent interest groups competing for influence over the curriculum of schools in the United States have been useful. Each offered a set of keywords and notions that permitted me to approach the progressivist texts from distinct perspectives and orientations.\textsuperscript{122}

I began by describing progressivist texts broadly, as instances of reform rhetoric critiquing the traditional, established curriculum in Ontario’s schools. In light of my reading of the source material, it became apparent that there were three common concerns expressed in the texts. These represented the reasons for which the traditional schools were critiqued. Firstly, progressivist articles depicted schools as insufficiently related to modern, contemporary life. Secondly, the schools were described as being overly concerned with academic knowledge rather than individual student’s interests and abilities. Thirdly, traditional schools were regarded as institutions where passive forms of learning and assessment, including rote memorization from textbooks and standardized examinations, were practised. Consequently, my working definition of the field entailed three domains, representing the common concerns of progressivist texts: active learning,

\textsuperscript{121} Cohen, \textit{Challenging Orthodoxies}, 116.
\textsuperscript{122} From the child study orientation, key concepts and keywords included: health, stages of development, holistic study, integration, individual freedom, normalization, environment, home, security, and adjustment. From the social efficiency orientation, key concepts and keywords included: adjustment, intelligence, standardization, scientific planning, administration, surveying, waste, cost, industry, and vocation. From the social meliorist orientation, key concepts and keywords included: active citizenship, critical thinking, social cooperation, adaptability, civics, social studies, democracy, and reformation.
individualized instruction, and relating schools to society. By describing how each of
these domains were interpreted and explained from different perspectives, my analyses
treated a broad but inclusive definition of progressivist rhetoric.

Lastly, my approach aimed to consider the perspective being critiqued by
progressivist articles. I refer to this perspective in this thesis as humanist as opposed to
other terms which might represent similar orientations, such as critic of modernity, anti-
progressive, or regressive. The humanist rhetoric represents what Cohen referred to as
the discourse receding and responding to progressivist language, or “the ‘before’ to
progressivism’s ‘after.’”123 How, I asked, did the humanist orientation respond to and
anticipate the progressivist critiques in The School and The Canadian School Journal between
1919 and 1942?124

Summary

Progressive educators, despite all differences in orientation, were held together by
four common perspectives, which operated as “ideational glue.”125 The first, and most
overarching of these, was a critique of the traditional humanist curriculum.126 The
humanists’ key concepts and subjects—faculty psychology, mental discipline, and the
classics—were most commonly critiqued. The other three domains of common interest

124 From the humanist orientation, key concepts and keywords included: mental discipline, faculty
psychology, classics, literature, and language study. These will be discussed at greater length in
Chapter VII.
Rodgers denied that it was possible to derive a stable list or catalogue of progressive values in the
political and social contexts, but believed that constituencies were built on a faith in some
common language or interest. The following paragraphs fill in what was only scantily sketched in
the opening pages.
126 The curriculum, in particular, was a subject of discussion. See Chapter VII.
among progressive educators dovetail from the first; they represent the grounds on which
the traditional schools were deemed unsuitable.127

According to the progressivist sources, the humanistic curriculum, in short,
emphasized passive forms of learning, including rote memorization; it subjugated the
individual learner to often out-of-date subject matter; and it was out of touch with
knowledge relating to real life. Consequently, the journal articles that I have identified as
being progressivist express concern for active learning, individualized instruction, and
relating the schools more closely to society. Establishing this unifying framework for
exploring progressive educational discourse allows for a more accurate and subtle
understanding of the diverse, sometimes conflicting, perspectives within it.

I define the first of these orientations, child study, in relation to the emerging field
of developmental psychology. Here was an element of progressivist reform concerned
mostly with fostering individualization and self-fulfillment through Ontario’s schools.
Students could, from this progressivist orientation, be understood on their own terms and
nurtured to develop into self-directed, moral citizens. Secondly, I define, social efficiency
as an ideal closely related to the fields of experimental psychology and industrial
management. Here was a thread of progressivist reform concerned with social planning
and management. From this progressivist orientation, students’ interests and abilities
were seen as requiring careful study in order for specific courses of training and study to
be developed so that each individual would be best prepared for his or her vocational and
social niche. I define, lastly, social meliorism, a network of ideas related to the idea of
social justice. Social meliorism was a course of progressivist reform concerned with

127 These three domains, under the overarching theme of a rejection of traditional schools,
constitute my operational definition of progressive education.
fostering participatory citizenship and equity in society. Students could, from the perspective of this orientation, engage with social problems and inequities in order to learn ways of critically considering their contexts and striving for a more equitable world. The following three chapters consider these differing progressivist orientations with respect to three domains of progressive education: active learning, individualizing instruction, and developing the relationship between schools and modern society.
CHAPTER IV

THE DOMAIN OF ACTIVE LEARNING:
PROGRESSIVIST CRITIQUES OF ROTE SCHOLARSHIP

Some few years ago I was looking about the school supply stores in the city, trying to find desks and chairs which seemed thoroughly suitable from all points of view—artistic, hygienic, and educational—to the needs of the children. We had a good deal of difficulty in finding what we needed, and finally one dealer, more intelligent than the rest, made this remark: “I am afraid we have not what you want. You want something at which the children may work; these are all for listening.” That tells the story of the traditional education.¹

Introduction

This chapter examines themes for exploring the meanings of active learning, one of three domains of progressivist texts in Ontario’s educational journals, from three different orientations: child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism.² The traditional curriculum, it was argued by progressive educationists in Ontario, put the learner into an essentially passive role entailing rote memorization of data and regurgitation of these in examinations.³ Progressivist texts in Ontario’s journals criticized passive, rote learning.⁴ As will be shown, such critiques were frequently presented in mocking or sarcastic texts that ridiculed the province’s traditional curriculum on the grounds that it considered students passive receptacles for academic content. Below, these critiques are divided into

² The other two domains under consideration in this dissertation, individualized instruction and correlation of school with society, are considered in Chapters V and VI, respectfully. The different orientations are heuristics for exploring the meanings of each domain of progressivist thought.
³ It is not only Ontarians who advocated for active, engaging learning experiences to supplant passive ones. John Dewey, most notably when establishing his progressive laboratory school at the University of Chicago, had the recollection noted in this chapter’s epigraph.
⁴ See, for example, “Education Now—And Then,” *The Canadian School Journal* (January 1935): 24. This article presents a song written by Ontario teachers Irma H. Kaufmann and Truda T. Weil that could be sung to the tune “Last Night on the Back Porch.” The text lacks musicality, but progressivist overtones are explicit: “Yesterday: They taught them how to sit straight and fold their hands up tight; … Today: They dote on self-expression and creative energy.”
three groups, each representing a divergent orientation toward progressive education. Each orientation—child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism—presents essentially different concerns and aims with respect to the progressivist aim of increasing the active participation of students in the learning process.

**Child Study and Developmental Psychology**

**Context of Child Study in Relation to Active Learning**

Pedagogically, the child study orientation was geared principally toward the scientific and psychological understanding of unfolding stages of growth and qualitative development. G. Stanley Hall best summarized its central principle: “first of all to keep out of nature’s way.” Educational activity was described as essential for the promotion of healthy development of mind and body. The child, like a plant or flower, would grow and develop through natural stages; the educator needed to understand these to foster, not impede, healthy growth.

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5 G. Stanley Hall, “Ideal School Based on Child Study,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the National Education Association* (1901): 474–88. The child study movement’s vision for schooling was heavily influenced by educationists such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, and Friedrich Froebel. Hall, regarded as the founder of child psychology in North America, had a strong influence on pioneering child study progressivists in Ontario, including William E. Blatz. On occasion, he is cited directly in Ontario’s journal articles. Ryerson public school teacher M. Isabel Wilson, for example, quotes Hall at length when presenting a thesis that primary school activities should provoke creativity and active engagement. M. Isabel Wilson, “Seat Work in the Primary Grades,” *The School* (November 1931): 237–41.

6 See, for an example of this very common theme in progressivist texts concerned with child study, “Looking Ahead,” *The Canadian School Journal* (March 1936): 95.

7 The Assistant Superintendent of Schools in London, Ontario, A. B. Lucas, provided one notable example of organic rhetoric in relation to children’s activities when he noted: “Every leaf differs from every other leaf; every flower differs from every other flower…. To develop individuality and initiative it is necessary for the learner to be confronted with as many kinds of situations as possible, calling for initiative, under the personal guidance and personality of an expert teacher.” A. B. Lucas, “Education for Democracy,” *The Canadian School Journal* (April 1940): 139.
The practical experience of early child study advocates in Ontario, such as William E. Blatz, was rooted in the rehabilitation programs for traumatized and wounded soldiers returning from World War I. The principles of child study were, in large part:

An outgrowth of the re-education methods and psychological principles that were developed for the muscle-function training of crippled veterans at the University of Toronto during 1916–1919, namely, that patient must not remain passive and psychologically dependent, but must become a participant learner, if he is to master his present limitations and thus be able to meet later situations with confidence.

With respect to the study and education of children, ascertaining the stage of the learner’s development and the complexity of the tasks involved were simpler, yet the emphasis on active self-direction and the progressive achievement of small goals was the same.

In the case of a veteran, rehabilitation was slow progression toward an, often physical, objective. In the case of a child, the objective of progressive education was the successful adjustment into the next stage of human development. The foundation of all learning was perceived to be experiential. The learner’s active engagement with tasks

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8 To read a comprehensive biography of William E. Blatz, see Jocelyn Motyer Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*. Blatz, famous for his important role in the upbringing of the Dionne Quintuplets in Ontario, is considered here the architect of progressivist child study in the province. At the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library archives, the Blatz collection includes 53 boxes in nine filing cabinets and covers his personal and professional correspondence between 1919 and 1966 (MS. COLL. 134).

9 E. A. Bott, “Founding of the Institute of Child Study,” 15–16. Bott, a University of Toronto psychologist, played a central role in bringing Blatz to the university and supporting the foundation of the Institute of Child Study.

10 W. G. Fleming, *Ontario’s Educative Society*, 5:187–188. Fleming comments on the connections among soldier rehabilitation, child study, and Blatz’s research: “While studies of child development were curtailed during the First World War, that period saw an intensification of interest in longitudinal psychological studies of individuals throughout life. Valuable findings resulted from attempts to improve rehabilitation treatment of disabled veterans. Among those who became interested in the broader implications of these findings was William E. Blatz. In order to prepare himself for further study of human development, particularly at the earlier stages of life, he undertook advanced studies in the University of Chicago in 1924. He returned to Toronto in time to participate in a study of mental hygiene problems in public school children.”

11 The staff of the Institute of Child Study, a centre for research into human development and education, co-published many books and articles explaining the relevance of child study to
suitable to his or her stage of development promoted both health and happiness; in Blatz’s words, “if all reading, grammar, mathematics and other academic subjects were removed from the school time-table, and drawing, modeling, craftwork, music and dancing substituted, we should have in the next generation not more intelligent but happier adults.”12 The most natural way to educate children, he argued, was through creative and expressive activity.

The nursery and laboratory schools that were integral parts of child study were also described as “outgrowths … they came into being at the same time when the human sciences were beginning to speculate upon the significance of childhood for human adjustment.”13 These allowed researchers to form developmental hypotheses of real children as they actively engaged in pedagogically progressive activities with their peers. In constructing such environments, Blatz appealed to his experiences at Chicago and to the model laboratory school developed there by Dewey. The children “worked on a loom and baked bread. There were school trips to the harbour, to art galleries, and to the train station. A newspaper was launched.”14 These ideas, commonplace today, were a far cry from the seatwork and rote learning characterizing the traditional classrooms in Toronto at the time.15

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14 Raymond, The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz, 90.
15 Ibid.
Stages of Development

Child study texts promoted the idea that special activities needed to be developed for dealing with a child at each stage of his or her evolution. Each stage of development had its own pedagogical activities and challenges to tackle. Overall, and regardless of age, children needed to enjoy what Blatz referred to as “an atmosphere of freedom, self-dependence, regulated habits, adequate social contacts—and of serenity. The latter is the sine qua non of any well-conducted Nursery School.”

Educational experiences were all about the active engagement with situations that promoted and provoked new knowledge. A reprinted address by Professor N. S. MacDonald to the Kindergarten Section of the O.E.A. in 1928 makes clear that activities should engage a child’s present stage of development, not some future aim. The article presenting MacDonald’s ideas noted that the foundations of child study were the belief that “education is a process of growth rather than instruction” and the conviction that “present interests rather than future needs should determine the method and material of instruction.” A child, in order to adjust to his or her stage of development, required developmentally appropriate learning experiences. The total personality of children developed only as they learned, which meant, of course, as they encountered developmentally appropriate experiences with which they could interact. For educationists concerned with child study, action was primary in progressive education,

16 W. E. Blatz, University of Toronto Monthly (June 1926).
18 Dorothy A. Millichamp and Margaret I. Fletcher, “Goals and Growth of Nursery Education,” 29. Millichamp and Fletcher were two of the teachers at the Institute of Child Study who actively and frequently published their findings in child study research.
and the content was only a secondary consideration.\textsuperscript{19} The best learning experiences were responsive to the developmental level of each child, which involved consideration of appropriate skills, interests, and habits.\textsuperscript{20}

The goal of the teacher, then, was to understand the child’s stage of development. With that knowledge in mind, an evolving educational plan needed to be constructed which could guide the learner’s activities through ever-increasing stages of complexity. In this context, the learning situation “was defined simply but dynamically as the response whereby the child seeks to meet his needs within his environment.”\textsuperscript{21} Success in a learning situation required effort and reflection on the part of the student. The teacher’s role, on the other hand, was seen as necessarily constructing situations that directed the learner’s natural energies and instincts toward educational aims. For instance, an article in \textit{The School} reviewing the guiding principles of active learning as embodied in the Alberta school reforms undertaken in 1922, depicted the following principles, among others, as admirable:

1. Learning is not something that a child \textit{gets}, but something that he [sic] \textit{does}…
2. The school programme must respond meaningfully and purposefully to the child’s call for things to do, by setting up goals for the child’s activity as well as objectives for the teacher…
3. The natural way of learning used by children in their play life may be adopted by the school, and re-directed to educational objectives.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} T. A. Brough, “Revising the Curriculum in British Columbia,” \textit{The School} (October 1936): 101–05.
\textsuperscript{21} Millichamp and Fletcher, “Goals and Growth of Nursery Education,” 30.
\textsuperscript{22} See, for example, “The Alberta Activity-Programme,” \textit{The School} (October 1936): 96. Emphasis in original text.
The Alberta activity programme, a model of “the new curriculum” based on research on progress and development, was described as fostering cooperative activities among teachers, pupils, parents, and school boards.23

**Functional Socialization**

One of the main concerns of child study progressivist texts was the sociability and social activity of children. T. A. Brough expressed this in the following way: “A democratic state should be composed of citizens able to play their part and to make new adjustments in an evolving and progressive social order…. The best social experience at the own age-level is the best preparation for the child’s later life.”24 Sociability, like other behaviours and subjects for learning, would progress rapidly with meaningful learning experiences to promote that growth. Social development, then, was deemed a matter motivated by active learning and experience.25 The teacher, having set out an experiential program of learning for the students, then needed to observe these carefully and assume a supervisory role with a minimum of interference in the learner’s free social play.26

A progressive, experiential curriculum promoted by articles concerned with child study was seen as largely directed toward the development of habits; these were described in terms of experiences that provoked individual development, which would persist

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23 Ibid., 100–01.
25 Ibid., 102. In Brough’s terms: “Knowledge should lead to action.”
26 See, for example, Blatz, “Educational Frills.”
throughout life. William E. Blatz, contributing to The School, explained this aim by describing how successful experiences in solving problems, social or otherwise, would lead the child to develop confidence that solutions can be attained through the exercise of intelligent judgments. Further, children’s active learning encouraged taking responsibility for their own behaviour and, in cooperative situations, working with peers to overcome obstacles. Blatz explained this in terms of learning to evaluate the consequences of one’s own actions, which involved two implications of education:

First of all, to recognize consequences, which assumes an intelligent appraisal of actual experience; secondly, to develop an attitude toward consequences either of acceptance or avoidance.... The second factor is independent of intelligence and knowledge as such and is concerned primarily with the arrangements for the individual’s social and physical adjustment.

Teachers might, for Blatz, be charged with arranging experiences and guiding development, but learning was an active process that persisted throughout life. It was driven by children’s native curiosity and adaptability. “Learning is an instinct,” Blatz argued, “because of the fundamental needs he [sic] will strive for satisfaction. Among his needs is the appetite of change which, for its satisfaction, requires new experiences.”

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27 “Institute of Child Study,” The School (January 1941): 444–45. This article, which reviews educational research in Ontario, considers the implications of research done at the Institute of Child Study on the longitudinal development of children throughout life. The Institute’s research followed 109 children and considered their social adjustment and activity.


29 Ibid., 499.

30 Ibid., 500. Learning, according to Blatz, howsoever structured in schools, was instinctual, necessarily social, and persistent: “Fortunately for our peace of mind no system of education can entirely eradicate the influence of learning. The child will learn in spite of us.”
The Art of Nonconformity

One of the implications of the belief that children’s learning is a dynamic and active process was, particularly at the Institute of Child Study, the belief that children needed practice solving problems, social and otherwise, using the “‘art of nonconformity,’ or so-called creative endeavour.”31 When children experienced working cooperatively, or how to “conform,” they learned to believe in others; when children learned to be creative and independent, however, or to “nonconform,” they learned to have more trust in their own abilities.32 The teacher, as guide, had to develop both independence and dependence through a balance of cooperative and independent learning experiences. This demanded of the adult a dynamic rather than a purely passive role, involving the discovery of ways to support and encourage children to choose goals and to support various paths toward their accomplishments.

For the child study progressivists, then, what was important was “not to instruct, but to provoke.”33 Learning could provoke many feelings, but boredom was among the worst.34 Problems were seen as frequently arising from boredom or disinterest on the part of students, stemming from a lack of imagination on the part of teachers concerning how to develop meaningful learning experiences. Blatz often made this last argument in

31 Millichamp and Fletcher, “Goals and Growth of Nursery Education,” 35.
32 Ibid.
33 Mary L. Northway, “Preface,” in W. E. Blatz, Human Security: Some Reflections (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1967). Northway, one of Blatz’s colleagues at the Institute of Child Study, refers to him as a provocative public speaker. Further, in his own teaching, Blatz tried to engage his students in ways that would make them contradict him and express alternative views. In short, he “stimulated thought, while his listeners responded by silently but actively contradicting his statements, supporting his thesis by extending his examples, interpreting or misinterpreting his implications, rebutting his arguments, and appreciating or depreciating his wit,” ix.
relation to his underlying functionalist conviction that knowledge is meaningful only when it is used. The stress on active learning, like the emphasis on practical activity that could keep children pleasantly occupied and engaged at all costs, was a common refrain throughout the period.

A progressive education necessarily excited learners and aroused their native interests. Quelling mischievous activities in students was a matter of proactively preparing activities for them that were attractive, interesting, and purposeful. Without practical work and activity in the classroom, children would find learning “meaningless, dull, and tiresome.” Gordon Young, Inspector of Public Schools in Kemptville, Ontario, explained that curricula such as those entrenched in Ontario enforced a passive subjugation to content without regard for individual interest. Such frameworks not only quelled motivation, but also substantially hindered individual progress. A progressive curriculum was one that, alternatively, provoked enthusiasm and excitement for learning because it permitted the individual to pursue interesting experiences. Once students were freed to pursue learning activities related to their aims and personal concerns, they could make plans for their lives and prepare appropriately. J. D. Griffin, Professor in the University of Toronto’s Department of Psychology, countering opinions that students needed vocational guidance and structure in order to enter a fitting career path, explained that students who had had such opportunities to pursue meaningful

36 See, for example, Henry Conn, “The Unemployment Problem in Primary Classes,” The School (September 1929): 31–32. Conn’s thesis in the article is that the most difficult task for any teacher is the challenge of motivating students to remain pleasantly and profitably engaged.
37 Ibid.
38 See, for example, M. Isabel Wilson, “Seat Work in the Primary Grades,” 237.
40 Ibid.
experiences would already have developed the “ability to choose a vocation ... quite naturally.”

Enterprise Experiences

Ontario-born Donalda Dickie, one of Alberta’s foremost progressivist voices in Alberta, developed and advocated an enterprise method of learning that integrated concern for child study with developmentally active learning experiences. For her, the “‘progressive’ type” of school, then, was described as one that would develop the gifts and personality of each student, while acknowledging “the individual cannot be isolated from the group.” A progressive, enterprising school was depicted as necessarily emphasizing learning activities to develop “co-operative achievement of a social purpose that the teacher presents to the class with a view to having them use it as an exercise in intelligent social behaviour.”

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42 Dickie earned her M.A. from Queen’s University before moving to Alberta, where she instructed in all three of Calgary’s normal schools. Dickie wrote two articles in *The School* on the topic of enterprise education in 1940. She earned a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and a Governor General’s Award for a children’s history textbook titled *The Great Adventure*. Like most progressivist voices, she contrasted a new and progressive education with a traditional one that did not meet student’s needs. While Dickie is not treated as a subject in the source journals, enterprise learning had an impact on Ontario’s schools: “After her involvement with the introduction of “The Enterprise,” as the progressive education reforms in elementary schools were called in Alberta, she wrote *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice*. It became the standard text on progressive education used in teacher education programs across Canada.” Amy von Heyking, *Creating Citizens*, 64. See also Rebecca Piaget Coulter, “Getting Things Done: Donalda J. Dickie and Leadership through Practice,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 28, no. 4 (2005): 667–98.
44 Ibid., 4.
Enterprises involved the analysis and identification of a social problem, guided discovery of some solution, and the cooperative application of that solution. The subject matter of an enterprise ideally engaged a learner’s developmental stage and provided “a good range of contacts, experiences, and activities.” The activities intentionally blended the academic distinction between topics of study and the actual lives of students. In this regard, the topic and scope of school work was intended to be intimately related to the actual development of learners’ abilities and to involve students in active inquiry.

Social Efficiency and Adjustment to Industry

Context of Social Efficiency in Relation to Active Learning

Progressivist articles considered in this section as representative of the social efficiency orientation to school reforms promoted active learning that trained students to

45 In contemporary schooling contexts, the enterprise would best be described as a project method of teaching. Both integrate various subjects into learning tasks emphasizing some form of authentic activity. The learner is permitted space to pursue personal interests within the enabling constraints of a learning theme.
47 Correlation, in contemporary schools, is most commonly referred to as integration. Integration of subject matter might entail the use of, for example, mathematics, language, and social studies in one learning situation as opposed to treating these subjects separately. Correlation had a further inference involving a blurring of differences between subjects and contexts. I appeal to Dewey’s description of this in the context of learning: “We live in a world where all sides are bound together. All studies grow out of relations in the one great common world. When the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationship to this common world, his studies are naturally unified. It will no longer be a problem to correlate studies. The teacher will not have to resort to all sorts of devices to weave a little arithmetic into the history lesson, and the like.” Dewey, School and Society, 107.
48 See, for example, Donalda Dickie, “Education via the Enterprise,” 103–07. In this article, the second of two parts, Dickie elaborates on the theme of enterprise education. She provides instruction for teachers on how to plan enterprises, including a sample project titled “Down North: A Conducted Tour” that interrelated learning in the following subjects: flight, geography, weather, mining, freight, and Inuit peoples.
develop specific skills that would relate to vocational life. Many of the authors of these texts were related to vocational training or guidance, industry, and school administration. Throughout the interwar years, critiques of a general, humanistic education often hinged on the notion that transfer of training was impossible. Learning a skill in one particular context was not necessarily—or, even, possibly—transferable to another. This thesis was first presented in the 1890s by researchers such as William James at Harvard University. It was echoed in Canada by progressivist C. C. Goldring, who wrote on this question explicitly in an article written for *Toronto Saturday Night*, which was reprinted in *The Canadian School Journal* in 1935.

Goldring, who was hired as the Toronto Board of Education’s Director in 1933 at the age of 33, described “the transfer problem” as emanating from scientific evidence that “transfer of training usually takes place only when the situations are similar. It will be generally agreed that the conditions of business differ radically from the conditions of school.” To promote greater efficiency, schools needed to engage students in learning activities that were particular, precise, and specialized in order to train them for their future, vocational, lives.

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49 The issue of transfer of training will be discussed again in Chapter VII with regards to faculty psychology and the demise of humanistic study.

50 For further discussion on William James’s study in relation to the transfer of training and faculty psychology, see Chapter VII, which discusses humanistic rhetoric as a foil to progressivist ideas.


52 In the U.S. context, Herbert Kliebard also reported that the collapse of mental discipline and the idea that experimental psychology had debunked faith in the transferability of learning was used as leverage for the dismantling of the classical, humanist curriculum. He hypothesized, however, that these justifications for reform need to be understood as a “consequence of a changing social order, which brought with it a different conception of what knowledge was of most worth.” Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 6.
Stating this point with abundant clarity was Ontario’s Minister of Public Welfare, W. G. Martin, who announced to the Trustees’ and Ratepayers’ Department of the O.E.A. in 1932 that “we are no longer satisfied with a system of general education…. The work of training the boy of to-day must follow along some particular line instead of fashioning our youth in a common group.” Educational activities needed to be designed efficiently, so that they might “take the boy of school age and seek to fit and equip him for some special and definite avocation or calling.” This was, Martin argued, an “age of specialization.”

**Adjusting Students Efficiently to the Industrial Order**

C. C. Goldring, whose article in *Toronto Saturday Night* was just discussed, was identified by Robert Stamp as an educationist “flirting in the 1930s with what was called ‘progressive education’” in Ontario. What Stamp does not consider, citing the same source, is that the article reveals a particular orientation to progressive education. In this case, Goldring best expresses a distinctly social efficiency progressivist reading of the school’s responsibility to the established industrial order: “Since it is certain that all the mature members of a society will die, it is obvious that the conservation of a society depends upon rearing the new-born members in such a way that they will appropriate its functions and sustain its values.” Further, since “school graduates will look for positions in business, it is important for the school people to have some knowledge of the viewpoint

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54 Ibid., 194.
55 Ibid., 194.
Goldring’s message to progressivists was that educational activities should prepare students to adjust to the extant social order, not to reconstruct it.

This active adjustment to industrial demands entailed training students to conform in personality, not merely in skill. A. M. Laird and J. E. Durrant reported in *The School* that they had, like others in the Department of Education, undertaken a thorough occupational survey in order to take note of particular skills and habits required by different professions. Their work, funded by the Ontario Training College for Technical Teachers, had two aims: “The first was to learn something definite about the industries, commerce, and major occupations in the city. The second was to analyze this information in its relation to secondary education and the kinds of courses required.” The logic behind these surveys was quite straightforward. If educators were to develop educational activities that could train students to perform specialized tasks or manifest particular character traits, these needed to be identified as behavioural objectives.

By 1935, the report cards in Toronto schools were assessing students’ progress in attaining particular, desirable personality characteristics. These, in the words of Goldring, provided “a record of progress in some of the qualities of a good citizen. The development of personal qualities is as important as a good standing in the subject of

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58 Ibid., 10.
59 A. M. Laird and J. E. Durrant, “An Occupational Survey of a Small City,” *The School* (April 1939): 655. Occupational surveys of cities were undertaken in most urban cities during the interwar period, each resulting in a list of characteristics or traits desired of progressive young citizens entering the workforce. Laird and Durrant were concerned with the City of Guelph, Ontario.
60 Ibid., 655.
61 Ibid.
A good citizen was one, in this context, whose activities facilitated his or her adjustment to the established order.

Active citizenship for a progressive society, for example, required direct training of students by the schools of all those characteristics that would foster conservative obedience to the state order, including:

1. Respect for authority—(a) Parental; (b) Positional.
2. Industry—(a) Thoroughness in work done; (b) Time not wasted.
3. Thrift—(a) Regular savings; (b) Avoidance of waste.
4. Courtesy—(a) Recognition of the rights of others; (b) Politeness, good manners.
5. Integrity—(a) Honesty, Truthfulness; (b) Trustworthiness.
6. Care for property—(a) Private; (b) Public.
7. Tidiness—(a) Personal; (b) Environmental.
8. Contribution to the public good—(a) Cooperation; (b) Initiative, suggestiveness.
9. Self-control—(a) Actions; (b) Feelings.
10. Courage—(a) Physical; (b) Moral.

Thus, efficiency-oriented progressivist texts argued that these could not be learned by independently and quietly sitting in classrooms focused on reading and writing tasks; personality, like skill, required active training.

The educational journals reported the benefits and successes of several progressivist programs, which were established in Ontario’s schools in order to train students actively and specifically in the habits of mind consistent with a social efficiency

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64 It is essentially this kind of prespecification of pedagogical objectives based on the precepts of activity analysis and behavioural objectives that, in the United States, characterized the idea of scientific curriculum design. For further reading on scientific curriculum making, see Werrett W. Charters, Methods of Teaching: Developed from a Functional Standpoint (Chicago, IL: Row, Peterson & Co., 1909); Curriculum Construction (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1923); Teaching the Common Branches (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1913); and Herbert M. Kliebard, “Rise of Scientific Curriculum-Making,” in Forging the American Curriculum: Essays in Curriculum History and Theory (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 83–84.
viewpoint. Such programs as Manual Training, Domestic Science, and Technical Education were introduced into the province’s curriculum, and the Penny Bank program was specifically designed to teach children the value of regular savings, thrift habits, and business practice.

Educator J. R. Littleproud, whose list of traits defining good citizenship was just noted, was Ontario’s Chief Penny Bank inspector. His 1934 article in *The Canadian School Journal*, which also provided a thorough historical survey of the Penny Banking program, equated students’ participation in the program with citizenship education: “As a civic institution, the public school can justify its existence to-day only by the type of citizen it produces.” Littleproud was not shy in proposing that educational activity in a progressivist context had as its ultimate goal the production of efficient citizens:

> Recent years have witnessed a revolution in the field of pedagogy as far-reaching as any revolution ever effected [sic] in the political affairs of mankind or in the industrial world. There has come a new viewpoint in the minds of educators, a new objective for the schools, a new test of the school’s efficiency.

A young child participating in a project and activity promoting frugality would become a mature citizen of the province with experience handling his or her finances.

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65 The questioning of what personal traits or habits of mind schools could cultivate in order to facilitate efficient business practice in a progressive society was a continuous theme in the interwar years. On occasion, the notion that progressive schools should cultivate appropriate business habits was blatantly and explicitly stated. See, for example, W. J. Cairns, “What To-Day’s Business Man Asks of To-Day’s Young Man,” 285. Cairns, Manager of the Bell Telephone’s largest division, spoke to a group of Boy Scouts, informing them that dependability, loyalty, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and initiative were, in order, the traits that he looked for when hiring employees. His speech was reproduced in the journal and sent to educationists across the province, reinforcing the importance of asking “What does the business man of today look for in young men?”


67 Ibid., 9.

68 Ibid. The following citation makes this point most clearly, as Littleproud engages in a prolonged comparison between the “old” and “new” educational viewpoints: “The old viewpoint was traditional; the new viewpoint is human. The old viewpoint was academic, the new viewpoint is citizenship. The aim of the school under the old viewpoint was to make scholars of
According to Littleproud, under the terms of the Penny Bank Act of 1904, which was passed by the federal Minister of Finance and with the cooperation of local chartered banks, the Penny Bank of Toronto was organized in 1905. It began taking deposits as of May 1, 1905, and by the end of that school year, it had enrolled 42 schools in the provincial capital, with a combined balance of $50,400. By the start of World War I, 187 schools in 48 different cities with a total balance of an astounding $395,000 were involved with Penny Banking. The progressive program for active learning that correlated to real life was maintained throughout the Depression, actually expanding during that period to 470 schools and 124 cities, serving as custodian for $1,200,000 belonging to the children of the province.

**Purposeful and Useful Activity**

The traditional, entrenched curriculum was not only inefficient because it concentrated on content unrelated to life, but also because the method of instruction did not concern purposeful and useful activity. As Reverend C. R. Durrant said in his address at the 1934 Ontario Educational Association Convention, a new and progressive school system would “train for living. Many things we have regarded as fads, frills and fancies, will be looked upon as necessities in the new day approaching.”

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69 Ibid., 10.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
Charles F. Deeley, an Ontario educator, would interpret educational training for living in terms that related it to classroom instruction through projects. “The new curriculum has given a very marked impetus to individual or class projects in both the public school and lower school grades,” he explained.\(^{73}\) Calling out to his colleagues in *The School*, Deeley summarized very effectively the efficiency concern for making all classroom activity both useful and purposeful: “Teachers, let us evaluate our project before the activity is begun by two criteria: first, the knowledge which such an undertaking will convey to our pupils; second its value in the light of the time and labour which the work will entail.”\(^{74}\) The article expresses two common progressivist preoccupations in journal articles concerned with school planning: usefulness and efficiency. Lessons were supposed to concentrate activity as efficiently as possible, in terms of time and effort invested by both teacher and student.

An active program of schooling that promoted utility and efficiency was frequently represented as one that would be of greater interest to learners than a curriculum inculcating academic knowledge and habits. Learning that was strictly academic was a remnant of Ontario’s past, when only a privileged elite could pursue higher learning. In the modern world, an editorial article in *The School* explained, a progressive system was one that allowed for the fact that “high schools enrol upwards of three-fourths of the young people of high school age.”\(^{75}\) A fair proportion of those students, the argument continued, had neither the inclination nor the ability to pursue academic studies. These students deserved the right to pursue studies actively that would prepare them best for

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\(^{74}\) Ibid., 405.

\(^{75}\) “Standards in the Middle School: A Discussion of Methods in Measurements in Matriculation Subjects,” *The School* (March 1941): 621
their future vocational lives by providing precise and adequate training.\textsuperscript{76} Such training was necessarily active, participatory, and directed toward realistic aims. Any course that did not actively engage students in practical work relating to life missed the mark. If history, for example, was treated as “merely a matter of memorizing sequences of past events, its study might better be abandoned. Its chief purpose is training pupils to appreciate the significance of current happenings and to understand the nature of historical cause and effect.”\textsuperscript{77} Mere memorization of textbooks was, in a progressivist context, inadequate learning.

\textbf{Teachers and Administration}

Progressivists concerned with educational efficiency largely dealt with administrative issues, including the management and control of testing systems, school organization, and finance. Yet, the microcosm of the classroom and the operations of public school teachers were not ignored by efficiency progressivists. S. B. Sinclair, for instance, a school trustee in rural Ontario, published an article in \textit{The Canadian School Journal} arguing that for a school board to be efficient “the first step in the wise selection of a teacher is to determine, in a general way, the special kind of teacher required.”\textsuperscript{78} Hiring of teachers required prudence, and a number of factors were crucial to the development and cultivation of useful, efficient citizens. Just as students learned desirable

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. The editorial states: “For the most part these pupils expect the school to play an important part in preparing them for vocational life, and we are justified in requiring standards which will make that preparation as nearly adequate as possible.”

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 622.

skills and habits through activity, teachers should actively intervene in student affairs, particularly with regard to discipline.

Among the principal problems of education, explained George Rogers, was the presence of teachers who were poor disciplinarians: “If we are serious in our desire for economy, we may have to change the organization of many of our schools. Teachers will have to perfect a technique for handling larger classes.”

Rogers, writing in 1933 when ballooning enrolments during the Depression stretched the province’s educational infrastructure to its limits, believed that no efficient organization of schools could be sustained if teachers were inefficient managers of classrooms. Particularly in the case of vocational schools and technical training institutions where “there are a number of large boys who are behaviour problems, a teacher who is known to be a good disciplinarian is better than one who has no experience.”

An efficient teacher minimized distractions and kept students on task for a maximum time.

Further, since the transferability of training between contexts was, at best, debatable from this perspective, the efficient teacher also required specific and efficient training. Particularly in the domains of technical and vocational schooling, courses were set up during the summer, in the evenings, and in the normal schools for the preparation of teachers in different domains of training. In terms of academic and professional training, “the candidate who holds a first class certificate and certificates for successful courses in Agriculture, Household Science, Music, Drawing, Physical Culture, Auxiliary Class work, two years Normal School training etc. is sure to do better work as the result of

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80 Ibid., 176.
superior preparation,” Rogers argued. More training and increased specialization were imperative for the promotion of progressive teachers who could use input from school inspectors, school principals, administrators, and peers to improve the efficiency with which they fulfilled their teaching duties.

**Conference and Conversion**

There was an almost missionary element to certain progressivist texts, some of which argued strenuously for the conversion of educationists holding other views. In a 1932 editorial article published in *The Canadian School Journal*, for example, the following sentiment was expressed:

Too many of us forget that we must win those who do not see eye to eye with us. In fact all our convention and association effort is really directed to winning the active co-operation of those who are either opposed to certain ideas, which we consider progressive; or are indifferent upon the matter.

The editorial took aim at unnamed but alternative progressivist visions for school reform that did not consider the promotion of efficiency paramount. There were, it acknowledged, alternative orientations to progressive education; these, in effect, decreased the efficiency of progressivist aims.

This appeal is notable because it highlights another dimension of activity within progressive education, namely, that of progressivists themselves. The publication of editorial articles and of lesson plans or news reports bearing relevance to progressivist themes represented, in itself, active engagement with progressive education. Progressivists not only promoted active learning within learning situations, they actively

81 Ibid., 176.
engaged in writing about and conferencing on progressive education. Further, if the cause of progressive education were to be furthered in the most efficient way, it would happen through some form of agreement and active cooperation.

The same editorial of 1932 also invited progressivists to confer about their problems and engage in discussion about the best course for school reform. Ultimately, from the efficiency perspective, the greatest test of any measure was a utilitarian and pragmatic one; it was “the test of its value.” Social efficiency claims to value would always be strongest because these were based on research that actively surveyed the realities of vocational life and consulted with business leaders to ascertain their particular demands for the schools. W. E. Gordon, manager of the Robert Simpson Eastern Company, having defined a modern school as one that taught students the personal qualities that would ensure their success in business life, explained to Ontario’s educational community that “the progressive, intelligent graduate of to-day … is the industrial leader of to-morrow.”

**Surveying Costs and Researching Waste**

Survey research into educational cost and expenditure was another dimension of what such progressivist interests saw as active engagement with schools. Throughout 1937, *The Canadian School Journal* in particular provided space to leaders of business and industry to present their concerns to Ontario’s educationists. Common themes treated

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 93.
85 W. E. Gordon, “A Guide to Young Canadians Seeking a Job,” *The Canadian School Journal* (January 1937), 4. Another theme present in Gordon’s article is the difficulty of finding work during the Depression and immediately afterwards. Progressive schools would provide their students with abilities that would facilitate vocational success.
desirable characteristics and skills that school graduates should have upon entering the workplace. Progressive schools were not wasteful ones, and it was imperative to “discover, if possible, where we are wasting effort and money.” Efficiency-minded progressivists published the reports of such investigations and related them to contemporary concerns with relative frequency. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, as an example, aimed to discover “where eliminations, combinations, and reconstructions can be made, that will at the same time relieve the burden and increase the effectiveness” of Ontario’s high school programs. This active advocacy of school efficiency made the matter of controlling expenditure an overarching administrative concern; in the words of one editorial, it “accentuated the movement for reducing educational costs.”

Above all other factors, the Depression accentuated efficiency progressivist pleas for financial and institutional restructuring of schools. Yet such rhetoric was widespread and not delimited by the 1929 to 1934 years. In 1928, for example, when the Department of Education was in the throes of expansion and building plans that would be halted by the depressed economy, a number of articles were published advocating reorganization of school boards, funding grants, regulations, and administration. Along with a sense that the world was increasingly modern, specialized, and scientific, came

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86 Rogers, “Present Day Problems in Education,” 175.
87 These surveys were, as noted above in relation to vocational surveys, common. Throughout the period studied, reports were made from surveys commissioned by different agencies and institutions, including the Department of Education, universities, the Ontario College of Education, and the teachers’ federations.
88 J. E. Robertson, “An Educational Survey,” 120. This survey was, of course, undertaken at the very moment when the Great Depression was most profoundly crunching school finances and grinding both building expansions and program revisions through the efficiency mill.
90 See, for example: R. D. Mess, “Organizing the School Board for Efficiency,” The Canadian School Board Journal (April 1928): 8. In this article, which reproduced an address delivered at the Urban Section of the Trustees’ Department by the Reverend R. D. Mess in London, Ontario, one of the themes for progressivist reform is the idea that efficiency promotes stability and control when the world is in flux.
claims that education was out of touch with this spirit of scientific planning and efficiency.\textsuperscript{91} Whereas, in other words, all of society was changing, school administration had remained relatively static and, as one editorial in \textit{The Canadian School Journal} made clear, “the same administrative machine we set up sixty years ago, some of it nearly one hundred years ago … [now] works badly.”\textsuperscript{92} Another editorial in the same journal four months earlier stated the following:

In the transition from the more cultural period of our system to the intensely practical, the system has, through the enthusiastic efforts and appeals of the many idealists, become so cumbersome as to be a burden to both the teacher and pupil and correspondingly ineffective.\textsuperscript{93}

The war against waste required vigilant reflection, study, and action. Wherever efficiency could be increased, without increasing costs, progress was being achieved.\textsuperscript{94}

\textbf{Social Meliorism and Engagement with Social Ills}

\textbf{Context of Social Meliorism in Relation to Active Learning}

Articles with a social meliorist orientation to active learning were concerned, primarily, with the promotion of active, reflective, and critical citizenship. The progressivist texts from this orientation were concerned, by and large, with fostering a cooperative rather than an individualistic society. With respect to active learning, this section will discuss meliorist progressivist articles’ advocacy for schooling that engages students with problems facing contemporary society and providing experiences for their

\textsuperscript{91} See, for example, “The Challenge of Childhood,” 2.
\textsuperscript{92} “School Administration and School Finance in Ontario—Can They Be Improved?” \textit{The Canadian School Journal}, (May 1932): 190.
\textsuperscript{93} “Control of Expenditures for Education,” 339.
analysis and resolution. Schools could become spaces where future citizens would learn to challenge social injustices and promote greater equality for all.

**Criticality and Change**

Joseph McCulley, Headmaster of one of Ontario’s largest private schools, Pickering College, emerged as a significant progressivist voice advocating social meliorism in both of the source journals.\(^95\) From his perspective, the drive for a progressive system that would support a more just and cooperative world had been prompted by social circumstances that “arise which cause a general unsettling in the intellectual atmosphere; in this environment creative thinkers find a more satisfactory opportunity to achieve their purpose and change comes about much more rapidly than at other times.”\(^96\) The world had changed dramatically, and it could be changed to reflect a more equitable social order.

New conceptions of life and schooling could never supplant established curricula or doctrines without the active struggle, advocacy, and support of citizens. McCulley thought that progressive education was a cause that could rally the support of educationists in times of inequity or injustice because “any ‘ism’ or ‘ology’ which is

\(^{95}\) In March of 1937, McCulley was identified as a notable figure in Ontario’s educational scene, meriting a short biography in an article titled “Who’s Who,” *The Canadian School Journal* (March 1937): 86. McCulley, a University of Toronto graduate awarded the Massey Scholarship for graduate study in History at Oxford University, was described as being “interested in progressive movements in education, being a member of the Executive and Chairman for two years of the Toronto Branch of the New Education Fellowship.” The New Education Fellowship was a UK-based organization promoting progressive education; it was in many respects the European counterpart to the U.S.-based Progressive Education Association. For further reading, see, for example, Margaret H. White, “The New Education Fellowship: An International Community of Practice,” *New Era in Education* 82, no. 3 (2001); Hermann Rohrs and Volker Lenhart, eds., *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1995).

sufficiently critical of present conditions or which claims itself as a panacea for the ills of our body politic will find at least its quota of adherents."97 Moreover, active citizenship required a critical perspective toward the ideas and circumstances of life so that viewpoints could be debated without blind adherence to any particular doctrine.98

Active involvement in terms of promoting social welfare and justice involved more than reading and reflection. Progressivist schools, teachers, and students were represented as those that did not confine themselves within school walls but actively sought to engage with social problems and issues.99 “Don’t stand aside and leave it to others,” implored W. G. Martin, an Ontario teacher, “for the opportunities are at your threshold, in every town and village where you happen to live. The tasks are there and every one of us can play a part, for the race is not necessarily to the swift nor the battle to the strong.”100 Concern for the common good called on each progressivist to turn his or her gaze to others in society. Each person was considered equally capable of this task, and neither intelligence testing nor auxiliary classes could replace a commitment to active involvement in the reconstruction of society.101

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97 Ibid., 58.
98 Ibid. In education, McCulley notes, this would require a paradigmatic shift, which would face opposition from entrenched ways of thinking: “In all ages and in all places there has ever seemed to be among mankind a profound aversion to change. Particularly is this so when change necessitates a revision of mental concepts,--or a reconstruction of a philosophy of life.”
99 See, for example, “The Educational Conventions,” The Canadian School Journal (March 1937), 106. This article, summarizing conventions held across the province in the past months, presents a number of voices iterating the most dominant theme in progressivist, social meliorist texts in the late 1930s, the necessity of fostering social cooperation. It reports, for instance, that Joseph McCulley held a convention on this same theme at Pickering College in Newmarket, Ontario. References were made to “the emphasis placed on the knowledge of facts as not being of so great importance as the spirit in which the child uses the knowledge, and the development of the capacity of all pupils to live a socially useful life.”
101 Ibid.
The alternative, a strict and narrow efficiency view of progress, was a fundamentally immoral one, as an editorial in *The School*, demonstrated by equating progressivist visions not grounded in social meliorism with Nazism.¹⁰² Civic cooperation, social justice, and intelligent activity were hallmarks of democracy, wherein Nazi society submitted citizens to their rulers as if they were animals to be trained:

Having no grounds for confidence in the intelligent, self-motivated, co-operative activity of a lion fresh from the jungle, the trainer relies on his own intelligence to gain his own ends and on emotional and physical force to make his animals behave in a manner conducive to such ends. For the application of this method to human beings see *Mein Kampf* by A. Hitler, who bases his social and educational philosophy on Darwinian theory.¹⁰³

A more just progressivist vision for the reformation of Ontario’s schools would promote social cooperation over the rule of brute science, enabling each child to “assume responsibility for his own welfare and the welfare of all.”¹⁰⁴

**Cooperative Living and Activity**

Accordingly, if progressive schools were to develop in children an understanding of the benefits of cooperative living and social welfare, they should engage learners in classroom activities that build relevant and rewarding experiences. The pupil, educator John Cook explained, “having been shown the particular value of this principle in the world around him, should be placed in a position where he may take part in the actual

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¹⁰² “Editorial: Working Together,” *The School* (February 1941): 497. This was, of course, during World War II. The content of many editorial articles during the early 1940s emphasized social meliorism and democratic government as necessary alternatives to fascism and Nazism. For a lengthier description of the meliorist ethos during World War II, see Chapter VIII.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 497.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 497.
Cooperative activities directed toward some social purpose or benefits were frequently cited as possible ways in which students could gain active experience with the benefits of mutual care and sharing.\textsuperscript{106} R. H. Macklem, for instance, a teacher at Runnymede Collegiate Institute in Toronto, argued that “community schools” could be founded as models of “a reciprocal service between school and community.”\textsuperscript{107} Promoting students’ active involvement within the community included activities with social benefits, such as the construction of benches for needy organizations and the formation of school choirs that would tour the community and promote good will. Schools, Macklem explained, could improve the social welfare of communities in which they were situated: “There is a school in every community, but few communities have schools which do more than render a minimum of service to the people.”\textsuperscript{108} Further, progressive schools could become social centres, wherein students and adults could come together as a group, “playing and studying, singing and conversing—together.”\textsuperscript{109}

**Engaged and Active Citizenship**

A democratic and socially just province required active and committed citizens. As F. J. McDonald, Inspector of Separate Schools for Ottawa, explained: “Unfeeling, apathetic citizenship of people is proving fatal to democracy.”\textsuperscript{110} A progressive school

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 656.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 656.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 657.
was one that fostered and promoted active, critical reflection and promoted cooperative, responsible, and associative living based on the question “Who is my neighbour?” In resounding Deweyan tones, McDonald argued that a progressive school could play a significant role in “the improvement of social order” if it successfully promoted cooperative “learning by doing.” “Doing” cooperative citizenship entailed far more than memorization of facts relating to government, civics, or morality; it required the habit of living democratically. Progressivists could promote active citizenship in schools by adhering to the following precepts:

1. That civilization is a co-operative task
2. That living is a joint responsibility
3. That the success of the social enterprise depends upon individual effort, sociability and dependability

… These aims are to be constantly held in mind in training our citizens. And the greatest of these is participation.

Ontario’s schools could help students become active and moral citizens by promoting those same values through classroom activities. For instance, B. C. Taylor explained, “if the society is to be successful in revealing democracy, it should train each member in a democratic way.” The formative place for this life was at school, where the lessons of communal work and play were first learned. The School reported that the elementary school teachers’ federations had sent out to their members a memorandum “supporting attitudes and teaching methods which will foster democracy as a way of life. Democratic teaching rather than teaching democracy is approved as desirable practice in elementary school.”

111 Ibid., 238.
112 Ibid., 238.
113 Ibid., 239–40.
Such democratic teaching, argued Stanley Watson, Principal of Toronto’s Keele Street Public School, necessarily emerged from a paradigmatic shift concerning the roles of teacher and learner. Watson used The Canadian School Journal as his forum for explaining his opinions on this matter, explaining that the teacher was supposed to be a director of student activities and not an imparter of information. A progressive educator, he argued, was neither concerned with the projected training value of educational experiences, nor with the passive absorption of academic facts. “The modern teacher” guides rather than inculcates, Watson explained, because he or she “no longer thinks of education in terms of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.” A progressive school was represented here as one that liberated both student and teacher from tethers restraining their concern for community, justice, and other social problems.

In 1937, The Canadian School Journal reproduced the text of a lecture that Duncan McArthur presented to the O.E.A., in which he described these restraints as detrimental to the essential elements of democratic life. This was the same year that the Department of Education would introduce its revised Programme of Studies, and the article presents McArthur at his rhetorical best. In strong meliorist tones, he describes a progressivist vision for Ontario’s schools in which “children must be freed from any authoritative concepts or any blind worship of tradition or the status quo. In their school days they must have some opportunity to learn how to choose—to choose between

116 Watson shared the limelight with Thornton Mustard, Principal of the Toronto Normal School. The two were co-chairs of the committee that drafted the 1937 revised Programme of Studies in Ontario. For a lengthier discussion, see Chapter VIII. See also Lynn S. Lemisko and Kurt W. Clausen, “Connections, Contrarieties, and Convulsions: Curriculum and Pedagogical Reform in Alberta and Ontario, 1930–1955,” Canadian Journal of Education 29, no. 4 (2006): 1097–126.


118 Ibid., 228.

opposed alternatives that path which will be for the ultimate good.”

For McArthur, the cultivation of a scientific and democratic educational community would help to build a better and less prejudiced world. This article, spanning seven pages, is near epic, both in its scope and its energy. In it McArthur, who featured prominently in the construction and presentation of Ontario’s newly minted progressivist curriculum, strikes while the iron is hot. A lengthy citation of the text is merited:

The school of tomorrow must, above all things, turn out citizens who are capable of facing their very different problems intelligently, courageously and with sympathy for all living beings. In this connection I make a plea for freedom of discussion, even of the most controversial issues in the classroom. The teacher must not be a propagandist but be encouraged to develop in the minds of his pupils the importance of ascertaining all the facts in a given situation, of accepting differences of opinion with tolerance and of making a decision, not on the grounds of personal prejudice but on the basis of the total community good. Education at its best in the intellectual sphere is the doing away with prejudices.

By the beginning of World War II, starting in 1940, a veritable flurry of articles appeared in the journals concerned with the preservation and integrity of a democratic attitude to education.

Between 1940 and 1942, the dominant theme in the sources is a prevailing concern with fostering democratic activity and community in the schools. An article reproducing a document drafted by an anonymous member of a Board of Education in Ontario gives robust expression to this theme: “Our democratic government is only meant for people who can do their own thinking. … liberty and freedom are not gifts from heaven, bestowed on a favoured people, but are the price of an everlasting struggle

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120 Ibid., 140.
121 Ibid., 140.
for justice in high places and low.”

McArthur’s call for schools to foster opportunities for free discussion and democratic choice became a rallying cry for many progressivist articles in the early 1940s; democracy was represented as an ideal to be lived as well as taught.

Civics and Social Studies Education

Civics courses were frequently described as one way for progressivists to enable active and experiential training for citizenship. While the school curriculum had been overextended and overloaded with courses that were either entirely academic or vocational, the most practical necessity of all, that is, learning about being a critical and reflective citizen of the province, had been neglected. “It is not possible for all to become carpenters, or dressmakers, or milliners,” explained North Toronto Collegiate Institute teacher James Keillor, but “all are called upon to assume the duties of citizenship.” In the “progressive educational journals and in the columns of our daily newspapers,” Keillor continued, “we read much regarding efforts to adapt the curricula of our public and high schools to the needs of the average Canadian citizen.” A truly progressive school system would concentrate on the study of society, and understand that “the pupil

123 “A Criticism of Our Educational System,” 322. An editorial note at the article’s head states the following: “This report was given by a member of a Board of Education and an active member of the Ontario School Trustees’ and Ratepayers’ Association to the Board in one of the large cities in Ontario.”


126 Ibid., 59.
can learn citizenship only by being an active citizen during his school life.”  Most importantly, in terms of active learning, “a text-book, if any is used, will be valuable chiefly for reference in seeking more information after class discussion … the chief value of such action lies in the development of habits of right social thought and action.”

The notion of “social studies,” widely adopted in the rhetoric and curricula of schools across Ontario in the 1930s, was intimately connected to the social meliorist orientation toward progressive schooling. Prior to the 1930s, explained an editorial in *The School*, the term had “been used rather loosely to include history, civics, geography, and economics. Some effort has been made to correlate these subjects, but up to the present they have generally remained quite separate.” Other models of classes typically referred to as *fusion courses* were essayed, to the dismay of meliorists because they frequently consisted of fragments of different subjects without a theme centring on actual social circumstances of life. The rise of social studies as a significant subject for discussion in the journals during the Depression is not surprising, particularly in light of references to the perceived instability and insecurity permeating the age. Advocacy of

127 Ibid., 59.
130 Ibid., 645
131 Ibid.
132 See, for example, Joseph McCulley, “Education in an Age of Insecurity,” *The Canadian School Journal* (April 1937): 138–40. In this article, McCulley identifies conflicts relating to religious surety, moral codes, financial stability, political faith, and the breakdown of a strong agricultural community as sources of profound anxiety among Ontarians. Further, he argued that “security in all these areas and many others has been shattered by our rapidly changing age … no longer is the classical and traditional curriculum carefully divided off into subject matter areas, sufficient to provide any understanding of the problems of modern life.” See also Lucy Dobson, “Message of the President, O.E.A.,” *The Canadian School Journal* (December 1940): 422. Dobson argues: “We are living in a rapidly changing world. It is difficult to predict what sort of life our youth will live when they reach maturity, but it is essential that they be adequately equipped to take their place in the new world of tomorrow.”
social studies as a means of actively studying contemporary social problems culminated in the 1937 entrenchment of the subject in the Ontario curriculum.

Leading up to the revised Programme of Studies, The School reported on the Report of the Commission on the Social Studies in 1936 and cited, at length, Part XIII, titled Curriculum Making in the Social Studies, which argued that:

The essential task in our schools … is to aid youth to the fullest practicable understanding of our social order; to a meaningful realization of the ways in which the individual, both pupil and adult, may participate effectively in that order; and to motivate for effective participation.  

The unity of the social studies was seen as achievable through the thematic study of various social problems and injustices.  The social studies were seen as potential domains for the study and active and systematic improvement of social life. They would make for the “laboratory study of social living. In some substantial sense, this approach means a laboratory study of social living…. Every pupil provides his own singularly complete laboratories; and his laboratories are not artificial—they are real life.” Social studies were represented as a dynamic way of unifying independent subjects treated as mere “collections of insignificant facts” and concentrating them on “the scientific study of the development of the society in which we live.” By engaging a class of students as a community in the study of actual social phenomena, a “progressive teacher … of the

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133 Ibid. The article explains that L. C. Marshall and R. M. Goetz prepared the report on behalf of Ontario’s Department of Education.

134 Not only would students be able to draw on their personal experiences and a range of different subjects to study—for example, inequities in public health and housing—but also they would have opportunity to develop an interest in active participation in the improvement of community life for all.


social sciences will soon develop a scientific method of instruction,” one that treated the students as a miniature scientific community.137

**Extension of Schooling to All Citizens**

Meliorist texts argued for greater inclusivity, especially with respect to the economically disadvantaged. In part, their vision was inspired by adult education. As E. A. Corbett, a strong advocate for adult education and training, reported in 1938, the Canadian Association for Adult Education had actively lobbied for and promoted opportunities for adults to pursue learning, particularly in rural areas.138 The Association stood for the following purposes: “(1) to serve as a clearing-house and maintain a working library; (2) to develop interest by means of publications, radio, and conferences; (3) to suggest methods and to improve the work in adult education.”139 In part due to such lobbies, extensions of educational opportunities were pursued on a vigorous scale throughout the interwar period, even during the Depression when infrastructure projects were often shelved.140

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137 Ibid., 363. Many progressivist articles are concerned with a “scientific” approach to education. Meliorist discourse shows concern for social science and, in a Deweyan sense, the development of scientific communities of learning. Efficiency discourse reveals a faith in mathematical science and the ability of objective intelligence testing to scientifically assess student ability. Developmentalist discourse often concerns science in biological spheres.


139 Ibid., 18. Radio, in particular, was frequently discussed as potentially exerting a unifying influence on Ontario’s citizens, promoting national consciousness and operating as a defence mechanism for democratic thinking. See, for example, Gladstone Murray, “Radio and Citizenship,” *The Canadian School Journal* (April 1942): 113–14. The radio as an educational tool for promoting citizenship and democracy is discussed again in Chapter VIII.

140 The expansion of schooling and the effects of the Depression on schooling were discussed in Chapter II.
“Adult education is indeed closely bound up with democracy itself,” explained R. S. Lambert of the Canadian Association for Adult Education. He argued that programs for adult learning were based:

… on the very principles which make democracy flourish—the development of individual personality, the encouragement of the creative instinct, the rational approach to social and international problems, and a sound balance of duties and responsibilities in citizenship.成人教育由此被设想为“对抗宣传的一个有力的解毒剂。”进步主义教育从改良主义的视角来看，被视为辩论和讨论的必要框架，而非宣传。

 Correspondence classes, which provided courses of study to individuals unable to attend school because of geographical distance or physical disability, were also represented as valuable extensions of Ontario’s educational franchise. Radio broadcasts, slide lectures, agricultural talks, and moving motion picture machines were also advocated for by progressivists as worthy investments supporting the “increasing effort [of schools] … to reach the most remote parts” of the province that did not have equality of access to education. In an ever-changing world, the development of critical

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142 Ibid., 883. See Chapter VIII for a more extended discussion of the democratic rhetoric that infused the source journals in Ontario between 1940 and 1942, when Canada’s involvement in World War II thrust the topic of democracy into the limelight of progressivist discourse.
143 Ibid., 883.
144 See, for example, Jas. S. Gordon, “Adult Education in a Rural Community,” *The Canadian School Journal* (December 1937): 428. This article is notable because it states quite plainly in the opening paragraph that citizenship training was seen as representing the core of adult education. Gordon’s argument also follows the common progressivist argument, which began with a commentary on the inadequacy of traditional schools: “Education, some time ago, was spoken in terms of 3 R’s (readin’, ‘riting, ‘rithmetic). Today it is considered in terms of 3 C’s (character, culture, and citizenship). With the transition from the R’s to the C’s has come the realization that education is not confined to school and university years, but extends from the cradle to the grave.”
145 For example, “Extension of Correspondence Courses,” *The School* (November 1935): 250.
146 E. A. Corbett, “Can the Radio Be Used Effectively in University Extension Work?” 93.
skills and democratic principles in the adult population would further the cause of educational and social progress.

**Summary**

In this chapter, themes for considering the various meanings of active learning for progressive educators in Ontario were explored from three different progressivist orientations. Firstly, in the case of child study, active learning represented developmentally appropriate tasks for students that stimulated healthy growth and further mental development. Secondly, in the case of social efficiency, active learning was related to the training of particular skills and habits related to students’ projected vocational paths. Thirdly, in the case of social meliorism, active learning engaged students with actual problems in society and was intended to foster active citizenship in a democratic community. In the following chapter, the same three orientations will be used to shed light on the meaning of individualized study for Ontario’s progressivists.
CHAPTER V

THE DOMAIN OF INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION: PROGRESSIVIST CRITIQUES OF CONTENT-DRIVEN LEARNING

Now the change which is coming into our education is the shifting of the center of gravity. It is a change, a revolution, not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical center shifted from the earth to the sun. In this case the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he [sic] is the center about which they are organized.¹

Introduction

This chapter examines the meanings of individualized instruction, a second domain of progressive education explored in Ontario’s educational journals. It does so from three orientations: child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism. Considered from the first orientation, the progressivist concern for educating the individual child was related to the holistic study of each learner’s development and instruction, and supported enabling individual personalities to unfold over time. From the second orientation, the individual child was seen as having a particular mental aptitude that could be diagnosed objectively and used to develop a channel of study leading to a suitable vocational niche for each student. From the third orientation, the individual was seen as one part of a democratic community, who necessarily could be helped to develop a critical intelligence and a concern for social justice.

Context of Child Study in Relation to Individualized Instruction

The first progressivist nursery schools and child study centres in Ontario, like the first rehabilitation programs for traumatized World War I veterans, had been developed as a social welfare initiative with the ideal of health promotion at its core.\(^2\) In the same way that measurements of physical health, such as weight or blood pressure, were seen as operating within certain normal ranges, children’s growth and development also moved through normal, diagnosable stages.\(^3\) In historian Cynthia Commachio’s assessment, “child behaviour became a legitimate area of medical investigation just as child psychology was developing as a distinct field, and there was much inter-borrowing between medicine and psychology.”\(^4\) The developing child unfolded naturally in terms of stages that could be, at least in the abstract, studied and used to generate educational principles. The progressivist concern for child study, borrowing heavily from the medical field’s promotion of health, had three overlapping concerns—therapeutics, prophylaxis, and promotion:

\(^2\) In the previous chapter, it was noted that William E. Blatz, founding Director of the Institute of Child Study, began his medical career working in a rehabilitation program for injured soldiers in Toronto.

\(^3\) For further reading on the implications of increased professionalization and institutionalization of psychology in relation to the normalization of educational and family life, see Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999). Gleason’s text, which mostly concerns the context immediately following the period considered in this dissertation, uses Michel Foucault’s theoretical model to explain family life in Canada. Her analysis makes some rather broad generalizations regarding psychology as a normalizing discipline and, at points, has an ahistorical character.

Therapeutics, the curing of the sick, is an art. Prophylaxis, or the prevention of disease, is, however, an application of scientific discoveries to human welfare. Promotion of physical health is one of the latest interests in human welfare. To undertake a promotion program, a standard must be approved.5

A progressive education was thus seen as one that helped children’s development progress through certain normal stages of growth, each with “its characteristic problems, and the successful adjustment during one stage is the best guarantee of a corresponding success for the individual in the next.”6 Stages of human development spanned all of human life. At the Institute of Child Study, the following rough demarcations were the basis of developmental assessments: “The pre-school period, the school age, adolescence, marriage, parenthood, middle life, and old age.”7 There were stages within these demarcations; for the school age, these roughly corresponded to school grades.

Without such standard measures of normal child development, there could be no useful criteria to measure or understand growth. As William Blatz and his colleague Helen MacMurchy Bott explained, “norms of development, ascertained for different cross-section levels … are therefore a kind of shorthand for recording the differences observed at such levels.”8 Historian Cynthia Commacchio has observed that the normalization of children was predominately motivated by the “postwar desire to define and promote ‘normalcy’” and was “infused with the spirit of industry, with its demands for regularity, repetition, scheduling, systematization, discipline, and productivity.”9 However, within the progressivist child study orientation, it was frequently argued that developmental

5 Ibid., 256.
6 William E. Blatz and Helen McMurchy Bott, Parents and the Pre-School Child (Toronto, ON: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1928), 14–15.
7 Ibid., 15.
8 Ibid., 16. Emphasis in original text.
psychology needed to be differentiated from scientific management. Blatz, for instance, was adamant that child study not play second fiddle to the promotion of efficiency and industry:

Today the nursery school must be looked upon neither as a charitable institution, nor as an expedient for increasing the number of mothers in industry, nor as a convenience for parents, but rather as a necessary adjunct to child care and training.... The nursery school is for neither the privileged nor the underprivileged, but for both. The nursery school is not a luxury, it is a necessity.  

The foundation of the Institute of Child Study was, Blatz believed, an entrenchment of the progressivist concern for education concentrated on the individual child. It was organized in the spirit of John Dewey’s laboratory school at the University of Chicago and prided itself on being the “first organization to achieve a truly child-centered philosophy—a philosophy which considers the child’s experiences first and cultural expectations second.”

Holistic Study and Assessment of the Normal Child’s Development

On November 18 and 19, 1939, almost a year to the day that the New Education Fellowship drew crowds of educationists to Hamilton, Ontario, the U.S.-based Progressive Education Association (P.E.A.) held its fourth Annual Conference of the International Border Region in Windsor, Ontario. This was the first time the P.E.A.

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10 William E. Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 240.
11 Millichamp and Fletcher, “Goals and Growth of Nursery Education,” 27.
12 Frederick Minkler, “The Progressive Education Conferences at Hamilton and Windsor,” *The School* (January 1939): 378–84. The New Education Fellowship (N.E.F.), introduced last chapter in the section on “Criticality and Change,” was based out of Great Britain. The N.E.F. was international in scope, and aspired to promote a new and progressive education. The Hamilton conference was held on November 17, 1938, drawing eight hundred guests. Notably, the P.E.A. conference occurred less than two months after Canada declared war on Germany. At the time,
had held a conference on Canadian soil, an event that involved forty-five formal addresses and 1800 registered delegates.\textsuperscript{13} Ontario College of Education representative Frederick Minkler wrote a report of the conference in \textit{The School} that spanned six pages and attempted to synthesize his understanding of what progressive education entailed.\textsuperscript{14}

The character of progressive education conveyed in the article is thoroughly grounded in the terms of child study, envisioning holistic development of individual children as the core element separating progressivist from traditional views of learning. Minkler put forward the following thesis:

\begin{quote}
In traditional education, the predominant interest was in intellectual development, and the emphasis was on subject-matter. In the \textit{new education}, the predominant interest is the complete development of the personality, and the emphasis is on the needs of the individual.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

The consideration of these needs and their entrenchment as the centre of schooling was seen as what separated progressivists from traditionalists.

A child’s needs extended from the physiological to the mental and psychological; none could be neglected, as the child needed to be considered holistically.\textsuperscript{16} The traditional school was concerned only with mental development, and by positing the transmission of academic knowledge as the pinnacle of educational interest, it neglected the holistic development of children. “When the child is viewed as a whole,” Minkler

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most progressivist articles in the Ontario journals were concerned with the active promotion of democratic citizenship and social meliorism. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{14} Minkler attended fifteen sessions and admitted that his article was synthetic rather than descriptive. \\
\textsuperscript{15} Minkler, “The Progressive Education Conferences at Hamilton and Windsor,” 378. Emphasis in original text. \\
\textsuperscript{16} See, for example, Helen Loy McDowell, “Some Thoughts on Educating the Child of Preschool Age,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (October 1936): 283, 305. McDowell, President of Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario, asserts the individuality and uniqueness of each child, which requires careful, holistic study.
\end{flushright}
explained, “everything which he [sic] does is of importance in his development.”¹⁷ A child’s holistic development could not be facilitated within the narrow parameters laid out by the traditional curriculum.

The child study progressivist depictions of holistic study integrated concern for healthy development of children’s physical, social, emotional, and intellectual capacities.¹⁸ The aim of progressive education was not to teach academic content; Professor S. R. Laycock from the University of Saskatchewan’s College of Education told Ontario’s educationists that it was “to see their pupils grow … to see them develop wholesome personalities.”¹⁹ Progressive school programs necessarily abandoned, Laycock argued, unsatisfactory attempts “to confine their efforts to the development of skills in ‘the three R’s,’ or to cramming their children with facts.”²⁰ “The philosophy of modern progressive education,” his argument continued, “is to develop persons who are high-grade physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually.”²¹ Child study could not be truly progressivist if its definitions of schooling did not include physical, social, emotional, and intellectual terms. The child was a whole person; he or she would with proper guidance develop into a healthy, well-adjusted, and qualitatively different kind of person—an adult.

The concern for holistic child study was inevitably rooted in the medical and psychological scientific roots of the new discipline. Again, it was Laycock who expressed this most cogently, arguing that progressivist educators were those who understood that

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¹⁷ Minkler, “The Progressive Education Conferences at Hamilton and Windsor,” 379.
¹⁸ See, for example, Laycock, “Extra-curricular Activities in the Modern School,” 93–97. Laycock, a Professor of Education, explained that the progressive teacher “thinks in terms of pupil development and pupil growth. Further, she conceives of her task as the all-round development of her pupils,” 93.
²⁰ Ibid., 461.
²¹ Ibid., 461.
“the whole child comes to school” and, with that knowledge, were also compelled to diagnose the healthy development of emotional, physical, intellectual, and psychological factors. Each of these, within a particular stage of development, operated within normal ranges and, consequently, baseline measures of what constituted a “normal child” were useful guidelines for teachers to follow. The task of progressive education from this perspective was to cultivate different dimensions of the child, whose abilities and knowledge had a great deal of plasticity and resiliency, within normal levels of growth.

The holistic assessment and diagnosis of a learner’s development included, then, more than a measure of academic memory garnered from a traditional examination. It also included more than a standardized measure of I.Q.s or aptitudes. This is not to deny that measures mattered to child study progressivists; each provided information regarding one aspect of the whole child’s development. How I.Q. data were used to promote further development was of greater interest than whether or not such tests were administered. Multiple data sources needed to be combined for a balanced view of the

22 Ibid., 461. Emphasis in original text.
23 See, for example, Raymond, The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz; Mary L. Northway, “Foreword,” in Twenty-Five Years of Child Study; and Blatz, Understanding the Young Child.
24 See, for example, Chas. A. Alexander, “The Teacher’s Place in the New Health Programme,” The Canadian School Journal (January 1935).
25 The matter of I.Q. will be discussed at greater length below within the social efficiency orientation.
26 In fact, Blatz actually constructed an instrument for measuring parental intelligence, which addressed the “duties and responsibilities of fathers to their children … and devised to stimulate thinking on the part of the fathers rather than to test their ‘knowledge about’ children.” If it succeeded in stimulating discussion, Blatz believed, it would be justified. Parents would score the test themselves, and the knowledge garnered from its results would help them develop as parents. No one was expected “to rate 100%, of course, for no one is a perfect parent.” William E. Blatz and Helen MacMurchy Bott, An Intelligence Test for Fathers, box 1, no. 43, William E. Blatz Fonds, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library: 1.
27 Blatz conceded that an observational and anecdotal report by “trained psychologist is a far more reliable index to a child’s educational needs than numerals marked on a written examination or the dictum of a single teacher’s judgment,” Understanding the Young Child, 234.
child’s educational development. A truly progressive education, Blatz explained, “looks beyond the entrance, beyond the B.A., and, believe it or not, beyond the I.Q.” An education that was overly concerned with intelligence was ultimately too narrow in focus. Blatz concluded his argument with the following thought: “To sum up: it is possible, through training, to develop in every child, irrespective of I.Q. and inheritance, a social pattern which is recognized as ambitious, persistent, honest, interested, courageous, and humorous. What more can we ask of any educational programme?” Human development and education, in a developmentalist progressivist context, ultimately concerned students’ holistic progress, not merely their cognitive abilities.

**Freedom, Happiness, and Psychological Well-Being**

If progressive education were truly to concern itself with the holistic development of individuals, child study educationists believed that it needed to make provision for the learner to pursue personal interests freely. Interest was seen as instinctive, and self-direction was the force that could drive children to learn about new and interesting things. When seen in terms of energy, the traditional curriculum was incredibly wasteful in that it applied undue pressure on children to learn academic content that was of little

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28 See, for example, Laycock, “The Diagnostic Approach to Problems of Pupil Adjustment.” Blatz, for his part, believed that it was inconceivable to suggest that the I.Q. “should be the only criterion for later selection and educational opportunities.” Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 234.


30 Ibid., 382.

31 See, for example, Samuel Farmer, “The Aims of Education,” *The Canadian School Journal* (February 1935): 41–42. Farmer, a school trustee from Port Perry, Ontario, lists as his first aim a concern for the development of individuals through the natural stages of life and their happy coexistence with others: “Education should be the development of the individual so that he [sic] may live happily and usefully with other people, making the best use of his native ability and life’s opportunities. Every phase of life, its happiness and its sorrows, its comedies and its tragedies, and its final drama, all these educate.”
interest to them. With some sarcasm, Blatz commented on the uselessness of forcing unwilling pupils to submit to external interests:

Many teachers seem to think that education is based on the laws of thermodynamics. Energy is indestructible. The more energy, the more force. One may envisage the interaction between teacher and pupil as illustrated in the physics text-book by the hydraulic force pump. I will never forget the fascination of that picture. Pressure is exerted in the slender cylinder on the left, and bang!—up goes the elevator on the right. I could never disassociate the piston on the left from the teacher in front of the class—and still can’t. Now, education is nothing of this sort at all.32

Blatz is giving clear expression here to a concern that was consistently expressed by child study progressivists at the time, namely, that the forceful inculcation of knowledge deemed either useful or necessary from the outside is problematic. It is not only an image of violence, but also one of oppression.

Child study progressivist texts in this context, then, make frequent reference to the educator’s role as entailing a process of guiding and leading, as opposed to teaching. As Frederick Minkler noted, progressivists distinguished themselves from their traditionalist counterparts because they were responsive to the innate differences, personalities, and interests of students: “The traditional school attempts to fit the child into a predetermined mould, to train him to fit into the social order to which he now belongs. The progressive school attempts to guide, with little or no dictation, the development of the child as an individual.”33 Here, Minkler is expressing the nuanced understanding of how individualism and compulsion were to be balanced from the child study progressivist orientation.

32 Blatz, “Mental Hygiene and Education,” 377.
The 1937 revised *Programme of Studies* gives a good indication of how this balance was seen as potentially being maintained.\(^{34}\) According to Duncan McArthur, whose role in its formulation and explication was formidable, the reformed course of study aimed to create “a central core of subjects to be open to all pupils. These might include English, geography, history and civics, one science, mathematics and a second language.”\(^{35}\) Students newly free to choose subjects they found interesting and important would probably extend education’s very scope: “beyond this group of subjects, options might be offered in a wider range of subjects than is at present available.”\(^{36}\)

Certainly, positive assessments of the Ontario curriculum reforms published in the journals praised the progressivist concern for individual freedom and interest. D. S. Woods, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, for instance, looked highly on the “new school outlook, conditioned by individual needs rather than by university requirements.”\(^{37}\) Woods’s assessment of curriculum reforms in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba was a positive one, and he explained that a progressivist outlook influenced by an “increasing knowledge of child growth … is emerging and gradually winning sanction from public opinion and school teacher alike.”\(^{38}\) The pedagogical ideal was a balance between common subjects and individual electives.\(^{39}\)

\(^{34}\) The 1937 curriculum reforms and their relationship to progressivist orientations are discussed at greater length in Chapter VIII.


\(^{36}\) Ibid., 834.


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 658.

\(^{39}\) See, for example, W. C. Keirstead, “Indoctrination in Education,” *The School* (May 1940): 743–48. Blatz explained that individual choice was necessary, but that individuals were bound to accept responsibility for these choices. This was how responsibility was learned: “At every moment of experience the individual must select a specific action pattern. From the beginning of his [sic] life there are situations in which a child may be taught to choose and accept the
Freedom to pursue studies of personal relevance was not only seen as an important element in motivating students, but also as a vital ingredient of their ultimate happiness. Professor W. C. Keirstead from the University of New Brunswick expressed this progressivist theme plainly in May of 1940. Amid calls for democratic education that could counter the oppressive tendencies of fascist and Nazi youth training, Keirstead argued that the pith of any modern and progressive educational system needed to be a concern for the individual learner: “The person is the centre of all intelligence, of initiative, of discovery, of creative thinking, and therefore the pivot of social progress. The home of all experiences of value, of all happiness, or misery, is the soul of the individual.”

Freedom to pursue studies and subjects of interest was not only pedagogically sound practice for child study progressivists, but also essential for health and happiness.

**Social Adjustment, Not Social Conformity**

The promotion of a healthy balance between ideas such as freedom and responsibility extended to the perceived relationship that progressive education could promote between the individual and society. Each person had a primary purpose to lead his or her life responsibly, but no one lived apart from a social context. Keirstead, while depicting children as the centre of educational activity, still felt that they were required, from birth, to adjust to their social and environmental contexts.

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41 Ibid., 743.
institution, an individual’s freedom was subject to particular norms and expectations. A progressivist school concerned with child study should not ask for obedience and conformity. Individual freedoms must be adjusted to and restrained by the realities of social life.42

This philosophy was by no means an uncontroversial one; in 1941, an editorial in *The School* reported on a visit to the Institute of Child Study intended to ascertain the extent of truth in reports that its progressivist philosophy led to unfettered self-direction.

For years the city teacup telegraph had been causing eyebrows to rise at the scandalous goings-on among the younger set at 98 St. George Street. The impression was abroad that those four-year-olds were really making the bric-a-brac fly in an orgy of self-activity. No one could safely enter those premises, we thought, unless doubly protected in the armour of the spirit and a suit of medieval form.43

A fear of unfettered freedom was the perpetual counterpoint to the terror of oppressive discipline and punishment; balancing the two remained a consistent aim of child study progressivists.

Teacher Fern Holland explained her belief that progressivist educationists were required to facilitate the development of individuals within a social framework. A classroom, like society, imposed pressures and structures requiring adjustment and accommodation on the part of students. It was the traditional schools, however, that promoted conformity, not the progressivist ones. Classrooms of the past had imposed

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42 William Blatz wrote a great deal on the individual child’s responsibility to self and to society. Most fully, he elaborated on this theme in *Understanding the Young Child* in which he explained that, to a certain extent, all people needed to learn to conform to societal expectations so they might “feel comfortable in the community” even though the expectations might be nothing more than “certain arbitrary and artificial rules of conduct.” Yet, blind obedience to rules and dictates would ultimately lead to unhealthy resentment in the learner. Questioning regulations was necessary. In fact, the interest in promoting a progressive education was a necessary thing, for the members of any community—in this case the educational one—needed “opportunities … to alter the rules or laws to fit changing conditions and ideas,” 57.

“the kind of education that consists in memorizing facts and dates and theories and delighting the teacher by showing that one has done the memorizing.”

Child study, on the contrary, led educationists to conclude that individual students needed to develop and retain a distinct sense of self. In Fern Holland’s terms, children had to preserve their own “personalities and identities in spite of all the organized machinery of education could do to them, in an effort to make them conform to a general pattern.”

Social Efficiency and Adjustment to Industry

Context of Social Efficiency in Relation to Individualized Instruction

The rhetoric of social efficiency typically linked references to individual learners with the themes of industry or experimental psychology. Children’s individual, innate abilities were depicted as measurable, definable, and classifiable. Individualized instruction involved providing each learner with a program of study that facilitated his or her adjustment into a vocational and social niche with the greatest degree of efficiency possible. A diversified system of schooling that included vocational training and specific classes for “exceptional children” was depicted as both progressive and democratic.

Marion Goode Hodgins expressed the efficiency progressivist aims succinctly: “The

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45 Ibid., 316.
46 In this discussion of social efficiency, the focus remains on the discourse and not on the authors. The aim here is not to develop a catalogue of “advocates” enmeshed in rhetorical warfare or, in Kliebard’s terms, conflicting interest groups waging war for the curriculum.
47 See, for example, Donald Peat, “Two Sides to a Question: If Teachers Are to Devote More Time to Exceptional Children, to What Intelligence Group Should Most of the Additional Attention Be Given? To Below-Average Pupils,” *The School* (February 1942): 464.

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ultimate end of education is the production of efficient citizens.”48 Schools, like industry, were in the business of production and were compelled to pursue the most efficient means possible.

Classifying According to Ability for the Good of Democracy

This same Marion Goode Hodgins, a teacher at the Central High School of Commerce in Hamilton, believed the most pressing objective that progressive education could promote was training for a future vocation.49 Classifying children according to their abilities and intelligence, explained Donald Peat, of the Church Street School for Boys in Toronto, was commensurate with providing them “the right to an opportunity to develop their talents, no less than other children, to the greatest extent commensurate with the good society.”50 A general education failed to provide exceptional learners with an opportunity to flourish and denied them equality of opportunity.51 Conversely, a progressive education able to formulate a way of classifying children according to their abilities would liberate them from an oppressive, general, and academic system of schooling.

Special programs designed for special children would provide exceptional children with particular instruction. They would focus attention where required. Not only would such a progressive system give Ontario’s children the support they deserved, but also help

49 Ibid., 760–62. Although Goode’s address was seen as primarily directed to teachers of commercial work in vocational schools, an editorial note reinforced the point that all schools should encourage the article’s catalogued values because they were significant for all teachers.
50 Peat, “Two Sides to a Question: If Teachers Are to Devote More Time,” 464. Interestingly, the editor’s introduction to Peat’s article describes the author as a “champion of the below-average children.”
51 Ibid., 464.
classes operate more efficiently in a democratic society. Identifying individual intelligence would thus make the entire system of schooling in Ontario more efficient and, indeed, more democratic.\textsuperscript{52} If schools were reformed by classifying Ontario students according to their abilities, all the students would better value their time in school. In the words of Donald Peat, the value of such classification and specialization of study in schools lies in its increased efficiency:

> Average classes will cease to be clogged with ill-adjusted troublemakers; children of average and higher intelligence will get fuller value for the time they spend in school; courts and reformatories will save expenses now incurred through preventable delinquency; and the lower I.Q. boys and girls will have the chance to claim their birthright of useful, happy citizenship.\textsuperscript{53}

The language permeating Peat’s arguments does not conceal an orientation to school reform concerned predominately with efficiency of management and administration. Concentrating on I.Q. as a means of understanding the individual, in other words, was presented as a sort of panacea to cure all society’s ills and usher in democratic opportunity for all.\textsuperscript{54}

In the words of S. R. Laycock, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan, each citizen in Canada was entitled to an equality of educational opportunity, which meant “every child, dull, average, and bright, shall have the chance to develop in accordance with his own particular abilities and needs.”\textsuperscript{55}

Laycock’s concerns primarily addressed a particular category of exceptional students,

\textsuperscript{52} See, for example, Greer, “Two Sides to a Question: If Teachers Are to Devote More Time,” 465.

\textsuperscript{53} Peat, “Two Sides to a Question: If Teachers Are to Devote More Time,” 464.

\textsuperscript{54} See, for example, “How Shall We Achieve Greater Efficiency in Our Schools,” 251–56. In this article, Snider argues that standardized tests measuring mental ability were so effective at promoting efficiency that they should be extended to each area in the province and country and used as global, comparative tools.

\textsuperscript{55} S. R. Laycock, “Helping the Bright Pupil,” \textit{The School} (March 1942): 561.
Ontario’s highly gifted students, a population that he estimated at 5 percent of the total population. He expressed concern that, because they were not receiving learning commensurate to their abilities, they were denied their right to a fitting education: “If the teacher is incompetent, these children may suffer somewhat more than the average child. If she [sic] is an alert and progressive teacher, they do not suffer unduly in their development.” Only a system that identified and classified students on the basis of intelligence could, with the support of teachers who addressed classes with challenges appropriate to their abilities, could fully realize the learners’ cognitive potential.

**Maximizing Returns on Educational Investments**

A progressive education that directly addressed individual learners’ cognitive abilities was frequently represented in business terms, entailing returns on investments. C. W. Greer of Earls court Public School in Toronto offered Ontario’s educationists the following anecdote:

He said: “Fertilize that hillside field? Heck, I’ve wasted enough good manure and seed on it to cover the country. Every rain there’s a run-off that washes everything away except the fences. A man can’t do a thing with that field. It ain’t fit to plant pig-weed in, let alone wheat!” Then he added, thoughtfully: “Son, put your effort where it’ll net you some profit. Every hour spent on this field is money in my pocket. But the other one—last time I worked it, I seeded it four times, and never got a crop.”

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56 Ibid., 561.
57 Ibid. For example, Laycock argues that a capable, progressive teacher “knows that slightly above-average children have powers above the average in reasoning and analysis, and she [sic] sees that the classroom discussions and the pupils’ written work bring out these powers. She encourages them to read and to look up additional material pertinent to lessons,” 561.
58 Greer, “Two Sides to a Question: If Teachers Are to Devote More Time,” 465. An editorial note introducing Greer’s article characterizes the author as a “protagonist of the brainy.” The context of the quotation was an Ontario farm where Greer worked as a young man. Apparently, the anecdote was a response to Greer, who asked his employer why he wanted to fertilize land.
Greer’s anecdote depicts a situation in which the capabilities of learners, like the fecundity of fields, are established. The farmer knew what would pay dividends and what would not. Educational attainments were intimately related to intelligence, and this was a fixed entity.\footnote{Ibid.}

Progressive educationists with an efficiency orientation knew what traditional educationists did not: schools could find ways of maximizing the returns on society’s investment in education. Trying to take children identified as slow, or defective, and bring them to the intellectual ability of others who were deemed normal, or intelligent, was a waste of time and energy.\footnote{See, for example, R. S. Murray, “The Problem of Teaching,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (December 1934): 415.} Instead, schools should administer intelligence tests and grade children according to their abilities rather than their school ages; efficient and progressive schools would be organized according to intelligence and ability, rather than other concerns.\footnote{See, for example, “Editorial: High Marks Still Count,” \textit{The School} (March 1942): 557.}

The benefits of such a progressivist practice would trickle down to all levels of society. Each individual would benefit greatly from an education that maximized his or her potential learning. In the case of a gifted pupil, such a child would develop into a future leader of society or industry.\footnote{See, for example, Laycock, “Helping the Bright Pupil,” 561.} In the case of the “below-average” child, he or she would have many positive experiences in school that could contribute to the development of healthy attitudes and useful skills.\footnote{See, for example, S. R. Laycock, “Helping the Below-Average Pupil,” 467. Laycock qualifies the potential benefits of educating the “dull child” by explaining that the field of potential study must be chosen carefully on the basis of good guidance.} Returning to Greer’s anecdotal analogy between

that was already good, when the barren ten acres near a creek was in urgent need of improvement.
farming and educating, a progressivist system was one that maximized the potential returns of its investments for society: “The farmer knew by experience,” Greer concluded, “what would, and what would not, pay dividends. Should formal education fail to recognize what is obvious to practical economists?”

**Eliminating Educational Waste**

Maximizing educational returns was closely related to the idea of eliminating educational waste. These considerations, especially in articles in *The Canadian School Journal*, were depicted as consistent with the ideals of a democratic and Christian state. The diagnosis and treatment of so-called “sub-normal” children was represented as a noble service. While it was incongruous with democratic and Christian principles to eliminate children of low intelligence from society, it was perfectly acceptable to give such children fitter and happier lives. “Unless we adopt the Nazi plan of doing away with below-average individuals, we have no alternative but to guide them to the fullest life which they are capable of living and into channels of work and play where they can best

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64 Greer, “Two Sides to a Question: If Teachers Are to Devote More Time,” 465.
65 See, for example, Karl S. Bernhardt, “Who Should Go to College,” *The Canadian School Journal* (October 1936): 281–82. In this article, Bernhardt, Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto, assesses the educational system in Ontario and finds it incredibly wasteful in terms of both time and money because it does not lead students to the correct courses that their lives should follow.
66 See, for example, S. B. Sinclair, “Treatment of the Sub-Normal Child,” *The Canadian School Journal* (July 1929): 18–19. Sinclair, former Inspector of Auxiliary Classes for the Province of Ontario, provides sub-categories for describing children already identified as sub-normal. Children with I.Q.s below fifty are described as “feeble-minded” and uneducable. “Psychopathic children” with mental illness should be treated similarly. Individuals falling in the fifty to seventy-five range are “dull and backward” and belong in ungraded school classes with special teachers.
67 See, for example, J. H. Putman, “The Problem of Retarded Pupils,” *The Canadian School Journal* (June 1939): 223–24. A gifted child, or one of normal intelligence, Putman argues, “does not constitute a major problem in the modern school. He [sic] will look after himself.” A child who is “retarded,” on the other hand, requires greater supports and needs, consequently, to be identified and given instruction at his level.
serve their fellows,” explained Laycock.68 For each individual, there were ideal channels, which, based on ability, were most suitable. Consequently, one of the main aims of progressivists was the elimination of wasteful and inefficient courses of study. Diagnostic information regarding each learner would then facilitate this efficient channelling.69 Such information could also guide remedial school programs, which were seen as a way of correcting the course and choice of study on individual bases.70

As David Russell of the University of British Columbia’s Department of Education told Ontario’s educators, education required a reorientation in priorities:

Teachers and administrators are content to have classes conducted in the same old way, thinking nothing of the human waste involved. With a few exceptions, Canadian schools generally have been slow to adopt the diagnostic and remedial point of view, which has done much for retarded children in other systems.71

The diagnostic perspective, then, emphasizing the garnering of information about students for needs assessments and the tailoring of instruction for efficient progress in society, was predicated on the collection of reliable and objective data on individuals.72 This was particularly relevant for individuals who would assume vocational careers and would require training in a particular set of skills or habits before entering the workplace,

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68 Laycock, “Helping the Below-Average Pupil,” 467–68. The most common arguments for progressivist administrative reforms to schools between 1940 and 1942 included an assertion of democratic care for individuals in Ontario’s schools by presenting Hitlerism, fascism, and Stalinism as brutish and oppressive by comparison.

69 See, for example, David H. Russell, “Subject Matter Disabilities,” The School (February 1942): 471.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., 471.

72 See, for example, “Students Find Happiness,” The Canadian School Journal (October 1929): 23. This article announces that the Inspector of Auxiliary Classes in Ontario, “S. B. Sinclair, Ph.D. in a lecture in Toronto astonished his hearers by revealing a scientific system whereby boys and girls may be guided into their true account of service in the after life which follows vocational training. The fact that all pupils are not equally mentally equipped has been recognized for centuries, but it is only in recent years that a sane, sympathetic attitude has been taken towards those unfortunates who fall below the common standard.” Sinclair’s system included mental intelligence testing and vocational guidance.
explained W. H. H. Green. As Principal of the Vocational School in Fort William, Ontario, Green explained his conviction that “intelligence tests, mechanical aptitude tests, art ability tests, stenographic ability tests, the school nurse reports, and personal interviews, play an important part in helping pupils to find their right places.” A special type of education was needed for each student, and the appropriate selection of one path meant the elimination of alternatives, which were either distracting or not reflective of intelligence and ability.

**Standardizing Assessments and the Collection of Data on Individuals**

From the efficiency perspective, collecting diagnostic information on each individual student’s aptitudes and interests was regarded as the lynchpin of an efficient and progressive schooling system, informing administrators, parents, and guidance counsellors. Every teacher needed to be familiar with the potential of each student, his or her interests, and potential vocational opportunities. Marion E. Goode, who emerged in 1940 as one of the most consistent advocates of vocational guidance and testing in Ontario’s journals, believed that every teacher had a responsibility to lead students toward their vocational goals. To maximize efficiency and comprehensiveness, the teachers’ instructional decisions would be based on data gathered from seven sources: personnel records, research, tests, interviews, try-out experiences with work, more lengthy

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73 W. H. H. Green, “The Vocational School and the Community,” *The School* (November 1940): 212. This conviction was one very frequently stated. See, for example, Marion E. Goode, “The Methods of Guidance,” *The School* (December 1940): 288–91.

74 See, for example, H. Ruth Hooper and Edna Lancaster, “Classes for More Intelligent Pupils,” *The School* (December 1940): 352–55. The authors, teachers at the Empress School in London, Ontario, are particularly concerned with gifted and intelligent children, whose education, they argued, should lead them most efficiently to leadership positions.

placements, and follow-up interviews. General intelligence tests were also to be administered several times in each pupil’s career so that any necessary adjustments to the school programme and curriculum could be made.

John A. Long of the Ontario College of Education advocated objective examinations that could facilitate a teacher’s involvement with an individual learner’s progress along vocational channels. The strength of so-called objective testing was its ability to quantify students’ mental ability reliably and consistently. A person’s intelligence was seen as operating within certain limited parameters. All students could be trained to learn more about particular subjects, but their ability to think about matters intelligently was a fixed and relatively rigid thing. Traditional examinations were both unreliable and too intimately related to particular content. Intelligence tests, on the contrary, eliminated unreliability and the subjectivity of an individual teacher’s grading system, and thus produced information regarding native ability independent of subject matter. In short, they promoted efficiency on the part of both students and administrators.

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76 Ibid., 289–90.
77 John A. Long, “The Construction and Use of New-Type Tests,” The School (October 1940): 95. Long argued that reliability and consistency were evident in an assessment when “repeated testing of the same candidates tend to give closely parallel results.”
78 Laycock from the University of Saskatchewan expressed this idea in the following terms: “While the controversy still rages as to whether intelligence can be affected by environment or not, teachers had best be reconciled to the fact that, at present, so far as school children go, dull children cannot be made brilliant by any trick now known to educators.” Laycock, “Helping the Below-Average Pupil,” 467.
79 Long, “The Construction and Use of New-Type Tests,” 95. Long aims to distinguish progressivist concerns for individual ability from traditionalist concerns for content-mastery: “It has been urged by critics of new-type tests that they measure mere facts. Usually this criticism comes from men of a philosophic turn of mind, for to the matter-of-fact scientist there is no such thing as a ‘mere fact’: facts are to him [sic] the only basis for sure knowledge and are always matters of first importance. This criticism is frequently advanced by teachers of history, who argue that new-type devices give the examinee no scope to show his originality or to show his ability to organize his knowledge in a logical matter. For the most part the argument is well founded, but
Maintenance of Extant Social Order

It was all fine and well to attempt to organize the system of schooling to promote equality of opportunity, explained some progressivist articles, but the maintenance of an efficient social order required, also, the production of particular skills and habits. The explicit teaching of proper conduct, including character traits that would not disrupt society, was necessary if individuals were to adjust efficiently to an established social, industrial, and economic order. Individuals who could not find appropriate work and were potentially disruptive of the status quo were described as deviants and future criminals. Efficient schools could also, then, prevent crime and disorder by sufficiently preparing students to adjust to their places in the world. This involved, above all, training future citizens “in habits of work in such a way that they will be self-supporting in later life, and to develop in them such desirable social qualities as honesty, self-control, reliability, truthfulness, and the ability to live and work contentedly.”

often when new-type tests are singled out for this particular criticism, it is merely a matter of the pot calling the kettle black. If one examines our matriculation papers in history he will find little to show that the candidate is expected to do more than record legibly and grammatically certain facts which he is expected to have acquired from his teacher and his textbook.” Emphasis in original text.

Ibid., 95. Long argues: “In the essay-type examination the candidate is so slowed up by the mere mechanics of writing, that he [sic] manages to express surprisingly few ideas in a two- or three-hour period.” The teacher can also rejoice because “objective examinations are easily and quickly scored,” 95. Emphasis in original text.

The belief, based on Edward Thorndike’s work, that transferability of training was not possible.

See, for example, Alfred E. Lavell, “Abstract of an Address on ‘Home, School, and the Prevention of Crime,’” The Canadian School Journal (April 1932): 148. Among the most desirable character traits was discipline.

Ibid.

Peat, “Two Sides to a Question: If Teachers Are to Devote More Time,” 464. Watson Kirkconnell, Principal of the Lindsay Collegiate Institute, presented a lecture in April of 1927 titled “Why Did They Go Astray?” in which he explained, in reference to the arrest of two local boys for “banditry,” that if the system of education in Ontario “could have given them a technical education instead of having to confine them to the regular matriculation course they would have been fitted to engage in work which suited them. I do not think I am going too far in laying the
That character education should have as its aims conformity and the inculcation of specific habits or attitudes desired of citizens in life was an idea consistent with the efficiency orientation in progressivist articles.\textsuperscript{85} A progressive school board was envisaged as one that took into consideration the psychological aptitude of individual students and made provision for special attention that could enable future social adjustment.\textsuperscript{86} In language startlingly inconsistent with the typically democratic or scientific rhetoric of efficiency progressivists, educator C. L. Burton argued that if schools were to prepare students for lives in business and industry, they needed to be organized as corporations were.\textsuperscript{87}

For the good of all students, Burton argued, those who could not be efficiently placed into a modern and progressive workplace should not be in school along with their peers: “Mental defectives should be separated … not only should the mentally unfit be weeded out, but the mentally alert and those showing special promise along various lines should be encouraged to proceed further than the average along the lines of special abilities.”\textsuperscript{88} Each child had a vocational niche in life that schools should prepare him or her to fill.\textsuperscript{89} Harold Hill of Harbord Collegiate Institute in Toronto interpreted the blame for their predicament to our present system of education.” Watson Kirkconnell, “Puts Blame on the System,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (September 1927): 20.

\textsuperscript{85} See, for example, “Education for Character,” \textit{The School} (October 1934): 95. This article, which was followed by others during the 1934–35 school year, praised the U.S.-based National Education Association’s publication of a report outlining character education as a process of integrated curriculum, guidance, and administration for the purpose of securing students’ vocational adjustment. Certainly, it was not the only opinion on character education. For instance, child study progressivist concerns were, as noted in the previous chapter, explicitly on the side of fostering individuality and, even, nonconformity.

\textsuperscript{86} See, for example, Florence S. Dunlop, “The School Psychologist,” \textit{The School} (May 1940): 754.


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 341.

\textsuperscript{89} Other reasons noted for classifying and separating school children according to ability included, to reiterate, the idea that slow children impede the progress of their peers, and the belief that each child’s potential could best be realized by an education catered to his or her mental ability.
intellectual abilities of students in equally undemocratic terms. He discerned among students social classes that need not mingle.90 While the gifted and the delayed received much attention, Hill explained, the middle class of children of average intelligence made up the majority of school populations and of society.91

In spite of these seemingly elitist conceptions, it was also a common complaint that there was too much stress on the identification and placement of exceptional children at the expense of the so-called gifted learners: “So often the so-called ‘brilliant’ students have turned out in later life to be utter failures or to achieve only mediocre success, while the steady plodders with only average ability have scaled the heights to fame and fortune.”92 The public school system, from this perspective “has left the gifted children in the regular grades, with a great deal of spare time on their hands, and with very little outlet for their abundant energies and creative abilities.”93

This trend was very commonly described in terms of socio-economic classes. Fully integrated classrooms were the educational equivalent to forcing the rich to stay with the poor and middle classes, rather than maximizing their economic advantage. As a result, such special students ended up squandering potential and living average or mediocre lives. In a progressive environment, however, where their assets could be put to full and efficient use, vaster fortunes could be made, and benefits would trickle down to all others in society. Modelled on the principles of social efficiency, a progressive educational system in Ontario would provide a specialized channel of study for students

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90 Harold W. Hill, “Above-Average and Below-Average Students,” *The School* (December 1940): 327. In his terms, “In mathematics, as in all other subjects, a problem is created by the existence of three main groups of students: the exceptionally bright, the exceptionally otherwise, and the great middle class between.”

91 Ibid.


93 Ibid., 352.
commensurate with their abilities and their interests. This would enable them, later in life, to assume responsible places in the social order.94

Social Meliorism and Engagement with Social Ills

Context of Social Meliorism in Relation to Individualized Instruction

The New Education Fellowship (N.E.F.), an international organization established in Europe for the promotion and exploration of progressivist educational ideas, held its annual conference at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto on April 23 and 24, 1937. Teachers College professor and noted American progressivist from Columbia University, Harold Rugg, who represented the P.E.A. at N.E.F. gatherings, spoke to Ontario’s educators on the themes and meanings of progressive education.95 The new education, he argued, “demands that pupils should be given a chance to learn self-government in social co-operation, and that pupils should be introduced to a knowledge of our [sic] changing culture.”96 Dr. Boyd H. Bode of Ohio State University spoke about the relationship of education to the social order. The School summarized Bode’s thesis as follows:

94 Ibid., and, for example, Martin, “Education and Citizenship,” 194.
95 For further reading on Harold Rugg, see Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 170–73, and E. A. Winters, “Harold Rugg and Education for Social Reconstruction” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1968). Like George S. Counts and Boyd Bode, Rugg had a profound impact on the terrain of social reconstructionism and social meliorism in the United States’ progressive education movement. He not only represented the P.E.A. on the N.E.F., but also developed the first social studies textbooks, titled Man and His Changing Society, in the United States. These texts, despite the economic collapse and financial cutbacks affiliated with the Depression, sold an astounding figure of 1,317,960 copies and 2,687,000 workbooks between 1929 and 1939. Rugg’s textbooks, before being slandered and burned as subversive and socialist texts in the build-up to the Cold War, targeted social inequities, disparities between the rich and the poor, racial stereotypes, and changing gender roles in society.
He believes, as others do, that education should be adapted to our changing social order, that our pupils should learn to co-operate in school as they must co-operate later in adult life; but he urges that they must be brought to a just evaluation of our present social order and to a sane judgement of what changes should be made, not by indoctrination but by training in reading, in observation, in discussion, and in thinking for themselves.97

The entire proceedings of the conference were notably charged, according to the report in *The School*; this was not only because of the presence of internationally renowned educationists, but also because Ontario was in the midst of a progressivist revolution in its own curriculum.98 The editorial is notable because it isolated the term *progressive education* by placing it within quotation marks and argued that Ontario’s educationists had participated in the conference because of a keen “desire to learn what the ‘new education’ really is.”99

The meanings of progressive education were not fixed, and their implications for the province’s educationists were still being explored. The general theme of the conference was “Tradition and Freedom in Education.” Delegates focused on discussions of how progressive education interacted with individual freedom and broke from traditional models of schooling.100 Rugg presented two speeches, deciding to emphasize the meliorist progressive concern for correlating school studies with critical examination of social settings, fostering social cooperation, and considering the changing nature of culture.101 From this orientation to the progressivist concern for individual education, Ontario’s schools were asked to develop training in observation, discussion, and critical

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97 Ibid., 742.
98 For further discussion of the 1937 curriculum reforms in Ontario, see Chapter VIII.
100 Ibid.
101 These are, incidentally, the themes that are considered in this section of the chapter.
thinking free from any indoctrination. Chapter VII will discuss how by 1940, following the outbreak of World War II, the meliorist calls for a new education to promote the cause of democracy via the engagement of students in free discussion, cooperative organization, and democratic debate, were both loud and frequent.

**Individual Student’s Responsibility for His or Her Peers**

“Individualism,” Dalhousie University Professor B. A. Fletcher told Ontario’s teachers, “is the quality that more than any other sharply distinguishes the democratic from the totalitarian idea … it is the concept that is finding expression in all the recent efforts to provide equality of opportunity.” This individualism, however, Fletcher elaborated, was a nuanced position: “Individualism does not imply licence. The growing child needs to be surrounded by a ring of prohibition, both to save society from his [sic] disturbing egoism, and also to foster the shapely growth of his later personality.” A progressive school should not think of the individual student either as some functional element within an imposed social structure or as an unfeeling egotist. The former view would lead to suppression of individuality and self-right, and the other to narrow and selfish ends.

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103 See, for example, “Editorial: Government by the People,” *The School* (October 1940): 93. This article called on Ontario’s educationists not to forget that “the principle of democracy is, and should be present in the classroom always, making the teacher conscious that his [sic] authority is a temporary trust to be used as little, but as effectively, as possible.” It cautions that “democracy means ‘power of the people’ and it can only be developed by the people within themselves … it is the right of people to make their influence felt by free discussion and organization.” The war threatened to repudiate democratic principles, posing a threat to the meliorist principles of progressive education: “And the new education, designed to make democracy more effective, will bear the first brunt of the attack,” 93. Emphasis in original text.
105 Ibid., 372–73.
The only way for a democratic society to proceed, particularly in times of toil and trouble, would be on the basis of individual self-sacrifice for communal welfare and service. Following his assumption of the position of Ontario’s Deputy Minister of Education, Duncan McArthur almost immediately started using *The School* as his pulpit to announce a bold vision of sustainable democratic citizenship. He announced that education in Ontario needed to break with the spirit of competition and the ethos of individualism in order to cultivate cooperation, community, and interdependence. For McArthur, among the foremost principles of progressive school reform was the relating of individual interests to the concerns of society so that students would learn to show concern for the entire community in which they lived. His rhetoric was vivid and eminently quotable:

> The old wine of unrestrained individualism, of laissez faire, the “God’s in His Heaven, all’s well with the world” complacency of the Victorians will not be contained within the new bottles of respect for human rights of a planned economy, and of subordination of individual freedom to the well-being of the community. If the school of to-day is to discharge adequately its responsibilities, it must recognize that the old order has changed and prepare the new generation to adjust itself harmoniously in an independent and integrated society.

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106 See, for example, Martin, “Education for Citizenship,” 194.
108 Ibid., 284–85. Here, McArthur proclaimed: “Conditions have been created which have encouraged, too greatly, the spirit of competition; the desire to ‘come first’ has provided, too frequently, a more powerful motive than the ambition to master a particular field of knowledge. We have permitted, too frequently, the place in the procession to be considered of greater consequence than the direction in which the procession is moving. The good citizen recognizes the binding force of obligation to the community and realizes that his own well-being cannot be separated from that of the common-weal. The foundations on which alone the structure of good citizenship may be erected must be laid in the schools.”
109 Ibid., 286. McArthur explained this aim in the following manner: “The objective which the schools must bear in mind is the creation of an understanding of the fundamental relationships subsisting between the individual and the community and the promotion of habits of mind which, against this background of understanding, will make possible the exercise of sound judgment in matters of public concern.”
110 Ibid., 284.
In this meliorist vision, the good of one learner was inextricably bound to the good of the whole community.\textsuperscript{111} The traditional school’s concern for the teaching and testing of academic content fostered, in contrast, a spirit of competition.\textsuperscript{112} The more efficiency-minded trend of streaming children into classes, likewise, destroyed any possible sense of community and mutual support by aggravating the differences among individuals.\textsuperscript{113} Meliorist progressives also condemned examinations and report cards that put a greater emphasis on where Ontario’s children stood in relation to one another, than on their attitudes to work and on their abilities to work cooperatively.\textsuperscript{114}

\textbf{The Adaptable Individual in a Context of Change}

In 1937, Joseph McCulley of Pickering College published a bold article in \textit{The Canadian School Journal}. He urged progressive schools to teach individual children ways of

\textsuperscript{111} See, for example, “The Importance of the School Today,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (October 1942): 324. In this editorial note, individual children are described as citizen units whose roles were vital in the maintenance and integrity of a democratic community.

\textsuperscript{112} McArthur, “Education for Citizenship,” 284. Among the targets of McArthur’s scorn were the annual departmental examinations in Ontario, which, he felt, promoted a ruthless and competitive individualism. The spirit of competition, he explained, crept “into our schools through practices designed originally to satisfy a thoroughly legitimate demand of parents to know the rate of progress of their children. Instead of measuring the extent of the development within the child of interest and initiative, of effort and appreciation, our system of gradation too frequently has become the means of self-glorification of the child or of its parent, and the creation of an attitude of mind which is fundamentally selfish and anti-social.”

\textsuperscript{113} “Editorial: Below Average,” \textit{The School} (February 1942): 463. The editorial argued: “The fact is that achievement marks are a much too facile instrument in education and are too often interpreted as indicating much more than they do.”

\textsuperscript{114} See, for example, “What Others Are Saying,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (January 1936): 27. This article attributed to J. G. Althouse, Dean of the Ontario College of Education, contains the following quotation: “The rubbish heap should receive first the preference for a single, authorized text-book in a subject—instead the pupil should be encouraged to read all he [sic] could find on the prescribed subject. Second, the matriculation fetish, that is, the idea among business men and employers that none need apply unless they have a matriculation certificate. Third, the competitive report, which the child brings home, showing where he stands in comparison with the other pupils, instead of showing the child’s attitude towards his work, or comparison with the best that he can do.”
coping with contexts of change by helping them develop the skills to think critically and independently. The world was ripe with change, he argued, and, consequently, the future could never be predicted and laid down in blueprints. To usher in a new social order students would need the ability to question the world around them and reshape it accordingly. After reminding his audience that self-discipline and cooperation were the foundations of democratic living, he told it that:

Children must be freed from any authoritative concepts or any blind worship of tradition or the status quo. In their school days they must have some opportunity to learn how to choose—to choose between opposed alternatives that path which will ultimately be good for the maximum good of all. Biological structures and civilizations themselves which have shown an inability to adapt to new conditions have perished; the school of tomorrow must, above all things, turn out citizens who are capable of facing their very different problems intelligently, courageously and with sympathy for all living beings.

McCulley expressed, in this case, a sentiment repeated time and again in the articles by meliorist progressives interested in promoting, through the schools, habits of mind in students that would enable them to think critically about social problems.

Modernity appeared to mark all phases of life with what John Long of the Ontario College of Education referred to as “a climate of mystifying change.” An education that would be in any way useful or relevant in a modern world was regarded as one

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115 McCulley, “Education in an Age of Insecurity,” 138–40. His speech opened with the following thesis: “This is indeed an age of insecurity. In fact this word describes conditions today just about as well as any word in the English language.”

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid., 140.

118 See, for example, H. P. Plumptre, “Education for World Citizenship,” The Canadian School Journal (September 1935): 247–50; Jessie L. Beattie, “The New Education,” The Canadian School Journal (May 1936): 158–60; and A. G. Larsson, “Some Observations Regarding the Results of the Education Practised in the European Dictatorial Countries,” The Canadian School Journal (March 1939): 79–81. Larsson’s article is particularly memorable. He, a member of the Board of Education in St. Mary’s, Ontario, reviews the educational programs in Germany, Italy, and Russia. He finds them narrow, false, debasing, and one-sided because they do not permit, let alone prepare, their students to challenge the maxims and principles of the ruling authority.

preparing adaptable minds that could be responsive to conditions that were rapidly and incessantly becoming increasingly complex. Critical thought and adaptability of ideas were antidotes to some narrow, specialized, and skills-based education, which would only promote conformity and subjugation to the dominant industrial and social orders. In a “progressive, industrial world, nothing is taken for granted,” explained a 1933 editorial article in *The Canadian School Journal*, which defended the individual’s right to critical thinking and to doubt. From this perspective, initiative and self-reliance, particularly in the tumultuous context of the Depression, depended on critical doubt. Consequently, “the student who approaches life’s problems with a mind unfitted to think things out is greatly handicapped.”

The Great Depression was most frequently referred to as proof that Ontarians needed to adapt and expect change, that no space of employment was safe, and that any job or trade might be deemed expendable. If, to return to the concentration on individual learners, progressive schools were to prepare students for a context complete with such dramatic potential for change and instability, they would necessarily concentrate on developing individuals who were adaptable to modern life. The idea that school should train students based on their abilities to perform particular tasks was, from the meliorist perspective, considered unreasonable. The most practical knowledge that

120 See, for example, “Changing the Educational Emphasis,” *The Canadian School Journal* (March 1933): 84.
121 Critical intelligence and critical thought are most frequently referred to as freedom to be critical of the overarching demands of society and the power to pursue learning that is of personal interest, rather than that deemed necessary or relevant. See, for example, W. H. Fyfe, “Message from the Principal of Queen’s University,” *The Canadian School Journal* (March 1936): 82.
122 “Changing the Educational Emphasis,” 83.
123 Ibid., 83.
any individual student could gain in a progressive school was the ability to live adaptively and critically in social contexts that were constantly evolving.126

Such was the recurrent message propagated by meliorist progressives, and, as the effects of the Depression dismantled many educationists’ faith in a predictable world for which one might prepare students to live, even the Premier of Ontario, George S. Henry, admitted that each child should know the truth of their situations: “We live in a world of change … nothing is perfect. What satisfies us to-day will not satisfy us to-morrow.”127 The course of studies in progressive schools, in other words, needed to prepare students for a world of change. Again, this was related to the belief than any individual citizen’s learning and education extended outside and beyond the parameters of any school.128

Social Cooperation and Critical Intelligence

The home, the church, agencies such as the Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Junior Red Cross, YMCA, and YWCA, along with adult education initiatives, all contributed to the progressivist visions of social justice and welfare outside the school house. Participation in social extracurricular agencies was a way for students to learn that their responsibilities to community were to be taken seriously.129 Community organizations and agencies were praised in a 1933 editorial in The School, because they had represented a communitarian concern for the development and welfare of each Ontarian, independent of ability,

127 Ibid., 163. George S. Henry was, as noted in Chapter II treating the context of schooling in Ontario, also the Minister of Education in Ontario between 1930 and 1934.
128 See, for example, “Editorial: As a Man Thinks,” 283–284.
129 See, for example, “The Work of Voluntary Agencies,” The School (November 1933): 188.
intelligence, or socio-economic status. Cooperation among schools, families, and community groups could best facilitate a progressive vision for a socially just and regenerated world.

Fragments of two notable addresses, “Some Problems of Government” and “The Endless War” by President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University, commemorating the 183rd year of his school were reprinted for Ontario’s educationists in October 1936. Butler argued that education needed to foster cooperation and build a greater sense of community in order to be both useful and robust. In a healthy democracy, a self-reliant critical intelligence was necessary if individuals were to promote social justice and respect for democratic institutions. In 1933, before the black cloud of the Depression lifted, it was particularly important for meliorist progressives to advocate justice and democracy as the bedrock of hope for all students. No children with critical orientations to life would submit to demands that they become cogs in some industrial machinery. In the words of Henry Conn, an Ontario teacher, “we cannot make the pupil fit the school. But it should be quite possible to make the school fit the pupil.” In a progressive society, the child need not fit into an extant order—for this order was changing, and could be reformed according to the will of its citizens.

Watson Kirkconnell explained that progressive education should never “think of the state as a machine in which the citizen is a mere cog.” Likewise, Joseph McCulley

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130 Ibid.
131 For example, “President Butler and Democracy,” *The School* (October 1936): 95.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
had likened education that did not treat actual social problems and cultivate critical intelligence to an ostrich-like avoidance of necessary controversy.\(^{137}\) The world might very well be changing and evolving, explained a 1935 editorial in *The School*, but humanity had also shown a remarkable ability to adapt itself to change.\(^{138}\) Progressive schools could challenge students to think critically about their world and prepare them for such change rather than suppress conflict or instability and, as a result, put socially minded criticality at risk.\(^{139}\) In the words of John Cook, a teacher in Ontario, “the developing in the pupil of the spirit of co-operation is one of the teacher’s most vital responsibilities.”\(^{140}\)

**Summary**

In this chapter, themes for thinking about the meanings of individualized instruction expressed by progressive educators in *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal* were explored from three different progressivist orientations. First, from the child study orientation, individualized instruction entailed the holistic study of each learner’s normal

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George S. Counts, an American progressivist concerned with social meliorism, first denounced the idea that the individual child should be seen as a cog to be fitted in some industrial order. Counts challenged educational reformers to abandon the principles of scientific management because these ideas inevitably led to a state where schools would perpetuate the existing social order rather than become creative forces for social justice. Counts rejected the progressivist concerns for testing and intelligence measuring, because these created false representations of human ability or limitations. For further reading on Counts, see George S. Counts, *The American Road to Culture: A Social Interpretation of Education in the United States* (New York, NY: John Day, 1930), and *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (New York, NY: John Day, 1932).


development, concern for individuals’ freedom, happiness, and well-being, and future citizens’ adjustment to social contexts. Second, from the social efficiency orientation, individualized instruction entailed maximizing the returns on educational investments, eliminating educational waste, standardizing assessment and data collection of mental aptitude, and maintaining social order. Third, from the social meliorist orientation, individualized instruction entailed teaching individuals responsibility for their peers, preparing children to be adaptable in contexts of social change, and developing habits of mind related to critical intelligence and social cooperation. In the following chapter, the same three orientations toward progressive education will be used to shed light on the final domain of analysis, the progressivist concern for closer bonds between schools and society.
CHAPTER VI
THE LINKING OF SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY: PROGRESSIVIST CRITIQUES OF LEARNING UNRELATED TO CONTEMPORARY LIFE

Relate the school to life, and all studies are of necessity correlated.¹

Introduction

This chapter examines how the concern for relating schools more closely to society was depicted from the perspective of three progressivist orientations: child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism. Considered from the first orientation, the progressivist concern for schools and society to be interrelated focused on child health, human security, and parent involvement through home and school associations. From the second orientation, social efficiency, schools could relate better to social realities by providing students with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and guidance for their adjustment to vocational life. From the third orientation, meliorism, the progressive schools were seen as models of democratic communities that would foster critical thinking, promote civic responsibility, and reform society so that it would become more equitable and just.

Context of Child Study in Relation to School and Society

The Institute of Child Study became a symbol of the linking of schools to society and of unifying studies within the school.\(^2\) Whereas the trend in education was movement toward increased specialization of training, child study progressivists believed that this led to the isolation of subjects from one another and from actual life.\(^3\) They emphasized the construction of projects and enterprises that related various subjects of study to one another.\(^4\)

Two other themes—health, and home and school groups—are also rooted in the progressivist educational practices of the Institute of Child Study and its founding director, William Blatz.\(^5\) Improving the physical and mental health of children was considered vital for the entire province. Parent education and parental involvement in activities at school were another means of fostering greater cooperation between students’ domestic and educational spheres of existence.

Health and Human Security

The source journals contain many frank discussions that health matters represented the most pressing reason for relating schools to society. Indeed, entire issues

\(^2\) Northway, “Foreword,” in *Twenty-Five Years of Child Study*, viii. In this foreword to a text commemorating the twenty-fifth year of the Institute, Northway refers to it as a “coordinating and unifying force” in education, standing apart from other models because of its freedom from any “rigid departmental or faculty pattern.”

\(^3\) Ibid., vii. Northway believed the Institute’s integrity emerged from its unity: “So, if education is to preserve its real character, if it is to be an organism and not merely an organization, we must constantly be on our guard against the forces which tend to destroy its unity.”

\(^4\) Education via project and enterprise method was discussed in Chapter IV.

\(^5\) These three aspects will be treated as themes for exploring the meanings of this progressivist domain from the child study orientation.
of *The Canadian School Journal* were focused on health as a central subject. The child’s physical health was one concern. The foundations of a healthy society were laid both in habits learned in the home and in the school. The first duty of every parent was to protect and develop his or her child’s health; schools, as places where all children were brought together, needed to care for the health of all students to promote their happiness and enjoyment of life.

The division of health as an area of study in the revised 1937 curriculum in Ontario was seen as a formal recognition of this notion. The Chief Inspector of Public and Separate Schools in the province, V. K. Greer, informed teachers that “the division of health is given first place in the new course. Nevertheless it is not intended that health teaching shall appear too prominently on the teacher’s time table.” Health, he informed teachers, was a subject that related to the entirety of children’s lives and to all the school subjects. Consequently, it should not be scheduled as a subject separate from others in daily study.

Medical inspections grew increasingly regular and commonplace in Ontario’s school system during the interwar period, and they came to represent the faith that health promotion was a burden to be shared by home and school. Dr. John T. Phair, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, explicitly addressed the overlapping concerns

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6 See, for example, both February 1939 and 1940.
7 Advocacy for medical and dental inspections as well as the presence of nurses in schools was the most common topic, spawning books and pamphlets on the subject. See, for example, “Pickings,” *The Canadian School Journal* (February 1941): 67.
10 Ibid.
11 See, for example, William M. Bellworth, “Periodical Medical Examinations of School Children,” *The Canadian School Journal* (February 1940): 37–38. Bellworth, a former patient and employee at the Toronto Hospital for Consumptives, relates health to happiness and sees both implicated in education.
between the provincial Departments of Education and Health. He noted that despite decades of increased cooperation between schools and social medical agencies, the matter of health was still regarded by many people as the sole responsibility of parents. School health service in Ontario actually began in 1909 with an amendment to The School Act of 1907, Edna Moore reported in The School, permitting medical and dental inspection in schools. It was not until 1924, however, that services were amalgamated and extended across the province.

This concern for health, both physical and psychological, prompted discussion in the journals about reforming and modernizing Ontario’s spaces of schooling. The beautification of school grounds was seen by some as an important element of school progress. The periodicals report scholarships and awards presented to beautified schools. By 1940, the Department of Education sponsored a survey of school grounds in the province. Various horticultural societies in the province became interested in working with Ontario’s students to build sustainable planting programs in and out of school grounds.

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12 In addition to being associated with the Toronto Boards of Education and Health, Phair was a member of the Executive Boards of a number of voluntary health agencies, including the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Victorian Order of Nurses, and the Canadian Welfare Council. He believed that social agencies and governmental institutions needed to work collaboratively to promote children’s health. “Dr. J. T. Phair,” The Canadian School Journal (March 1937): 87.


14 Edna L. Moore, “School Health Service in Ontario,” The School (September 1940): 10. When Moore published this article, she was the Chief Public Health Nurse in Ontario. This article outlines the history of health services in the province. With reference to early developments, she said: “In 1909 the City of Toronto took advantage of the existing legislation and established school health service under the auspices of the Board of Education. In 1917, following a plebiscite, the entire health service for the city was placed under the board of health and a generalized programme introduced.”

15 Ibid.

16 See, for example, “Scholarship for Beautification,” The Canadian School Journal (September 1940): 339. This particular article refers to the Carter Trophy, which was presented annually to a rural school in the Guelph region.
The matter of health was one area where the province had come to believe that the state shares with each parent the responsibility for health promotion. Ideally, they worked in close cooperation on the matter. School gardening clubs, extracurricular groups that worked on beautification projects on school grounds and in the community, were presented as examples of this cooperation.

Other discussions regarding school building upgrades, such as those dealing with modernization of heating systems and provisions for appropriate lighting, typically were addressed as vital to children’s health. These were portrayed as intimately associated with school progress. According to O. T. Walker, Chairman of the Property Committee in Brampton’s Public School Board, improved school buildings make for better and happier educational experiences. Walker was particularly concerned with school buildings that would afford students adequate amounts of light, an accommodation representing “a decidedly forward step” for the schools of Ontario. Improvements to the school plants would improve the entire life of the school; for example, he explained:

Better light gives brighter, more cheerful surroundings. These are naturally reflected in brighter, happier children. The advantage to those children who are actually backward or slow because of inability to see well, will be inestimable. Better lighting certainly makes for more thorough assimilation of knowledge, better education, and more school co-operation.

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18 Ibid.
19 See, for example, W. W. Tanner, “A School Gardening Club,” *The School* (September 1938): 13–14. Tanner, Principal of the High and Vocational School in Timmins, sees such clubs that extend school activities as great successes in education.
23 Ibid., 12.
24 Ibid., 12–13.
These benefits extended beyond the child’s school life into all social life. Suitable playgrounds and safe spaces for exercise on school property were portrayed as necessary for the development of children’s bodies and minds; they were also facilities for the entire neighbourhood and community. Growth and development were important factors to consider in education, explained an editorial in *The Canadian School Journal*, yet schools had to facilitate “not only growth of mind, but of body and soul.” Jessie Beattie, former Director of Recreation with the Community Welfare Council, saw the development of sanitary, well-heated, and attractive school buildings as indicative of all that was best in “new education.” In very similar terms, he argued that beautified school grounds reinforced the progressivist idea that schools should be concerned with more than the training of healthy minds. Places to play developed healthy bodies, but the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of life also needed cultivation: “Our world is not only a world of the material but of the spiritual, using the term in its broader sense. It was planned to satisfy more than the hunger of the body. To know this, we have only to look at the colour of the sunset on a spring night, to smell the fragrance of a rose.” Better school buildings enabled happier learning experiences, and these would remain more memorable throughout life.

Proper nutrition, medical care, dental maintenance, and education were issues of importance to all Ontarians, particularly with respect to the school-aged child. These

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26 Ibid., 95. Working with the analogy that heat expands and cold contracts, the article suggests that physical activity facilitates holistic growth and development: “Greater activity will produce a more rounded life while coldness or inactivity will contract life.”
28 Ibid., 160.
children needed to be treated holistically in the home and at school. Social progress and prosperity were thought to be inseparable from physical health and healthy habits. Even school records could go beyond the purely academic to log a child’s physical development, health particulars, weight, and measurements, a scheme necessitating that doctors, nurses, and parents worked together closely. The progressive school, explained a 1937 editorial in *The Canadian School Journal*, was one that joined with the home and the church to promote healthy development of physical and intellectual abilities harmoniously.

The individual child’s mental health was seen as persisting through life, necessarily implicating all social institutions. Corbin Brown, Inspector of Public Schools in St. Catharines, expressed this recurring sentiment most cogently:

> One of the most important features of present practice in our elementary schools is the increased interest shown by teachers in the mental health of their pupils. If each child is to achieve the maximum of happiness and usefulness in his [sic] life, he should have, not only good physical health, but in addition, a wholesome mental outlook.

The necessity for increased cooperation between the home and the school, Brown goes on to say, has been stressed by many speakers and writers, and it was implicated in the

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29 See, for example, “Guard the Health of the Child,” *The Canadian School Journal* (February 1940): 34.
30 See, for example, “The Editor’s Page,” *The Canadian School Journal* (December 1942): 377. In this editorial, all aspects were seen as necessarily correlated for the holistic and healthy development of the child.
31 “Guard the Health of the Child,” 34.
growth of home and school associations.\textsuperscript{34} The most important reason for this cooperation, he explains, is the promotion of a child's affective security in the world.\textsuperscript{35}

The concept of security, relating to a child's ability to face the world with self-reliance and confidence, was one of William Blatz's favourite topics.\textsuperscript{36} When the home and school were correlated effectively, both helping to produce healthy habits, the student's world would be a more secure one. In such a context, the child becomes independently secure, meaning that he or she could take responsibility for his or her own behaviour and actions.\textsuperscript{37} This, Blatz argued, was akin to emancipation because it liberated the child from dependence on parent and teacher for guidance.\textsuperscript{38} A fit life, in affective terms, required a secure outlook to life, which was predicated on self-direction as well as healthy habits of mind and action.\textsuperscript{39}

Medical doctor Charles Alexander, assessing the role of health in school study, came to a similar conclusion. Educational and medical institutions needed to work together to help children develop the skills necessary for a healthy, happy life: “Education

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\textsuperscript{34} Ontario's home and school associations will be discussed in “Home and School Movements, and the Promotion of Healthy Homes.”
\textsuperscript{35} Brown, “Mental Health of School Children,” 36.
\textsuperscript{36} Blatz, “Security,” 499–503. Corbin Brown did not cite Blatz in his article, but security theory was referred to at the Institute of Child Study as “the gospel according to Blatz.” Mary L. Northway, “Postscript,” in Human Security: Some Reflections (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 123.
\textsuperscript{37} Blatz, “Security,” 501. Blatz writes: “Security may now be defined more fully. When an individual is willing to accept the consequences of his [sic] behaviour, not only known but unknown, not only predictable but unpredictable; when the thrill of adventure compensates for the intervening security which may ensue, then the individual is in a state of security. Thus, the acquisition of any skill, in the form of a habit, makes for security. The greater the number and the higher the degree of skill, the more secure is the individual. Competence makes for security, incompetence for insecurity. The insecure individual will compensate either by seeking some form of dependence or by spurring himself on to greater effort in order to obtain security.” Emphasis in original text.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 503.
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should be a training in not only how to make a living but a training in how to live.”40 R. H. Roberts, educator, echoed Alexander when he described the school as a community in which the child dwells. Relating this community to real life entailed more than knowledge. It included healthy habits with respect to relaxation, food, and cleanliness.41 He emphatically argued for “the importance of integrating the entire life of the school child in a programme of physical, mental, emotional, and moral health.”42

**Home and School Movements, and the Promotion of Healthy Homes**

Just as the health of students in Ontario’s schools was a dominant theme among child study progressivist articles, children’s health in the home was a corollary concern. Parent education in the province was initially and primarily related to the promotion of healthy homes.43 Throughout the interwar period, educationists urged that lectures be given for parents at schools, pointing out the value of good health and how proper exercise and a balanced diet would increase weight and growth.44 A 1936 editorial article

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42 Ibid., 98–99.
43 A great number of brochures, articles, and manuals were published for parents by educationists. Between 1925 and 1940, the staff of the Institute of Child Study alone published 114 documents, including such titles as *Honesty* (1925), *The Importance of Failure* (1934), *How Children Learn* (1937), and *Social Work and Mr. Citizen* (1940).
44 This is particularly relevant to the work of Blatz and the Institute of Child Study, where a Parent Education Division was founded at the Institute’s foundation. Blatz published articles in a number of popular magazines for parents and mothers, in particular *Chatelaine, Childhood Education, Progressive Education, Child Welfare*, and *Child Study Magazine*. Government agencies were also involved in literature distribution, most notably the “Little Blue Books” Mothers’ Series written by Helen MacMurchy (later Helen MacMurchy Bott) and published by the Dominion of Canada’s Department of Health in 1923. Titles included *The Canadian Mother’s Book, How to Take Care of the Children*, and *How to Take Care of the Mother*. MacMurchy would eventually co-author a number of publications with Blatz and join the Institute of Child Study staff.
in *The Canadian School Journal* established that parent education was as important as children’s education with regards to health:

Lectures could be sponsored and paid for by the school board for the benefit of the whole community. A public health nurse or a speaker from one of the many health organizations … could be secured giving the parents useful information on the care and supervision of the child. Parent education is as essential as the education of the child. The parents prepare the child’s lunch, clothe the child, and should understand the necessity of proper care and the results of neglect of some of the minor defects which in time may prove to be incurable.\(^{45}\)

Such lectures were actually coordinated by interested parents, who founded the Home and School Movement in 1916. The movement grew into a provincial organization in 1919.\(^ {46}\) Various home and school associations were set up in local districts, and boards emerged as principal advocates for the belief that a child’s domestic and educational experiences required greater complementarity.\(^ {47}\) The movement’s advocates were particularly interested in the early, formative years of human life, when, according to one account, “the twig is bent, the sight is taken and the race of life has begun.”\(^ {48}\) The movement proclaimed itself an “essentially fundamental and progressive educational one.” Within it, teachers in schools and parents at home, representing “two great forces,” could “work together harmoniously and in a spirit of intelligent cooperation.”\(^ {49}\)

The Home and School Movement lobbyists changed how parents and teachers interacted throughout the province.\(^ {50}\) The extent of extracurricular activities and social

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\(^{45}\) See, for example, “The Editor’s Page,” *The Canadian School Journal* (February 1936): 38.


\(^{47}\) Ibid.


\(^{49}\) “The Home and School Movement,” 85.

\(^{50}\) Nowhere was this truer than in relation to the work of William Blatz. As a second educational project, Blatz took over as Director of an educational experiment called the Progressive School, which had actually been founded in 1926 by a group of parents. These parents included many of
services offered in the school, along with the quick and steady rise of so-called “parents’ days” and community meetings, increased the influence of schools in family life.\textsuperscript{51} Home and school groups mediated between the concerns of local parents and educational administrators, discussing everything from homework activities to celebrations.\textsuperscript{52}

Home and school groups were also involved in communicating with educational authorities on behalf of parents and expressing the concerns of families to the school boards, occasionally even incurring the wrath of educationists.\textsuperscript{53} At other times, they were depicted as attempting to interfere with the school board’s management of teachers. Attendees of O.E.A. conferences reported that school trustees were discussing the role of these groups in mediating between parent interests and school board authority.\textsuperscript{54} In rural regions, the home and school associations were also involved in supplying books to schools and selecting texts for libraries that local parents decided were important for their children to read.\textsuperscript{55} All things considered, however, increased communication between

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Toronto’s wealthiest families, including the Gundys and the Eatons. The parents decided to start a cooperative kindergarten pursuing educational lines outlined by John Dewey at his University of Chicago laboratory school. They hired a number of teachers from the United States who were familiar with progressive education to begin the program. In 1930, when Blatz assumed the school’s leadership, he changed its name from the Progressive School to Windy Ridge. Raymond, \textit{The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz}.


\textsuperscript{52} In many respects, they were the precursors to contemporary parent-teacher associations (P.T.A.s). The increased interest in child study among parents led to the establishment of mothers’ clubs, mothers’ congresses, mothers’ reading circles, art leagues, and young mother’s groups all across the province.

\textsuperscript{53} “Parents Are to Blame,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (October 1927): 24. This article, as an example, reports a speech by J. H. Putman, Senior Inspector of Ottawa’s public schools, in which he accuses parents of meddling in the aims of education despite having very little scientific understanding of intelligence or ability.

\textsuperscript{54} See, for example, “As the Press Viewed the O.E.A. Convention,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (April 1940): 154.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 156. In this news piece, E. E. Reece of the Home and School Section questions the wisdom of the Association’s purchase of books for schools. Trustees, she explains, should handle this, instead of home and school groups.
the home and the school was deemed vital to the holistic development of children. Parents and teachers needed to keep in close contact so that each child’s two spheres of life could complement each other.\textsuperscript{56} As \textit{The Canadian School Journal} put it in December of 1939, such cooperation helped “influence and train children to become healthy in body, mind and soul in this present world of great activity.”\textsuperscript{57}

\section*{Social Efficiency and Adjustment to Industry}

\subsection*{Context of Social Efficiency in Relation to School and Society}

As has been reinforced throughout this dissertation, progressivist texts stressed that Ontario’s schools should no longer be institutions strictly devoted to the inculcation of academic content. Reinforcing the idea that schools needed to relate more explicitly to the social realities of life, a 1934 editorial in \textit{The School}, aptly titled “School and Society,” celebrated that educational activities had become increasingly relevant to vocational training: “the ‘three R’s’ has now been extended to embrace the specialized training of boys and girls for every sphere of commercial, industrial, and professional activity.”\textsuperscript{58} The schools were represented as laying the foundations for a socially efficient and progressive society, particularly in industrial and economic terms. The cultivation of skills, habits, and character conducive to such gains were the responsibility of a progressive educational system.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} See, for example, Helen Loy McDowell, “Some Thoughts on Educating the Child of Preschool Age,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (October 1936): 283.
\textsuperscript{57} “Child Study Institute,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (December 1939): 440.
\textsuperscript{58} “Editorial Notes: The School and Society,” \textit{The School} (November 1934): 185.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
Relating schools to society meant, in many respects, assessing the needs of industry and the business community. These needs would then be translated into educational objectives. In the words of G. Fred McNally, Alberta’s Supervisor of Schools, schools preparing students to take up gainful work in industry needed to be organized as if they were industries, meaning that “education should be required to justify itself by the return of definitely recognizable dividends.” The needs of any society were akin to those of business and industry. For that reason, progressivist schools would necessarily base their curriculum on principles that provided communities most efficiently with essentials such as food, clothing, and shelter. Building on sections in Chapters III and IV, the relationship between schools and society, from the social efficiency orientation, will be explored further in this section.

**Relating to the Industrial Progress of Society**

Progressive schools were depicted as having an important role to play in the promotion of commercial, technical, and industrial progress in society. With this in mind, students needed to learn many of the basic principles of industry, including business ethics, retail practice, contracts, taxation, and banking. The more specific

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60 McNally, “Curricula for Canadian High Schools,” 377.
61 See, for example, J. L. Jose, “Is Business Practice Meeting the Community Needs?” The School (January 1941): 389.
62 Increasingly, high school programs were providing opportunities and facilities for full-time vocational study in day programs. See, for example, “Vocational Education,” The School (January 1929): 425–26. The editorial notes: “Twenty-five years ago the number of pupils attending day vocational schools was so small that they were not mentioned separately in the comparative statistics of the Department of Education; now more than a quarter of all the pupils in attendance at secondary schools in Ontario are enrolled in vocational schools and the proportion seems to be growing. It is not a phenomenon peculiar to Ontario.”
instruction could be in these areas, the better; as one of Ontario’s secondary school
teachers, J. Ferris David, put it, “every large business institution demands highly trained
and educated men [sic], each an expert or specialist in his own particular field.”64 In the
words of another, students required training in business if they were to possibly find their
vocational niches in the community.65 Progressive education was thus depicted as the
adjustment of educational facilities to give students training in the skills they would need
in their vocations.66 Schools reconstructed to prepare Ontario’s youth for successful
careers in business or industry were more inclined to “train” the mind to complete
particular tasks efficiently rather than to “stuff” it with facts and figures.67

If school learning was to be more closely related to life in business or industry, the
business model was an apt one for school organization.68 C. L. Burton, President of the
Robert Simpson Company, announced that “educational objectives, so far as business is
concerned, should be set with a view of preparing those who will enter the ranks of
industry and business enterprise for their future work.”69 Burton depicted children as a
natural resource that could be used to stimulate future progress in society. Education,
consequently, had to include much more than just academic study.70 It should adapt
business models not only as means, but also as ends.

(April 1933): 128. David was Chairman of the Ingersoll Board of Education, and Vice-President,
Urban Section, of the OSTRA.
65 Jose, “Is Business Practice Meeting the Community Needs?” 391.
66 “Education of 90% of the Pupils for 10% of the Jobs,” The Canadian School Journal (July 1929): 1.
70 Ibid. The depiction of schools as a factory and children as resources is entirely consistent with
many efficiency progressivists’ characterizations of the educational process. Just as “the earth’s
resources were progressively tapped to the world of trading,” Burton noted, children could also be
used to stimulate industrial development.
As noted in the previous chapter, elimination of waste in educational practice was one way of promoting efficiency. This entailed review of the management and control of schools, as well as the course of study.\textsuperscript{71} In terms of the curriculum, subjects that did not facilitate adjustment to the economic realities of life were deemed wasteful, removed as they were from what Dalhousie University Professor of Education B. A. Fletcher called “the fundamental principles” of life.\textsuperscript{72} J. Ferris David put this idea in clear terms when he argued that all “frills of education must be done away with at once and the curriculum adjusted so that the education received in our secondary schools will be such that a boy or girl will be properly fitted.”\textsuperscript{73} Frills were those subjects that did not facilitate this fitting of a child to some useful, vocational niche.

\textbf{Vocational Guidance and Support}

In a paper presented by Deputy Minister of Public Welfare, Milton A. Sorsoleil, before the Supervising and Training Department of the O.E.A., the promotion of vocational guidance was depicted as an essential quality of the movement toward increased efficiency in schools.\textsuperscript{74} Students’ vocational paths were largely dictated by

\textsuperscript{71}See, for example, W. J. Cunningham, “Efficiency, Unity, Economy,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (April 1937): 154–55. In this article, Cunningham, a member of the County Council Section of the O.E.A., argued that the promotion of efficiency was just as important to the successful progress of Ontario’s educational system as any other factor.

\textsuperscript{72}B. A. Fletcher, “Some General Principles of Education,” \textit{The School} (January 1939): 371. This article reproduced a speech made at a Canada and Newfoundland Education Association meeting. Emphasis in original text.

\textsuperscript{73}David, “Secondary Schools and Their Relation to Business,” 128.

\textsuperscript{74}M. A. Sorsoleil, “Vocational Guidance,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (November 1937): 393–95, 412. The article reproduced Sorsoleil’s essay. Curiously, while presenting guidance as a progressive reform in the province, he argued that the need and value of vocational counselling was as old as Plato’s \textit{Republic}, from which he cited the following passage: “But as we caution the shoemaker you know against attempting to be an agriculturist or a weaver or a builder, besides with a view to our shoemaking being well done, and to every artisan we assigned in a like manner
intelligence tests, which were seen as reliable predictors of mental ability. Guiding students toward their vocational niches in life, explained Florence Dunlop, psychologist for the public schools in Ottawa, involved the collection of a range of information beginning with that related to intelligence, but also inclusive of “pertinent data on health, developmental history, physical condition, personality, mental age, rate of mental maturation, school progress, special abilities and disabilities, interests, desires, home and community conditions.”

At its core, vocational guidance was predicated on the belief that there was an established niche for each person in the established order. Informed guidance from the schools could facilitate future citizens’ transitions to fitting careers. As W. G. Martin, Minister of Public Welfare, explained in a speech at an O.E.A. conference, “education is training in the principles of citizenship, enabling the boy or girl to find his or her proper groove in order that they may make a worth-while contribution to the day and generation in which they are privileged to live.”

Discovering students’ aptitudes and abilities went hand in hand with their training in an efficiently managed and progressive system of schools.

Efficient schools, then, were seen as requiring students to think about their vocational opportunities and their potential fit within the larger structure. “Modern industrial and progressive conditions have made vocational guidance imperative,”

one occupation, namely, that for which he was naturally fitted, and in which, if he let other things alone and wrought at it all his time without neglecting his opportunities, he was likely to prove a successful workman,” 393.


Martin, “Education for Citizenship,” 194. The article reproduced Martin’s speech, which was delivered to the Trustees’ and Ratepayers’ Department of the O.E.A. on March 30, 1932.

Burton, “Business as an Objective,” 342.
announced an editorial feature in *The Canadian School Journal*, and “without proper
guidance both the individual and the state may suffer loss.” In the first four years of the
1930s, as the Depression brought concerns regarding employment to the forefront of
educational talk, *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal* together carried over twenty
articles on vocational preparation in the province’s schools. It was in this climate that the
Ontario Vocational Guidance Association was organized, in 1934, to study the principles,
problems, and techniques of guidance.

The increasing emphasis on vocational guidance continued into the mid-1930s,
and as the Depression lifted, the stress moved from finding students work to finding them
work that would promote the greatest degree of happiness. Marion Goode, counsellor
and most frequent contributor to the source journals on the subject of guidance, believed
that the greatest concern of vocational guidance programs needed to be the negotiation of
students’ abilities and interests. Looking forward to a new decade, the 1940s, Ontario’s
schools needed to accept that helping an individual find a niche where he or she could
perform “successfully and happily” was a proposition that should receive “the very ready
assent of persons of sane mind.”

Interesting and meaningful work was depicted as an elixir for good health and
personal happiness. Vocational guidance was the most efficient way that a school could
use data collected on an individual student to facilitate an appropriate transition to a

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82 Burton, “Business as an Objective,” 342.
useful, suitable, and happy life. Helping Ontario’s future citizens to find their future
niches in society was a matter far too important to be left to chance.

In an age of increasing specialization, Goode argued, an educationist with
expertise in vocational guidance fulfilled a vital social task more efficiently than parents
could:

As for the great mass of working-class parents, it is obvious that limitations of
knowledge, experience and ability must often make it impossible for them to offer
wise counsel. In many cases they accept chance opportunities without regard to
their suitability; and in many cases they allow children who deserve a better fate to
drift into blind-alley occupations, more heedful of immediate gain than of future
advancement.

As the economic and industrial order in Ontario was always increasing in complexity,
and as traditional models of apprenticeship for training were vanishing, the educational
machinery needed greater expertise and specialization. Electa Bissell, an elementary
school teacher, expressed her faith that guidance was the very core of modern education.
She summed up the efficiency progressivist views succinctly: “From his [sic] baby ways,
teach him to walk by himself, and make him realize that he is an important cog in the
machinery of a smoothly-running world.”

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84 Ibid. Goode believed that a poor vocational choice led to many social ills: “Again, the
maladjusted worker must often fail to achieve material prosperity; and such failure, in addition to
aggravating his mental discontent, may affect his physical well-being and that of his dependents,
who, indeed, may suffer in more ways than one.”
85 Ibid., 108.
86 Rogers, “Present Day Problems in Education,” 174. George Rogers was Chief Director of
Education under both George S. Henry and Duncan McArthur. “We are in the midst of an
industrial revolution,” he proclaimed, calling for a progressive revision of school curricula and
management.
87 Electa Bissell, “Developing a Sense of Responsibility in the Grade II Child,” The School
(November 1929): 224.
Social Meliorism and Engagement with Social Ills

Context of Social Meliorism in Relation to School and Society

While the efficiency progressivist articles sought to pursue a business model to reform Ontario’s schools, the meliorist texts often presented business interests as a scourge in schools. An education that promoted competition among students or valued conformity was presented as anti-democratic. It was more important for schools to develop in students the ability to think critically and promote social justice than it was to adjust to an extant order. According to an editorial article in *The School*, the aims of education involved:

A wider distribution of material benefits, fundamentally by a wider distribution of three related abilities: the ability to recognize the universal good, the ability to recognize the good in others, and the ability to assume responsibility in cooperation with others to achieve the common good.

As seen earlier, meliorist articles readily admitted that the circumstances of life had changed. In the opinion of Joseph McCulley, Ontario was in the midst of its greatest period of change, and if schools were to relate to social life, they also required reforms. The most important of these was infusing schools with the spirits of democracy and cooperation.

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88 See, for example, “Editorial Notes: The School and Society,” *The School* (May 1933): 737.
91 Ibid. McCulley describes the democratic ethos in terms of freedom to debate, challenge, and question. The schools, in his opinion, needed to foster criticality.
Reforming Society to Better the Lot of Humanity

In the words of W. G. Martin, Minister of Public Welfare, “if there was ever a time in history when there was a need for a great crusade of youth and older men for the betterment of the lot of humanity that hour is to-day.”

A truly progressive society was one built on the principle of cooperation. During the years when the Depression affected school funding most significantly, 1932 and 1933, John A. Cook, member of the Rural Section of the O.E.A., made the case that: “Co-operation of individuals has aided them to build up our great civilization faster and more satisfactorily, and so to live more successfully than individuals could possibly do by living alone and individualistically.”

Ontario’s schools, consequently, needed to build links to the community and have opportunities to work cooperatively in order to improve society. Calling on educationists to see schooling as a way of reforming society along more equitable lines, one editorial in The School proclaimed “a new world is in the making, or so they tell us. Civilization has struck its tents, and is on the march.”

The aims of education were often questioned in meliorist progressivist articles that explored the meaning of schooling and the purposes of reform within a democratic state. One theme that persisted throughout the period related to the teacher’s role as a

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93 See, for example, Cook, “Co-operation in Education,” 406–07.
94 For further reading about the Depression and its impact on education, see Chapter II.
96 Ibid. Cook argued that students need to be constantly reminded of the principle of cooperation and how it has contributed to all aspects of their lives, including food, clothing, and transportation. Further, Cook said: “The pupil, after having been shown the particular value of this principle in the world about him [sic], should be placed in a position where he may take part in the actual demonstration of it.”
figure of authority in the classroom. How could debate and freedom of discussion be fostered in a system with mandated curricula and examinations? Were educators facilitators, guides, or indoctrinators? Such questions, examined in earlier chapters, persisted and, in fact, dominated the journals between 1940 and 1942.\footnote{For a lengthier discussion of the 1937 to 1942 context, see Chapter VIII.} When arguments were made for democratic schooling, these typically contrasted Ontario with fascist or Nazi states, which were characterized as overly concerned with indoctrination. Other than World War II, there was another stimulus leading to much discussion on the theme of indoctrination. In 1939, George Counts of Columbia University, spoke at a meeting of the Toronto Branch of the N.E.F. on the subject of indoctrination. In characteristically dramatic fashion, Counts explained that indoctrination represented the greatest threat to democracy.\footnote{“Editorial: Schools and Democracy,” \textit{The School} (February 1939): 459.}

“Is indoctrination just another name for education?” asked W. C. Keirstead, Professor of Education at the University of New Brunswick, “or may indoctrination be used in education?”\footnote{Keirstead, “Indoctrination in Education,” 743.}

Keirstead’s article in \textit{The School} likened individuals in a democratic community to active cells of a living body, which have independent and yet cooperative functions. Each part of the body depended on the health of other parts, and no society could be a healthy one without tending to the well-being of all its elements. When the whole of a community worked in harmony, everyone prospered and there could be “increased richness for all.”\footnote{Ibid.} What was, then, the teacher’s role in the protection of individual freedoms within a centralized, structured system of schooling? The editors of \textit{The School} answered that question in 1939 in strongly meliorist tones:

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\footnote{For a lengthier discussion of the 1937 to 1942 context, see Chapter VIII.}
\footnote{“Editorial: Schools and Democracy,” \textit{The School} (February 1939): 459.}
\footnote{Keirstead, “Indoctrination in Education,” 743.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
What can teachers do? They must not attempt to merely indoctrinate their pupils, first, because such education is futile, and secondly, because a certain section of the public will not allow us to indoctrinate their children or their young people. Teachers can, however, do much. In general they must educate their pupils to gather information, to weigh evidence, to analyze propaganda, and to come to their own conclusions.\textsuperscript{103}

Democracy, not business, was depicted as the ideal model for progressivist school reforms, because it enabled educationists and students alike to explore, debate, and express opinions.\textsuperscript{104} Ideally, democracy not only permitted, but also required rational debate and dissent. Furthermore, it led to decisions and aims that were pragmatic and mutable in a complex and evolving world.\textsuperscript{105}

Occasionally, articles advocating democratic schooling as a means of furthering social reforms reported on progressivist occurrences in the United States. An editorial in \textit{The School}, for example, cited, at length, a front-page article published in \textit{The Times Educational Supplement} the day after a meeting of the National Education Association, on July 6, 1935.\textsuperscript{106} Having discussed the American context, the editorial equated a democratic approach to debating educational reforms with freedom of speech. In order to develop a democratically minded and critical citizenry, Ontario’s schools needed to promote academic freedom, meaning that “administrators and schools should have full

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[103] “Editorial: Schools and Democracy,” 459.
\item[104] Ibid.
\item[105] See, for example, “Editorial Notes: The School and Society,” 737.
\item[106] “Academic Freedom,” \textit{The School} (September 1935): 2. The cited portion of the article from \textit{The Times Educational Supplement} explored reasons for social reconstructionists’ failure to affect meaningful educational reforms: “The leaders of the movement, in their fervor for social reconstruction, appear to close their eyes to a large number of factors which stand in the way of their programme. They fail to realize that teacher and schools cannot move any faster than society is willing to approve. They assume that all teachers are ready to accept the same political, social, or economic programme.... The public response to this movement, as might have been expected, has been a virulent campaign on the part of the press.... It is doubtful whether such opposition would have been aroused, if the campaign had not concentrated on making teachers class-conscious, militant propagandists. A less vociferously conducted movement for a programme of educational enlightenment on crucial issues of the day, for a genuine training in intelligent citizenship, would have met with greater success.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
opportunity to present differing points of view on all controversial questions, in order to aid students.”

Down with Laissez-Faire, Up with Democracy

Promoting democratic communities in the schools that would lead to social justice and cooperation was made difficult by what John Cook called “our so-called capitalistic system.” The ethos of civic cooperation and the spirit of laissez-faire capitalism were at odds with each other, Cook argued; the former could lead to equity, while the latter had led to economic depression and dramatic inequities. Progressive education should concern the building of community and the reforming of society through democratic citizenship. This message seemed to be emphatically reinforced throughout the Depression, which devastated Ontarians and thrust concerns for children’s health, stability, and welfare into the limelight:

In all industrial sections of Canada the problem of looking after children whose mothers are working in industry is becoming more acute. Many school-age

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108 Cook, “Co-operation in Education,” 406. Cook was President of the Rural School Section of the O.E.A.
109 Ibid. Cook asked his readers to consider the economy as an analogy for thinking about educational organization: “Capitalism as long as there was a scarcity of the necessities of comfortable living, and as long as the employment of every individual who was able to work was required to produce sufficient goods to keep people living satisfactorily, was a great success. It may be as good an economic system as could be evolved to meet a situation where there was a scarcity of the necessities of life. However, when the time came that the machinery set up by the system was easily able, without the assistance of the whole working population, to produce more than could easily be consumed by the whole population, difficulties became apparent. Unemployment became general. And that piteous condition of maldistribution where poverty existed in the midst of plenty attacked us. What, since then, has pure capitalism been able to do with respect to our difficulties? Nothing it would seem unless to aggravate them.”
110 See, for example, “Neighbourliness—The Core of Progressive Education,” The Canadian School Journal (February 1935): 55. The article, summarizing a lecture by Frederick L. Patry from the University of the State of New York, considers the promotion of community the hallmark of progressive schooling.
children are subsisting on a very ill-balanced diet—some leaving home in the morning after a breakfast of bread, returning at noon to an empty and cheerless house for an inadequate or injudicious lunch, and ending the day with a dinner prepared by one already tired from other employment.\footnote{111}

Inequality of opportunity, both in educational and economic terms, was seen as rooted in laissez-faire competition, leading to gross injustices.\footnote{112}

In 1935, at the High School Boards’ Annual Convention, Joseph McCulley proclaimed the death of laissez-faire and asked educationists to strive for a more just and cooperative world for which “a wider socialized viewpoint on the part of teachers and trustees is necessary.”\footnote{113} As Frederick Minkler explained, progressive education aimed “to develop the emergent generation that it will formulate a better and better democratic society.”\footnote{114} Minkler’s definition of progressive education reveals how very different the progressivist orientations were with respect to the relations between school and society. He essentially critiques other progressivists’ “attempts to fit the child into a pre-determined mould, to train to fit into the social order to which he belongs.”\footnote{115}

In the context of the journal articles, perhaps because debate itself was not possible given the medium, these varying definitions of progressive education sometimes resembled a spirited marketing campaign. The development of Education Weeks by teachers’ federations was a clear example of the perceived need for teachers’ federations in Ontario, as one editorial put it, “to put up a persistent sales campaign for

\footnote{111}{“Educational News: Ontario,” \textit{The School} (April 1942): 723.}
\footnote{112}{See, for example, Horace L. Brittain, “Some Views of Administration of Public Education,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (December 1934): 406.}
\footnote{113}{Joseph McCulley, “Press Extracts from Addresses,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (March 1935): 87.}
\footnote{114}{Minkler, “The Progressive Education Conferences at Hamilton and Windsor,” 378. Minkler’s article reported on the two P.E.A. conferences held in the province. These were discussed at greater length in the previous chapter.}
\footnote{115}{Ibid., 378.}
education.”116 The article fails to qualify what type or vision of education is being sold.117 A progressivist vision, explained E. A. Corbett, “like any other commodity, has to be sold to the people, and that a certain amount of showmanship is always necessary in promoting a program … in other words, the pill has to be sugar-coated.”118 McCulley, one of the most prominent advocates of a meliorist progressivist orientation, knew this well; advertisements for Pickering College, the private school founded in 1842 as a Quaker institution, which McCulley operated, were published regularly in *The Canadian School Journal* with the banner “Education in a changing world.”119 McCulley was so successful at selling the meliorist vision of progressive education that he was elected chairman of publicity and promotion for the conference of the western New York branch of the P.E.A. in the United States.120 While it might appear curious for progressivists arguing for cooperation and community to advertise their beliefs, the espousals and editorials were consistent with the vision of democracy for which meliorists advocated.

117 Ibid. The author of the article did acknowledge a degree of incongruity between selling and teaching: “Selling is not an activity congenial to teachers. To those who live in the academic calm, salesmanship connotes a glib and shameless sophistry with enthusiastic intent to deceive. Nevertheless we teach in a world where commodities survive on their publicized merits, in years when the demands on the public purse are heavy beyond precedent, and under conditions which will make people question the value of everything they paid for on trust before,” 181.
118 E. A. Corbett, “Can the Radio Be Used Effectively in University Extension Work?” *The School* (October 1935): 94. Corbett was a pioneering adult educator who played an important role in the establishment of the Canadian Association for Adult Education in 1935.
119 See, for example, “Pickering College, Newmarket, Ontario,” *The Canadian School Journal* (November 1933): 404. The rest of the advertisement is equally telling: “Teachers are aware that, in a time of crisis such as the present, education of our children should be the last economy. It is the purpose of this school to give to its students a rational appreciation of present day conditions and to fit them for the complex problems of the future.”
120 “News from Home and Abroad,” *The Canadian School Journal* (June 1935): 196. The article reported that this branch included teachers in private and public schools, parents, and educationists interested in working on basic ideas of international cooperation and understanding.
Freedom of speech, diversity of opinion, and freedom of choice were still the foundations of democratic schooling and were vital to debate.\textsuperscript{121} C. C. Goldring, speaking at the 1937 Urban Trustees Association meeting in London, Ontario, stressed that training for life involved learning how to live in a functioning democracy. In his opinion, expressed in uncharacteristically convoluted terms, “democracy consisted of making choices, consequently our schools should aim in preparing students to prepare themselves for the time when they will have to make their own choices in life.”\textsuperscript{122}

Marketing was not akin to indoctrination; and, so, it was with great horror that an editorial in *The School* reported on some of the Nazi policies that were shaping German schools.\textsuperscript{123} Such policies were antithetical to democratic principles because they forced students to conform, rather than to doubt. A. S. H. Hill, teacher at Oakwood Collegiate Institute, referred to this divide as the “struggle between two ways of life, ‘Hitlerism’ and ‘Democracy.’”\textsuperscript{124} As indicated earlier, the cultivation of critical thinking, democratic debate, intellectual curiosity, and equality of opportunity were aims in progressive democracies.

“Democratic education,” explained a 1941 editorial in *The School*, consisted of “challenging the rigid procedures of tradition, [and] showed disdain for any emphasis on efficiency—at least in theory.”\textsuperscript{125} Two months later, David H. Russell, Professor at the University of British Columbia, expanded on this definition by explaining that any citizen

\textsuperscript{121} “The Canadian Education Association,” *The School* (December, 1936): 283.


\textsuperscript{124} A. S. H. Hill, “Is Democracy Worth Fighting for?” *The School* (May 1940): 750. The theme of democratic education during the early 1940s will be discussed at greater length in Chapter VIII. Hill ran an article each month in *The School* that noted events happening during the war in Europe. He aimed to encourage teachers to engage their students with studies that reinforced the primacy of democracy.

actively participating in democratic life necessarily had a critical and inquiring view of the world. “Democracy,” he argued, “would wither if citizens’ critical faculties atrophied.”

It was in schools that this critical perspective should, primarily, be nurtured; this would require education itself to operate democratically. This entailed, explained Angela A. Hannan, citing James G. Gardiner, former Minister of National War Services: “Freedom to live, freedom to think, freedom to learn, freedom to agree or disagree, freedom to choose one’s calling, freedom to change one’s mind, leavened by a healthy community spirit, which permits us to bear one another’s burdens.”

No quotation in the sources encapsulates the meliorist progressive concern for the schools and society more comprehensively.

**Summary**

In this chapter, different progressivist depictions of the relations between schools and society were examined. From the child study orientation, proposals were made for the relating of schools to society via the promotion of health and the establishment of home and school associations. From the social efficiency orientation came visions of relating the course of study more intimately to the industrial progress of society and establishing vocational guidance programs in schools. From within the social meliorist orientation, progressive schools were seen as vital in the creation of a more socially just, cooperative, and democratic society. In the following chapter, journal articles critical of progressive education and school reforms will be considered. Humanistic studies are presented as foils to progressivist rhetoric.

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127 Angela A. Hannan, “Canadian Leaders Deserve Respect,” *The School* (September 1941): 11. Hannan was a teacher at Forest High School in Forest, Ontario, who the editors describe as having “taken an active part in discussion groups on social and economic problems.”
CHAPTER VII
HUMANISTS AS THE FOIL TO PROGRESSIVISTS: RESISTANCE TO PROGRESSIVIST REFORMS IN ONTARIO

I wonder how far we must go before we begin to realize that modern education is gradually turning its back on all that is cultural and thereby betraying its most fundamental purpose.¹

Introduction

Humanists, like their progressivist counterparts, were not contesting that the world around them, whether contemplated in industrial, economic, social, or intellectual terms, was changing.² It would have been impossible for any educationist in the context to be oblivious to the dramatic alterations in the landscape of Ontario’s culture and society.³ “It is generally accepted that society is going through a period of radical changes,” explained Reverend L. J. Bondy of St. Michael’s College in Toronto.⁴ “Some of these changes are inevitable, many are unquestionably good, a few are alarming.”⁵ The times were changing, admitted the humanists, but they always had been evolving, and they would never cease to do so.⁶

¹ L. J. Bondy, “The Present Situation in Modern Languages in Our Schools,” The School (October 1938): 121.
² Within the context of this thesis, I use the term “humanists” here as an alternative to “anti-progressivists” or “critics of progressive education.” I use this term as an alternative to “traditionalists,” “conservatives,” or “classicsists.” By humanists, I mean to consider the authors of those ideas that cannot be categorized as progressivist. Humanists defended the so-called traditional school models that progressive education sought to overthrow.
³ These were considered at length in Chapter II.
⁴ Bondy, “The Present Situation in Modern Languages in Our Schools,” 120. Reverend Bondy was the superior of the Basilian Fathers at St. Michael’s College.
⁵ Ibid., 120.
⁶ See, for example, C. C. Goldring, “Drifting towards Painless Education,” The Canadian School Journal (May 1936): 153–57. Goldring, Superintendent of Schools in Toronto, argues in this article that school reforms and criticisms of educational systems, are to be expected. Goldring, at
All aspects of life, explained Sir Arthur Currie, President of McGill University, “grow and change indeed. But the more they change, the more they remain, in essence, the same things.”7 Nothing, not even education, could keep up with the mutable nature of life. What was essential in the presence of turmoil and change was the steadying influence of tradition.8 Maurice Hutton, University of Toronto classicist, expressed this sentiment most clearly upon his retirement in 1928 following nearly half a century of leadership in the field:

We had learned from the Greek philosophers and from the New Testament, to find reason and purpose, and mind and God in the world and then Darwin interposed and brought back chance and luck and accident and the doctrine of casual survival of the lucky … the world has again become all chaos and confusion.9

As far as Hutton was concerned, the modern pursuit of science and progress had ushered in one world war as well as untold atrocities. In the words of W. H. Fyfe, Queen’s University’s Principal, the “‘grand, old fortifying’ classical curriculum … provided for the young mind problems that had permanent interest disentangled from contemporary passion.”10 Facing the onslaught of progressivist arguments, humanist articles in the periodicals fought for the survival of the classics, albeit from a position referred to by A.
B. McKillop as “dethroned and generally diminished.”

Until the curriculum reforms of the late 1930s, Latin had indeed remained a prerequisite for entry into the four-year Bachelor of Arts degree in university. The reforms would diminish Latin’s prestige as a qualification for university.

**Millipeducation, or, The Ascent of Fads and Frills**

Progressivist ideas were depicted by humanists such as Fyfe as entangled in a passionate but, ultimately, futile struggle to relate schools to contemporary life. If social conditions were, indeed, ever evolving, education could not keep up with these changes. Henry Bowers, a teacher from Fergus, Ontario, characterized progressive education as a “millipeducation.” The title of his article, “Guesswork,” highlighted what he called the fundamentally “contradictory tendencies” embedded in progressivist, modern thought. Progressive education was, for Bowers, “a great millipede, the legs of which reserve to themselves the right to independent action. Some move forward; others, with delightful contrariety, insist that backward is forward.”

In the same issue of The School, Evangeline Lewis from the Mount Allison School for Girls blamed progressivist ideas for the modern concern for specialization of study.

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11 A. B. McKillop, *Matters of Mind: The University in Ontario, 1791–1951* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 463. McKillop’s characterization of the diminished position of classics referred to the context of Ontario’s universities, yet it is also fitting with reference to the educational discourse in the province’s educational journals.

12 Ibid. McKillop summarizes the revised program of study’s impact on Latin as follows: “Students were allowed to choose between Latin and mathematics as the language of entry into university. Such reforms to the public school curriculum invariably undercut enrolment in classics programs throughout the province, even at the University of Toronto,” 463.


The traditional humanistic curriculum was, by contrast, broad and encyclopedic. It enabled exploration of the relationships among personal, contextual, and eternal phenomena. The classics remained classic because of their eternal value, whereas the future was contingent, mutable, and unpredictable. Predicated on that same argument, Bowers presented his most derisive characterization of progressivist millipeducation:

“Gressives” they are, no doubt; but which is “pro-“ and which “retro-“? Certain legs agree that lateral movement is desirable, but half of these maintain that the true path is on the right, while the others are equally positive that it lies to the left. Indeed, there are wistful legs that find on solid earth no rest for the soles of their feet and sigh for the wings of a dove.15

Bowers’ depiction of progressivist ideas stands out for its sarcasm and originality, but more commonly progressive education was slandered as being overly concerned with “fads and frills.”16

These humanist critics maintained that the concerns of progressivists would change and sway ephemerally and subjectively, whereas more academic subjects were lasting and substantial.17 Citing a forty-five-year-old article that had appeared in the New York Evening Post, a 1934 editorial in The School equated the progressivist concerns for school reform with the passing of crazes, one always supplanting some other:

The history of education in this country for the past fifty years has been a history of crazes—the method craze, the object-lesson craze, the illustration craze, the ‘memory-gem’ craze, the civics craze—calling upon children of eight to ten for information as to custom-houses, post-offices, city councils, governors, and legislators—the story-telling craze, the phonics craze, the word-method craze, the drawing and music craze, beside the craze for letters and business forms, picture study and physics. Now arrives manual training.18

16 See, for example, “Editorial: Fads and Frills in Education,” The Canadian School Journal (February 1934): 43.
17 Ibid.
The 1937 and 1938 revisions to Ontario’s *Programme of Studies* were seen by many humanists to be another example of what the above editorial called mere “fluctuations, shiftings, and tinkering.” Speaking two years after the first curriculum revisions were published, the Principal of the Normal School in London, C. E. Mark, felt he spoke for a great many educationists when he expressed doubt about the revisions’ value and substance. Critics of the progressivist craze for reform were fearful, he explained, of being labelled as ultra-conservatives; the swing toward progressive education in the province, however, was too extreme and dramatic to be sustainable:

Progress is best achieved, not by repudiation of the past, but by a reconstruction of the past. Some of the best thought of the ages has been built into our educational theory, and practices worthy of that theory have been based in the main on principles that are eternal. And so, young teacher, give ear to the first note of warning, to view that past with a full sense of indebtedness and gratitude, and to beware of turning too far to an extreme just because it is new and different.

Progressivists, for Mark, were akin to petulant and overly excitable youth.

Professor L. J. Bondy lamented that “one of the first results of the progress has been the passing of the classical languages; Greek already buried and Latin with one foot in the grave.” Bondy poked fun at the lofty claims of progressivists who believed the schools should address all of society’s ills and, noting different possible destinations for progress, challenged the advocates for progressive education to define its aims with greater accuracy. If the humanists’ voices in the educational literature were losing their

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19 Ibid., 370.
21 Ibid., 564.
22 Bondy, “The Present Situation in Modern Languages in Our Schools,” 120. Emphasis in original text.
23 Ibid. Bondy devotes a paragraph to this thought, beginning: “They call it progressive education and, since the term implies that we are going somewhere, an attempt is made to define more or less accurately the intended destination. In its most radical form, its avowed aim is to train citizens in accordance with the average requirements of the local community. A long article would be needed to do justice to the loftiness of noble ideal.”
prominence, they refused to go silently. Fyfe blamed certain progressivists for the Depression, and accused them of being inspired by the ignoble motive of producing fodder to work in factories. In his opinion, they cared not for “slow mental growth but training for trade or industry. It is a short-cut which has landed us in the Slough of Despond.”

R. B. Liddy, Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Ontario, made a similar argument to Fyfe’s, insisting that “the chief emphasis, although not the only emphasis, of the school should be upon intellectual development.” The so-called traditional schools criticized so heavily by progressivists, he acquiesced, might have “spent relatively too much time worshipping at the shrine of the purely intellectual” at the expense of the emotional and the practical. Liddy felt that the pendulum of progressivist reform in Ontario’s schools had swung too far and overly relegated academic content:

We must not lose perspective when we recognize the need for a richer curriculum; and we must continue to emphasize the fact that the primary scholastic function is intellectual education. The chief emphasis of the school must be upon what the title of this paper designates, rather loosely perhaps, the making of the mind.

Intellectual progress, he concluded, founded on knowledge of the heritage of past human achievements and developed by the language and number arts, was the most valuable basis for curriculum construction.

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26 Ibid., 233.
27 Ibid., 233.
28 Ibid., 234.
The Humanists’ Last Stands

The Unmaking of Faculty Psychology

Faculty psychology, the predominant way of describing intellectual development, was the first significant aspect of the humanists’ vision of schooling to be unmade by progressivists. Different mental abilities, or faculties, such as the faculty of reason or of memory, like muscles in the body, required conditioning, testing, and stretching to be developed. For each faculty, there was held to be a subject that could best facilitate that training. This view of mental development was predicated on the belief that learning in one context was generally transferable to another. In other words, if educators developed a child’s faculty of reason via the discipline of mathematics, the child would be more reasonable, generally.

Just as it is today, the idea that education was in some way related to the training of the mind was a potent one that educationists’ found difficult to relinquish. A. J.

29 See, for example, E. D. MacPhee, “The Value of the Classics,” The School (October 1927): 111–20. A number of references to faculty psychology are made in the source journals, but MacPhee’s article is by far the most comprehensive in the context. He, an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto, provides a thorough description of faculty psychology, explains why it proves inferior to experimental psychology, and includes a reference list for further reading.

30 See, for example, “Original Papers in Relation to a Course of Liberal Education,” American Journal of Science and Arts 15, no. 2 (1829): 301–02. This article explains how each subject in the traditional, humanistic curriculum conveniently matches up with one of the human faculties: “From the pure mathematics, he [sic] learns the art of demonstrable reasoning. In attending to the physical sciences, he becomes familiar with facts, with the process of induction, and the varieties of probable evidence. In ancient literature, he finds some of the most finished models of taste, by English reading he learns the powers of the language in which he is to speak and write. By logic and mental philosophy, he is taught the art of thinking; by rhetoric and oratory, the art of speaking. By frequent exercise on written composition, he acquires copiousness and accuracy of expression. By extemporaneous discussion, he becomes prompt, fluent, and animated.”


32 In 1930, W. H. Fyfe’s inauguration speech as Principal of Queen’s University reinforced the message that the aim of education, particularly at the university, was “to aid human beings in the growth of character, in the healthy development of all their faculties, physical, mental, moral,
Husband, Principal of Brockville Collegiate Institute, addressing the English and History Section of the O.E.A., argued that the value of history lay in the subject’s ability to cultivate the faculties of memory and imagination.\(^{33}\) A year later, J. H. Smith, Public School Inspector for South Perth, announced to Ontario’s educationists a very similar message. He began: “Most of us think, that we are going to school to prepare us for the earning of a living, but I would say we are sent to school to learn to live a life, there’s a big difference.”\(^ {34}\) This, Smith explained, could not happen if schools prepared students only for work in factories by teaching them a narrow range of skills. Education needed to be more holistically concerned with the cultivation of all the mental and emotional faculties.\(^ {35}\)

As late as 1935, Samuel Ramsey’s mental disciplinarian introduction to *The English Language and English Grammar* was being cited in *The School*:

> That great body of knowledge known as learning is valuable indirectly rather than directly. By it are formed habits of calm, thoughtful observation and discrimination that modify the whole character of men. If a savage could be induced to give his [sic] attention for half an hour to the drawing of a circle, to the equality of its radii, its relation to the hexagon—he would be a little less of a savage all his life after. All honest pursuit of knowledge has a humanizing effect.\(^ {36}\)

This citation expresses, on the one hand, the most endearing and hopeful aspects of the humanists’ educational vision, an undying faith in the transformatively able ability of education to touch all people, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. On the other hand, there

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33 A. J. Husband, “The Teaching of History in the Secondary School,” *The School* (December 1931): 308. Husband explained that “the training derived from study is one of the greatest importance. It helps to develop the logical faculties.”


35 Ibid.

is also within it an alienating elitism that represents the uneducated person as uncivilized.  

Experimental psychology would, ultimately, deal the most striking blows to the established faith in the potential for certain subjects to develop mental faculties. “With the dawn of experimental psychology,” explained E. D. MacPhee, “the concept of faculties was called into question, and with the development of that science, the theory disappeared.” Peter Sandiford, Professor and Psychologist at the Ontario College of Education, reported to Ontario’s educationists that the research of Edward Thorndike and William James in the United States had debunked any possible correlation between the training of faculties and general mental ability. James, Sandiford explained, in a modest experiment with his graduate students at Harvard University, had found that memorizing all of Paradise Lost had not helped any of them learn Victor Hugo’s Satyr any more quickly. Thorndike’s research at Columbia University allegedly confirmed James’s hypotheses that skills learned in one context could not be transferred to another:

When Thorndike and Woodworth planned more elaborate researches and used a number of subjects, the paucity of transfer effects began to be realized. Practice in estimating areas of one shape did not always improve the ability to estimate areas of other shapes. There could be negative and zero transfer as well as positive.

37 See also W. H. Fyfe, “The Objects of Education: Appreciation and Expression,” The Canadian School Journal (April 1932): 132. In this address to students at Victoria University in Toronto, Fyfe treats education as an entity that ennobles and civilizes the mind: “There are many criteria of a good education. One of the best, I think, is appreciation. The uneducated man is undeveloped, and, therefore, largely insensate. There are pleasures to which his sense is unawakened. He is blind to many forms of beauty; and deaf to many kinds of truth. He moves through life with muted senses, and at the same time pathetically exaggerates the few forms of pleasure which he can appreciate.”
38 MacPhee, “The Value of the Classics,” 112.
This study is also historically important in that it first suggested how transfer takes place.\footnote{Ibid., 94–95. See also Edward Lee Thorndike and R. S. Woodworth, “The Influence of Improvement in One Mental Function upon the Efficiency of Other Functions,” \textit{Psychological Review} 8 (May 1901): 247–61.}

The implications of this research for progressivists was evident: if learning was to be relevant and practical to life, it had to be specific and contextual. The reasoning underpinning the preservation of classical subjects, namely, that these disciplined faculties of the mind, was therefore faulty.\footnote{MacPhee, “The Value of the Classics,” 112–13.}

\section*{Demonstrations of Relevance and Utility}

With the demise of faculty psychology as a defensible justification for the inclusion of classics in a modern course of studies, humanists turned their arguments in the source journals to more utilitarian themes: preservation of the cultural heritage of Western civilization and its importance for understanding the present world.\footnote{This shift from a defence via mental discipline to one concerned with the usefulness of the past for contemporary life mirrors the situation in the United States. In that context, William Torrey Harris, Commissioner of Education, argued that the classical curriculum composed of mathematics, literature and art, grammar, history, and geography, “five windows of the soul,” best represented the culmination of human progress. Among Canadian humanists, years later, the scope of humanities’ subjects was outlined in similar terms, most notably by Watson Kirkconnell and A. S. P. Woodhouse, who included in their framework the study of language, literature, fine arts, history, religion, and philosophy, to the exclusion of social sciences and mathematics. For further reading, see William T. Harris, “What Shall the Public Schools Teach?” \textit{Forum} 4 (1888): 574; and Watson Kirkconnell and A. S. Woodhouse, eds., \textit{The Humanities in Canada} (Ottawa, ON: The Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1947): 203.}

Fyfe, lamenting the declining knowledge of Greek, was concerned that Ontario’s students were deprived of “the language which unlocks the only door that leads into their full intellectual inheritance.”\footnote{Fyfe, “Science in Secondary Education,” 656. See also Hilda Neatby, \textit{So Little for the Mind} (Toronto, ON: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1953).} Humanists, in similar terms, swung to the defence of classical subjects,
particularly Latin, explaining that these accompanied richer and deeper understanding of present life, language, and meanings. Oshawa Collegiate and Vocational Institute teacher Charles Ewing described Latin as a beacon that illuminated the derivations of terms in language, science, and mathematics. He argued: “Etymology is no highly specialized science to be pursued only by the erudite. It is actually the ‘Open Sesame’ to that mastery of words without which thought can never be fully and accurately conveyed from one mind to another.”

If classical studies seemed useless or merely abstract, this was due only to poor instruction that had not sufficiently emphasized the enormous debt modern languages and science owed to the past, some humanists argued. As J. M. Paton explained, the key to better English was increased study of Latin and Greek. Citing a 1936 editorial published in the magazine Saturday Night titled “An Illiterate Nation,” Paton associated the declining study of classical languages with “the prevalent inability of otherwise educated Canadians to use the English language with accuracy, to say nothing of literary effect.” The decreased skill in the use of modern languages was depicted as a consequence of the demise of ancient ones, confirming what E. D. MacPhee had termed the “direct utility values of classics.” MacPhee’s argument for the contemporary value of classics sought

46 Ibid., 101.
48 Ibid., 733. Supporting the editorial’s findings were scathing critiques of the standard of written and oral English usage among Canadians by E. H. A. Watson and Eric Duthie that had been published in The Queen’s Quarterly.
to establish a utilitarian argument for Latin while denying the plausibility of faculty psychology.\textsuperscript{50}

An editorial in \textit{The School} implored teachers of Latin to make more explicit the connections that the language had to modern life and contemporary subjects.\textsuperscript{51} Classicists could make their courses more appealing by using lively activities and celebrating student successes as opposed to stressing precision in grammar and penalizing errors.\textsuperscript{52} Latin clubs and Latin societies, for example, were envisaged as part of the solution to poor teaching and uninteresting subject matter.\textsuperscript{53} The introduction of such programs in schools, explained B. C. Taylor, a teacher at the University of Toronto Schools, required “skilful manipulation. A flat statement to the effect that a Latin Society is about to be founded may result in demonstrative nose holding in some quarters. A good teacher is three parts salesman, so that the idea must be sold as worthwhile.”\textsuperscript{54}

A brief introduction to the article by the editors of the journal makes very clear that, by the early 1940s, the focus of humanists had shifted from arguments for mental development to ones of direct utility.\textsuperscript{55} A decade earlier, R. H. King, the first principal of Scarborough High School, had argued that educators needed to reinforce the many relationships between classical languages and subjects and contemporary life in a modern

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. He cited, for example, the research of L. V. Walker, who showed that “the frequency of Latin words, phrases, and quotations in English shows merely that a Latin vocabulary may be of use in reading certain types of prose,” 113. He also cited V. A. C. Henmon’s demonstrations of the effects of high school Latin on ability to interpret phrases in modern languages.

\textsuperscript{51} “Here and There,” \textit{The School} (November 1934): 189–90.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. The article actually described the latter approach as “soul-destroying,” 189-190.

\textsuperscript{53} See, for example, B. C. Taylor, “The Latin Society—I,” \textit{The School} (September 1941): 41.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 41.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. The editorial note reads as follows: “Fifty years ago, nearly everyone said that Latin trained the mind for the business of living. Ten years ago, almost nobody believed it. Today, teachers like the author of this article are demonstrating that there can be a transfer of training when the teacher will make the transfer, instead of relying on a pious hope. The Latin club is one method of achieving this end. Mr. B. C. Taylor has had outstanding success in making Latin a rich and vital subject to high school pupils.”
democracy. Time and again, humanists claimed that classics could be saved if teachers could make evident their eminent practicality to life. What was at stake with regards to these progressivist reforms, argued an editorial piece published in 1941, was the destruction of all that was best in education, namely, “the foundations of that higher life which alone preserves the good and which is the only basis of true progress.”

**School Libraries, Last Bastion for the Humanists**

Even as the articles published in the source journals from Ontario sketch a picture of the humanists’ retreat in face of progressivist advances, they also portray an intriguing humanist concern and advocacy for school libraries. It appears that as proponents of liberal education and the study of classics were marginalized in discussions of curriculum reforms to Ontario’s schools, they increasingly threw their support behind public and school libraries, which would be storehouses of great literary works and historical texts.

These libraries were represented as capable of cultivating intelligence and appreciation of different aspects of the human spirit by enlarging the scope of education to include interaction with masterpieces of literature, art, and history. In the opinion of L. Irene Cole, who instructed at the Ontario College of Education’s Library School, libraries were not only supplements to school, but also essential institutions for

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broadening the entire population’s knowledge base. Cole explained: “It has been said the public library is the ‘university of the people,’ if this statement is true, then the elementary school library is the key that unlocks its door.”

Particularly during the Depression, when the burden on Ontario’s “communities to fill in the leisure time of the unemployed and preserve morale” was of grave concern to educationists, libraries were seen as spaces where adult education could flourish. Study groups were organized in various public libraries in the early 1930s, inviting Ontarians to enlighten their minds and contemplate great literary works and human accomplishments. In April 1934, J. D. Campbell, Assistant Chief Inspector of Public and Separate Schools, published a lengthy article in The Canadian School Journal outlining the history of the elementary school libraries in Ontario. “The library is an ancient and mediaeval institution as well as a modern one,” Campbell explained. His concern, in tones reminiscent of other humanist articles in the context, was that past human achievements be seen as relevant in a contemporary context.

The libraries were thus represented as safe, enlightening spaces where all Ontarians could develop intellects and pursue learning. Arthur Slyfield, a librarian at Oshawa Collegiate and Vocational Institute, explained to educationists that libraries were pleasant and instructive places, where the public and all students could pass their time amid “pictures, trophies, museum specimens, and growing plants, not to mention

61 Ibid., 726.
63 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 134. The reading opportunities provided by libraries, Campbell argued, were like “the open sesame to the best thoughts and sentiments of all ages.”
books.” The reading resources, unlike the increasingly utilitarian resources required for
subject study, were for both business and pleasure, as instructive as they were interesting. The best kind of education was guided by intelligent reading of great books, those capable of developing a vivid and robust intelligence. Lillian Morley, a librarian from Milverton, Ontario, expressed the belief, for example, that it was quite possible for quality reading alone to help a child become well educated; this faith, she explained, had been marginalized by the “comparatively recent swing towards the inclusion of manual arts in the school curriculum.”

Libraries, safeguards of academic knowledge, were also described in terms revealing a faith in mental discipline. Different books were able to develop different aspects of the mind and spirit. Such development, as a 1933 editorial in The Canadian School Journal explained, was “a necessary part of an intelligent man’s [sic] life. He reads as naturally as he eats. His mind is fed as regularly as his body. As with physical food, so with the mental—it has to have a balanced ration.” The classical curriculum might no longer have been available to Ontario’s students, but the essence of the humanists’ faith in a liberal curriculum could be retained within the province’s libraries. The institution seemed to respond to Harvard University President James B. Conant’s call for a “modern equivalent” to the classical curriculum. Conant’s plea, repeated by Chief Inspector for

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68 Ibid.
70 See, for example, J. E. Montague, “County Libraries,” The Canadian School Journal (July 1940): 270.
72 James B. Conant, quoted in George F. Rogers, “President’s Address: Canadian Education Association,” The School (January 1937): 384.
Public Schools in Ottawa, George Rogers, held that the study of classics provided a common framework to ground the thinking of an educated society.  

Ontario’s libraries, public and educational, seemed to fulfill this role according to articles in the source journals. As late as 1935, *The Canadian School Journal* published an opinion that libraries, like the academic curriculum, could help develop and discipline the mind: “A circulation of books through a community is of vital importance to the mental fitness of the people. Books are great levellers. They give to all who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence of the Greatest of our race.” If the progressivists were the prevailing influences in life at school and work, the humanists appear to have become more interested in life at times of leisure. The possibility of developing a fuller and richer life of liberal study in times of leisure, even if school led directly into industry, remained an admirable and achievable aim. “Learning for learning’s sake was no longer the slogan of schools,” lamented George Rogers, for the modern age in education, he felt, had become a strictly utilitarian one.
The educational aim of cultivating a love for and an interest in great books and classical themes, however, was an important one for humanists. Refining the literary tastes of children and developing their minds were equally important concerns. Mae Locklin, a school librarian, stressed that the librarian’s task was ultimately to help children “cultivate a taste for good fiction, for poetry and biography, and to discourage the reading of cheap and useless stories.” If libraries could develop in children the habit of selecting and reading books that developed their faculties broadly, these would be taken home, shared with the family, and spread to the community. Ideally, each home could establish its own library with its own classic texts. In the words of Isabel Wilson of Ryerson Public School in Toronto, reading and education were largely about appreciating “beauty of expression” and cultivating “harmony of thought.”

The humanists also argued that literature, history, and the classics had the power to inspire students to achieve great acts and to achieve their potentials. History teaching through stories of great lives, which involved the presentation of heroic figures

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78 See, for example, Arthur A. Lowther, “A Vocational School Literature Course,” The School (September 1926): 53. Lowther was concerned with how to develop a love of literature and classics in the context of a vocational school.

79 See, for example, J. W. Brown, “The School Library,” The Canadian School Journal (January 1934): 8. Brown, a librarian, treated the theme of book selection. For him, the choice of text was as important as the ability to read was.


81 See, for example, Isabel M. Thomas, “Getting Students to Do Home Reading,” The School (September 1933): 58–59; and “The Editor’s Page,” The Canadian School Journal (July 1938): 241.

82 “Educational News,” The Canadian School Journal (January 1935): 23. This thought is attributed to Lyman Abbott, who said “the home ought to be no more without a library than without a dining-room and kitchen. If you have but one room, and it is lighted by the wood fire in the flaming fireplace as Abraham Lincoln’s was, do as Abraham Lincoln did, pick out one corner for a library and use it. Every man ought to provide for the brain as well as the stomach.”

83 M. Isabel Wilson, “Silent Reading,” The School (May 1931): 852. Wilson also said that “Happy is the child whose young mind is stored with beautiful thoughts and beautiful expressions.”
accomplishing noble feats, was related to the study of Western society’s classic texts.\textsuperscript{84} The annual list of “essential books” identified in \textit{The Canadian School Journal} was largely about establishing a canon.\textsuperscript{85} “Children are great hero worshippers,” noted a testimonial from one teacher in 1932, “and will find many ideal characters in books by which to pattern their own lives.”\textsuperscript{86} Classical history and languages might not appear immediately and directly useful, but the inspirational and motivational aspects of such studies were beyond measure.\textsuperscript{87} The libraries’ potential role for disseminating and housing the knowledge to support broad and liberal learning was, consequently, invaluable.\textsuperscript{88} Even if the public schools existed for the purpose of starting education, posited a 1939 editorial in \textit{The Canadian School Journal}, libraries were able to continue and broaden the public’s studies.\textsuperscript{89} School libraries, however, despite the general recession of humanist influence in the school program, were increasingly depicted as a bastion of classical, academic knowledge that could develop children’s minds and spirits.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{84} See, for example, Doris M. Gill, “History Teaching through Great Lives: Alexander the Great,” \textit{The School} (October 1929): 231; and Archer Wallace, “A Boy and His Reading,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (February 1932): 56.

\textsuperscript{85} See, for example, Lillian H. Smith, “Fifty Essential Books for Boys and Girls,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (March 1934): 91.


\textsuperscript{87} See, for example, S. Silcox, “The Teacher’s Book Shelf,” \textit{The School} (March 1930): 470.

\textsuperscript{88} See, for example, Kathleen M. Crosby, “The School and Library Boards Co-operate,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (July 1938): 244–45. Crosby, a school librarian in the Orillia Public Library, provides a testimonial for how public librarians, working closely with schoolteachers, can promote the development of children’s reading tastes, introduce students to the classics of literature, and bring history alive.

\textsuperscript{89} “Co-operating for Good Reading,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (July 1939): 253.

\textsuperscript{90} See, for example, “More Books for More Children,” \textit{The Canadian School Journal} (July 1941): 221.
Losing Ground and Grasping at Utilitarian Straws

Reading through articles in the source journals, it is impossible not to note how an increase in progressivist rhetoric and reform language was intertwined with the decline of the classical, academic model of schooling. The study of Latin, in particular, suffered a severe decline. By 1934, it was clear to teachers of the subject that they could make no “claim that Latin be made compulsory for all students in the academic department of our secondary schools.”91 A progressivist curriculum, concerned more with the specialized study of contemporary life than past achievements and general training of the mind, was in its ascendency; the measure of a subject’s utility in the modern world was what mattered most to progressive educators.92

By 1935, a year after the election of a Liberal government in Ontario and following years of brutal economic depression, progressivists’ calls to seriously interrogate the aims and organization of schools were heeded. As an editorial in The School made evident that year, schools were thrust to the forefront of the public’s mind and depicted as a powerful way of reforming all of society: “In its search for the causes of our present social and industrial muddle, the public has not been slow to question whether faults in our educational system may account, in part at least, for our present troubles.”93 If the schools were to relate better to a modern world, the utility of subjects was of prime concern. The 1935 editorial noted that across the province “teachers and administrators alike feel that the curriculum must be examined critically in order to ensure that the

91 Ewing, “The Case for Latin in the High Schools,” 100.
92 Ibid.
The courses offered are really useful for the youth of the present day.”94 No subject or discipline could be retained if it did not fit perceived wants or needs:

For instance, the teachers of Classics in Ontario felt that they must justify afresh the place given to Latin in the provincial schools. The result has been the presentation to the Classical Section of the Ontario Educational Association of a formal report, not only on the value of the study of Latin, but on the best way of teaching the subject. Latin must justify itself or go, and so must the other subjects.95

In the latter years of the interwar period, humanists were indeed, as we have seen, wrestling with ways of demonstrating the utility of the classics to Ontario’s educationists.

By the end of the school year in 1935, the frontal attack on the humanities and the classics seemed hardly justified considering the already marginalized position of the fields of studies in Ontario’s educational framework. In 1936, it was reported in The School that many humanists had resolved to cut their losses; “the so-called Latin question” could be resolved if the subject was retained in the curriculum as a matriculation subject only for those students for whom it was necessary.96 Other humanists, such as the Classical Section of the O.E.A., were more hopeful that Latin could stand firmly in spite of oncoming tides of reform. At their annual convention in 1935, they reported the findings of an investigative committee’s query into the state of Latin in Ontario’s schools.97 The report argued that classical subjects had been too marginalized in the province, and recommended that the situation be ameliorated via the promotion of Greek and Latin, improved teacher preparation, and revisions to examinations and the curriculum.98

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94 Ibid., 741–42.
95 Ibid., 742.
96 “Editorial Notes: The Place of Latin in the Schools,” The School (December 1936): 274.
98 Ibid.
Latin, the report outlined, was not a compulsory study either in the secondary schools or in any one of the five universities in the province, nor was it even offered as a subject of study in the technical and commercial schools. It was not required by the Department of Education for high school graduate diplomas or admission to the normal schools. Also, students could enter any of Ontario’s universities without Latin and enrol in the Faculties of Applied Science, Household Science, and Forestry. Within the Faculty of Arts, the Commerce programme did not have Latin as a prerequisite. Middle school Latin was required in all other areas of the Faculty of Arts, as well as within the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry. Upper school Latin remained a requirement for Honours programs.

Following the report, the Council of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Toronto, including professors from various domains within the sciences, of mathematics, of history, of economics, and of ancient and modern languages tried to unite behind the Committee’s recommendations. By a vote of sixty to eleven, the Council “decided that at least Middle School Latin should continue to be a prerequisite for those who wished to proceed to the degree of Bachelor of Arts.” These efforts aside, the pendulum had swung, and progressivist reform visions had all the momentum. By 1938, Greek and Latin were denied to first-year high school students in lieu of a common, general program of courses. Further, language requirements for university study were loosened

100 Ibid., 897.
101 The 1937 and 1938 curriculum revisions are considered in greater length in the following chapter. For further reading on the decline of classics, see McKillop, Matters of Mind. For a debate between Duncan McArthur, Minister of Education, and J. F. Macdonald, Classics Professor at the University of Toronto, at the O.E.A. conference, see “McArthur Would Cut Language Requirement,” Globe and Mail, March 30, 1940: 5. Among the reasons that McArthur gave to Macdonald for removing Latin as a mandatory subject were the antiquated thinking
permitting students to elect French or mathematics in lieu of Latin. In fact, Minister of Education Duncan McArthur believed that the “greatest service the teaching profession could render to humanity would be to make French and Latin optional instead of compulsory subjects.” McArthur saw no value in students memorizing passages of Latin text. Such practices—elevating content over individual interest, promoting rote memorization and recall, and bearing no relation to contemporary life—were at odds with the core sensibilities of Ontario’s progressivists.

related to mental discipline and the unpleasant teaching methods associated with the classical language.

102 See, for example, McKillop, Matters of Mind, 463. McKillop notes, with a hint of irony, that a former student in classics played a pivotal role in the subject’s diminished status: “In 1934, with the election of the Liberal government of Mitchell Hepburn in Ontario, Duncan McArthur became deputy minister (and later minister) of education. McArthur, a 1912 graduate in ‘honour classics’ from the University of Toronto, championed French as opposed to Latin in the province’s high schools, possibly for political reasons.”


104 Ibid.
CHAPTER VIII

CONTINUITIES AND CHANGE: REFORMING THE CURRICULUM AND THE WAR’S IMPACT ON PROGRESSIVIST RHETORIC, 1937–1942

Social virtues are not things merely to learn about. They are to be achieved only by practising them. They are to be accepted willingly as desirable forms of conduct; they cannot be developed by coercion. The school, therefore, must be organized to permit their exercise and growth in situations that require their practice. Hence, opportunities should be provided for children to work together in groups, each child sharing in the planning, execution, and completion of worth-while tasks.¹

Introduction

This final chapter considers the period between 1937 and 1942, which entailed broad and thorough revisions to Ontario’s curriculum. Also, Canada’s participation in World War II and the very significant threat that global conflict posed for the maintenance and preservation of democracy brought about some shifts in progressivist rhetoric. The source journals, which had been heretofore consistently and almost stubbornly adverse to discussing or debating political matters, rallied behind the cause of a democratic education for a progressive world. Still, the progressivist articles did not engage in any rhetorical disputes regarding different visions for school reform.

Despite their willingness to engage with democratic pedagogical themes on a large and international scale, the journals remain diffident with regards to oppositional progressivist discourses within Ontario. As such, there is a stark absence of editorial critiques about the curriculum reforms or of commentary on the government’s stance on matters such as labour disputes. The journals were, in general, supportive of the Ontario

¹ Programme of Studies for Grades VII and VIII of the Public and Separate Schools, 1942 (Toronto, ON: Department of Education, 1942), 6.
government. Many voices were absent in these sources. Those that were included weighed in on pedagogical matters with cautious optimism, leaning toward a consensus view that democracy was a beacon of hope in times of darkness. In this context, Duncan McArthur, as a major figure in the curriculum revisions and a voice in the periodicals, was aiming to weave together progressivist currents of opinion into a broad and cohesive vision to guide Ontario’s school reforms.

Reforming the Provincial Curriculum

In 1934, as the worst of the Depression began to ease, a new government led by Mitchell Hepburn was elected to lead Ontario to better days. Among his many campaign promises, Hepburn’s vow to overhaul the education system was particularly appealing to Ontario’s educationists, who for fifteen years following the end of World War I had presented progressivist visions in the periodicals. Since 1923, Ontario’s Premiers had retained the education portfolio for themselves; consequently, Hepburn argued that the Department of Education had been led by men lacking “particular training” in educational matters. Dr. Leo J. Simpson, the new Minister of Education, had been a

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2 In fact, the source journals generally heaped praise on McArthur. Particularly following his appointment as Minister following the death of Leo Simpson, the journals reiterated McArthur’s credentials, experience, and commitment to Ontario’s schools. See, for example, “The New Minister of Education,” *The Canadian School Journal* (September 1940): 319; “The New Education,” *The School* (October 1940): 172; and “Personal,” *The School* (October 1940): 174. Having reported, in “The New Education” that “a revision of the Programme of Studies has just been published,” the following commentary in “Personal” extols the virtues of the Minister, arguing “the province is fortunate in having a distinguished educationist in the cabinet post charged with the administration of the schools.” *The Canadian School Journal*, likewise, praised McArthur and expressed confidence that he would “vitaly affect the youth of Ontario and influence the critical period which will follow the war. Ontario looks forward to still greater progress in the field of education and recognizes the valuable service which Dr. McArthur will contribute as a member of the Cabinet in all matters affecting public interest.”

3 See, for example, “Education Criticism,” *The Globe*, June 5, 1934: 5.
school board trustee in Barrie and was considered a good party organizer with grassroots support among trustees and educators. The new Deputy Minister of Education and Chief Director of Education, Duncan McArthur, would become the driving force behind the Department’s push to reform Ontario’s schools. In Robert Stamp’s view:

Actual leadership was assumed by the new deputy minister, Duncan McArthur. This was the outstanding educator Hepburn had been seeking for over a year—a Queen’s University history professor, member of the Kingston Board of Education, and a man who had the respect of the province’s teachers. Hepburn had failed to lure McArthur into the political arena as a Liberal candidate in the 1934 election, but the subsequent offer of the senior civil service position in the department had its appeal. Eventually, McArthur would have a taste of both worlds, for he moved from deputy minister to minister following Simpson’s death six years later.

Among the first announcements by the newly formed Department of Education was a promise to review and revise Ontario’s course of study.

The curriculum of Ontario’s schools did undergo considerable change, most notably in 1937 and 1938. The reforms to the program of study in those years represent a culmination of the progressivist reform energies and an attempt to institutionalize progressivist practice in schools. The revised curriculum embodied the core progressivist principles as defined in this thesis, making provisions for individual learners, active learning, and studies of relevance to contemporary society. E. J. Transom from the Central Public School in Timmins, trying to be objective in his assessment of Ontario’s curriculum revisions, explained the primary difference between the “old” and “new” courses of study as follows: “The old course stressed, almost exclusively, subject matter to be learned. The new course introduces other factors, like personality development, and

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4 See, for example, “Notes and News: Ontario,” The School (September 1934): 65–68. Simpson was a medical doctor as opposed to an academic, like McArthur.
6 “Notes and News: Ontario,” 66–68. The committee struck by McArthur to review the curriculum as well as the work of Thornton Mustard and Stanley Watson in the composition of a revised program of study were discussed briefly in Chapter IV.
socialization or citizenship.” It also brought together many of the concerns raised in progressivist journal articles since 1919, including the study of extant social problems, the fostering of community, enterprise learning, health studies, and opportunities for students to have options regarding their courses of study.

As far back as 1911, reference had been made to the need for Ontario’s educational system to broaden the course of study so that it could better relate to a modern world and its various needs. One prime focus was the need to differentiate between a program that would provide general learning leading to university matriculation and a program that would prepare students more narrowly for particular domains in society. It was not until 1937 that the shift toward a progressivist paradigm would fully transform Ontario’s program of study.

One of the most significant themes in the revised program was the attempt to balance a concern for developing a common curriculum and an interest in enabling individual choice. Consequently, upon entering high school, all of Ontario’s students were introduced to a common Grade 9 program that featured certain compulsory subjects: “English, social studies, health and physical education, business practice and writing, mathematics, general or agricultural science, French, general shop for boys and

7 E. J. Transom, “Time Off for Thinking,” The School (February 1941): 507. Transom believed the new, progressive schools drew their principles from the study of contemporary society: “The work of the teacher, principal, or supervisor now is to study society, ascertain modern trends and movements, learn the fundamentals of personality, child development, and child psychology.”

8 These concerns, on the whole, are dominated by those espoused by meliorist and developmentalist journal articles. The Department of Education’s concern for efficiency were predominately directed at reforming the system of taxation and consolidating school boards. See, for example, “Summary of Dr. McArthur’s Address,” The Canadian School Journal (May 1940): 192–93.

9 John Seath, Education for Industrial Purposes (Toronto, ON: King’s Printer, 1911).

10 Ibid., 263. Seath actually noted seven domains for study in Ontario’s schools: courses leading to university matriculation, courses leading to normal schools or Faculties of Education, household science courses, commercial courses, agricultural courses, manual training courses, and middle school art courses.
home economics for girls, and music and art.”11 English, social studies, and health remained compulsory subjects in Grade 10, whereas in Grades 11 and 12 history replaced social studies as the third compulsory subject. Further, students had to select four of the following optional subjects to supplement their core curriculum: “mathematics, science or agriculture, shop or home economics, and music and art or music or art.”12 There were slight variations in the optional courses available to students in the industrial, home economics, commercial, and art courses.

As W. G. Fleming argues, with respect to program revisions for the elementary schools, the Programme of Studies for Grades I to VI of the Public and Separate Schools, 1937 “was an event of considerable importance of the evolution of curriculum in elementary schools in Ontario because of the progressive outlook defined in the introduction and embodied in the recommendations.”13 The Ontario program had been developed by a committee of educators led by Thornton Mustard and S. A. Watson and was heavily influenced by the Deputy Minister of Education, Duncan McArthur.

In 1936, McArthur had selected Mustard, of Toronto Normal School, and Watson, from Keele Street Public School, and instructed them to lead the committee. These two educationists “were pragmatists, convinced by the realities of the depression that a different approach to class-room learning was necessary to prepare students for an uncertain future.”14 In light of the dramatic effects wrought by modernity, faith in a stable, predictable future had been shaken.15 Their report and the ensuing revised

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11 Fleming, Schools, Pupils, and Teachers, 129.
12 Ibid., 130.
13 Ibid., 123.
15 The preparation of students for an uncertain future, as well as the overall concern for trying to manage or control education in a mutable, unpredictable world was a common theme in
Programme drew many of their ideas and phrasing from reports of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education in Great Britain, which dealt with the topics of adolescence, primary schooling, and nursery schools.\textsuperscript{16}

The Ontario Programme dealt with many similar interests, but not exclusively so. A concentration on health was one relatively new domain for education stressed in the revised curriculum, involving the maintenance of healthy environments in schools and the provision of experiences that could produce lifelong healthy habits. The instructional aspects of health education were framed in terms consistent with my definition of progressive rhetoric, as described most consistently by child study progressivist articles. In other words, the instructional aspects should relate to social life and activity as experienced outside of the school.

So important was this aim of health promotion that the Department of Education issued a handbook for teachers in 1938 to facilitate its implementation in the schools.\textsuperscript{17} The teaching aid, titled Health: A Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers in Public and Separate Schools was prepared by members of a Joint Committee on the Teaching of Health, appointed from the Department of Education and the Department of Health of the Province of Ontario.\textsuperscript{18} Its chapters addressed a variety of topics, including the “Need and

\textsuperscript{16} Programme of Studies for Grades I to VI of the Public and Separate Schools, 1937 (Toronto, ON: Department of Education, 1937). The British publications are most commonly referred to as the Hadow Reports.

\textsuperscript{17} Health: A Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers in Public and Separate Schools (Toronto, ON: The Ryerson Press, 1938).

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., v. In the foreword, the handbook is described as having taken shape following experiments on the teaching of health in elementary schools in Ontario. The experiments were initiated by the Department of Health, supervised by the Department of Education, and implemented by progressivist educators: “This experiment was initiated by Dr. J. T. Phair, Chief Medical Officer of Health for the Province. Through the offices of Mr. V. K. Greer, Chief Inspector of Public and Separate Schools, the co-operation of six inspectors was obtained. These
Meaning of Health Education,” “Health Instruction in the Grades,” “The Human Body: Scientific and Technical Information for the Teacher,” and “Communicable Diseases.”\textsuperscript{19} Further, the handbook included a glossary of terms, which related the daily school program to health instruction.\textsuperscript{20} The definition of homework offered in the resource is notable, as it most succinctly strikes all the chords of progressivist rhetoric:

The child needs to play out-of-doors. For his [sic] growth he requires an adequate amount of sleep. Homework which curtails the child’s time for recreation and sleep is open to serious question. There are types of homework which have important values in linking up the activities of the school with the child’s home and community life. These types give the child an opportunity for outdoor and creative activities and may lead him to explore his own latent abilities. Such homework becomes a contribution to his physical mental, and social health.\textsuperscript{21}

Here, the three domains of progressivist thinking that were discussed in Chapters III through V were clearly interrelated and demonstrated as applicable to educational studies. The individual child’s interests and development, his or her active participation in learning tasks, and the linking of school to society are brought together under the canopy of health.

The \textit{Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers} did not veil its progressivist rhetoric: “More and more does the progressive teacher appreciate the importance of the physical, mental, emotional, and social capabilities and limitations of the individual pupils under his [sic] care.”\textsuperscript{22} The progressivist themes were projected to offer a viable pedagogical alternative to the traditional curriculum, which was depicted as inflexible, narrow, and overly

\footnotesize{Inspectors, in turn, enlisted the services of a number of progressive and interested teachers who were prepared to undertake the work.”
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., vii–viii.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 6–16.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 28.}
academic. This alternative sought to actively engage Ontario’s teachers in the ongoing experimentation with and definition of progressivist schooling, while building a community of educators who would be stakeholders in the province’s educational future.

Duncan McArthur explicitly described health education as a powerful way of approaching education holistically, taking into account various aspects of students’ development and linking children’s school lives to their home lives. He described the revised curriculum initiated during his tenure at the Department of Education as:

Essentially an educational program involving the training of both body and mind. It will endeavour to improve the health of our youth by providing greater facilities for games and out-of-doors recreation. We will endeavour to bridge the gap between school and home even should that involve a drastic revision of our traditional views regarding the function of the school. Whatever affects the physical and mental well-being of the children is properly the concern of the educator. The interest of the school in the boy [sic] must not be confined to what happens in the classroom between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

With the introduction of health study into the Programme of Studies, McArthur found a means of knitting together all three domains of progressivist concern. Health was one theme that involved activity and active learning, concerned the individual development of

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23 Ibid. In the handbook’s discussion on “The Individual Child,” the concentration on health is depicted as a means of enabling a flexible curriculum. The traditional program was described as setting up arbitrary academic levels of achievement and insisting that they be met by every child: “The inevitable result has been rigidity and inflexibility of the school programme. There has been over-emphasis on arbitrary academic standards. The neglect or inadequate consideration given to the physical, emotional, and social development of the individual child has resulted in the adoption of class-room procedures which too frequently are inelastic and ineffective in developing a well-balanced personality,” 28.

24 Ibid. The text’s foreword states the following: “The Handbook is submitted for use in schools, not as a final guide, but as an experimental and tentative outline of procedure. It is hoped that the teachers will accept it as such, record their observations and suggestions, and forward them to the Department of Education. Such observations and suggestions should prove of great value in future revisions,” vi.

25 See, for example, “Dr. McArthur’s Views on Youth,” Toronto Daily Star, July 30, 1943: 6. The article, incidentally, praises McArthur’s “progressive views on education.”

26 Ibid., 6.
students, and related studies to life outside school. Healthy habits, for instance, were described as the results of doing, not “reading and talking. Instruction in Health, therefore, should be active rather than formal in its nature, and should be linked as closely as possible to the child’s daily experience.”

Health, the document argued, “should not be regarded simply as a ‘subject’ of the curriculum but as a programme pervading the whole life of the school and the whole life of each pupil.”

With respect to individual subjects, English represented the core of the curriculum. It was seen as occupying “first place among the intellectual exercises of the elementary school. It is of prime importance that children learn to speak and write their mother tongue clearly, accurately, and gracefully.” Emphasis was placed on clarity of expression and mastery of reading and writing, both oral and written. Supplemental reading was described as “the most important phase of the English course … [because] the child who has learned to love reading is not only likely to continue his [sic] education all through life, but is prepared profitably to enjoy his leisure.” A child who developed a love for reading and mastered the required skill set was capable of self-directed, lifelong learning. Libraries were positioned as important sources of this supplementary reading. A list of suggested topics and resources for each grade was provided in the Programme, including domains of English instruction such as conversation, reading, verse speaking, verse making, storytelling, dramatization, letter writing, word study, sentence study, and writing.

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27 Programme of Studies for Grades I to VI of the Public and Separate Schools, 1937, 25.
28 Ibid., 25.
29 Ibid., 35.
30 Ibid., 35.
The introduction of social studies was the most meliorist progressivist element of the 1937 curriculum revisions in Ontario. This new subject was explicitly designed to relate school learning in more intimate ways to the broader social context of the province. It strove to engage students in active examinations of the world as it presently was and could be, not with its past or its heritage. As McArthur himself noted, upon entering the Department of Education, it was apparent to him that “both elementary and secondary school courses were out of harmony with the times, and accordingly sought a remedy.” The expressed aim of the course for social studies was “to help the child to understand the nature and workings of the social world in which he [sic] lives …. The course aims, also, to develop in the pupils desirable social attitudes.” The subject matter would be drawn from contemporary problems and issues in the world, which would then be contextualized in light of geographical and historical study. The progressive concern for active learning was not neglected; it was “expected that much of the course will be carried out through co-operative activities of various kinds.” Active learning—a means of developing the right attitudes of mind—should be encouraged. Teachers should “guard against merely talking about the duties of boys and girls, but must provide, instead, daily co-operative activities through which the practice of mutual helpfulness will grow.”

The revised description for the course in natural science reinforces this theme that the new style of education should emphasize the cultivation of habits of mind more than the absorption of facts or figures. The sciences were important because they could foster in students “a genuinely scientific spirit,” wherein a community of scholarship would

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33 Programme of Studies for Grades I to VI of the Public and Separate Schools, 1937, 71.
34 Ibid., 71.
35 Ibid. 73.
Engaging students, as a community of learners, in active scientific inquiry would mean the cultivation of an orientation to learning required of future citizens in a progressive, evolving world. The purpose of the course was to provide experiences for children so that they might learn “to observe carefully and dispassionately, to formulate one’s observations in words or in other ways, and to make proper inferences from what has been observed.” Experiential interactions “with real things” in the scientific realm, such as field excursions and experiments, were preferable means of achieving these aims than set “lessons at set periods” in a day.

Emphatic concern for relating school studies with actual life beyond the confines of classrooms permeates the Programme. The stress on active learning that is somehow self-directed or takes into consideration the individual child’s interests is a persistent one. Mathematics education, for example, involved helping the child to see the “value of numbers in the ordinary affairs of life, to provide him [sic] with training in the use of numbers for his own practical purposes, and to form the foundation upon which his subsequent mathematical knowledge will be built.” Art and music, while portrayed as useful media for active and creative expression of instinctive urges in children, were also means of correlating all the subjects and permitting individuals to construct and “express more and more successfully their own ideas.”

What united both the revised curriculum document and McArthur’s broad vision for progressivist reform of schools was a desire to transform a course of studies seen as overly concerned with the inculcation of academic knowledge. Such knowledge was seen

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36 Ibid., 87.
37 Ibid., 87.
38 Ibid., 87.
39 Ibid., 101.
40 Ibid., 127. Emphasis in original text.
as bearing little or no relevance to contemporary life, social activity, or democratic citizenship. It is for this reason that the revised course of study refused to authorize a standardized textbook or reader for each subject and discouraged the use of examinations as the sole measures of progress.\footnote{See, for example, “New School Course to Discourage Exams, Abolish Homework,” \textit{Toronto Daily Star}, September 14, 1937: 1. This front-page article in the newspaper summarized the spirit of the 164-page curriculum document as leading to “less stress on factual type of teaching.”} McArthur, shortly after his appointment within the Department, had advised Ontario’s educationists in 1934 that “the relaxation of the examination system may prove to be of definite encouragement to teachers to promote reading beyond the limits of prescribed texts.”\footnote{McArthur, “Education for Citizenship,” 286.} Indeed, by 1940, only the Departmental examinations for high school entrance remained.\footnote{Harris, \textit{Quiet Evolution}. The high school entrance examinations were not withdrawn until 1949.} Textbook learning, he continued, was not only narrow, but also its mandate compelled teachers to push through textbooks at the peril of ignoring broad student interest, activity, and exploration:

The system of authorizing special text-books for courses of study has likewise led to the encouragement of the formation of habits of mind which cannot be regarded as otherwise than undesirable. The authorizing of a particular book as a text gives to the printed word within the book a literal inspiration. It becomes easy for the student to assume that all of the truth relating to a subject is contained within the covers of the book.\footnote{McArthur, “Education for Citizenship,” 288.}

Further, the facts and figures contained within textbooks, once “committed to memory are soon forgotten. The information temporarily acquired is seldom related to the structure of knowledge or experience possessed by the pupil.”\footnote{Ibid., 288.} Standardized departmental examinations were as ill-suited to progressivist thinking as was the authorization of any single textbook for a subject because both reinforced a passive,
acquisitive model of learning. Consequently, McArthur explained, “the relaxation of the examination system may prove to be of definite encouragement to teachers to promote reading beyond the limits of prescribed texts.”

In addition to liberating students from prescribed texts and rote learning, the new model aimed at liberating the teacher. By seeking to dethrone an academic curriculum taught through authorized textbooks and tested via provincial examinations, McArthur staked his progressivist visions on the teachers of Ontario who would necessarily enact such principles. As reported in a 1941 supplement in The School, reporting on the new curriculum in Ontario, “the successful operation of any plan of education depends upon the teacher. The full benefits of the new curriculum can be realized only if the teacher understands the objectives and is able to secure results.” If the traditional, academic curriculum depended on standardized texts and assessments, the progressivist program of study would succeed only if teachers and principals were permitted freedom to make activities relevant, interesting, and interactive in different contexts. There is a cliché regarding a French inspector of schools who boasted that on any given day he could know what page of the textbook every child in the country was reading. It was against

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46 Ibid. McArthur explained the relationship between examinations and textbooks as follows: “The presumed necessities of examinations, again, encourage the teacher to attempt to satisfy the requirements of education by demanding that the pupil make himself [sic] familiar with the information contained within the authorized text. Instruction in such cases is degraded to the mere reciting of facts set forth on the pages of the text. Such a process, by no stretch of the imagination, can be found to have any relation to education,” 288.  
47 Ibid., 288.  
49 See, for example, “New School Course to Discourage Exams, Abolish Homework.” Recall, also, the cliché regarding French education, which postulated that at any given moment of the school day all children of the same age will be having exactly the same lesson. This vision of a standardized and centralized educational system reflects how entrenched le programme—the national curriculum, dating from Napoleonic times—had become in the country’s educational system.
such very standardized visions of schooling that the 1937 and 1938 programs were positioned.\textsuperscript{50}

It is because the notion of standardization, at its very core, conflicted with the progressivist stress on individualized instruction and the freedom to choose a personally meaningful course of study that the curriculum revisions provided ample opportunity for electives. Beyond the common Grade 9 program, McArthur contended there should be “a wide range of studies available for the various qualities of minds in the boys and girls.”\textsuperscript{51} It is in this context that the Department of Education’s loosening of language requirements and the demise of Latin and Greek as compulsory subjects can best be understood.\textsuperscript{52} As McArthur told J. F. McDonald in response to the University College Professor’s argument that the loss of Latin would make Ontario a weak and effeminate culture, “the psychology that it doesn’t matter what you teach a boy [sic] so long as it’s unpleasant is antiquated.”\textsuperscript{53} McArthur’s progressivist sensibilities found that compulsion in learning was neither useful nor desirable.\textsuperscript{54}

Aside from its implications for Ontario’s curriculum reforms, this exchange between Professor McDonald and Minister McArthur most clearly indicates the extent to which the periodicals would go to isolate pedagogical statements from any political controversy and rhetorical debates. Firstly, neither The School nor The Canadian School Journal published articles directly critical of McArthur’s progressivist reforms. Secondly,

\textsuperscript{50} See, for example, Julian Nundy, “Education: Teachers as Lone Wolves: France, 750,000 Children Sit Down to Be Tested on the Same Day,” Independent, June 10, 1993.

\textsuperscript{51} “Optional French and Latin Urged by Deputy Minister,” Toronto Daily Star, March 30, 1940: 27.

\textsuperscript{52} These were discussed at length in Chapter VII.


\textsuperscript{54} “Optional French and Latin Urged by Deputy Minister,” 27.
McArthur’s debate with McDonald was not reported at all in the journals, only in newspapers that covered the O.E.A. conference that year, *The Globe* and the *Toronto Daily Star*. *The School* provided no account of the conference. *The Canadian School Journal*, the official organ of the Association, offered a terse but positive summary of McArthur’s thesis that “the greatest service the teaching profession could render to humanity would be to make French and Latin optional instead of compulsory subjects.”55 There is no mention of McDonald or of any critical response to McArthur’s address. The summary does remind the reader that “Dr. McArthur said that the universities in this province are more rigid in their requirements than Oxford, Cambridge or Aberdeen.”56

In general, Patrice Milewski’s assessment that “the Programme can be understood as signifying a fundamental transformation that broke with previously existing pedagogies” is generally correct.57 Milewski identifies the 1937 curriculum as “a rupture in educational discourse.”58 In his view, “it conditioned or defined what could be said about teaching, learning, children and schooling for the greater part of the twentieth century.”59 In Robert Stamp’s assessment, both “culturally and politically, the revised program of 1937 implied a partial rejection of absolute values passed on to former generations of pupils.”60 The new Programme emphasized preparation for the present and the future more than it did transmission of past triumphs, heritage, and tales.

56 Ibid., 155.
58 Ibid., 92. Emphasis in original text.
59 Ibid., 92. My emphasis. The parallels that Milewski draws between the educational rhetoric and medical discourse seem to go too far, and it seems a further stretch to assert that “this discourse formed a body of knowledge that intervened in the experience of teaching and learning to shape or define normal child development, teaching, learning and schooling,” 92.
The actual extent to which progressive discourse and rhetoric actually affected classroom practice and, even, educationists’ conceptions of what direction progress should pursue is debatable. A rupture in the official discourse, howsoever dramatic or bold, does not necessarily correlate with a rupture in the modes and methods of instruction. W. G. Fleming touches on this point directly:

The *Programme of Studies for Grades I to VI of the Public and Separate Schools, 1937* demonstrates a highly progressive orientation and might have set the schools of Ontario on an entirely new path had certain circumstances been more propitious. The main reason why the point of view expressed in the document was ‘ahead of its time’ was that the short period of preparation for elementary teachers … made it impossible to induce them to abandon the patterns by which they themselves had been taught.\(^{61}\)

Fleming is right: progressive rhetoric takes on a very different character within the confines of a school or a particular classroom. If, however, as is the case here, the language of progressive schooling is of prime interest, the 1937 and 1938 curriculum documents represent significant ruptures in the discourse of systematized and departmentally sanctioned visions of progress.

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**Ontario’s Curriculum Revisions in Relation to the Various Progressivist Orientations**

Throughout this dissertation, progressivist concerns have been described from the perspectives of different orientations. Yet at this juncture, it is fitting to ask how Ontario’s curriculum revisions in the late 1930s and early 1940s can be assessed in light of the different progressivist orientations described throughout this thesis. In other words, to

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what extent did the revised *Programmes of Study* reflect the distinct concerns for educational reform that were evident in the source journals?

First, to review, progressivist articles concerned with child study revealed a concern for developmental psychology. From this orientation, progressive educational reforms posited the individual learner as the focal point of pedagogy. Throughout life, human beings passed through stages of development, each of which was qualitatively distinct. Educational activity was described as providing learning experiences appropriate to a particular stage of development. Such experiences would lead the student gradually to the next stage of development and growth.

The developmental model resembled the common vision of evolution, wherein a species adjusts to its environment and becomes increasingly complex. As such, child study as an orientation was steeped in the biological sciences and concerned with the promotion of health. In fact, many of its most vocal advocates, including William Blatz of the Institute of Child Study, began their careers as medical doctors. The application of medical principles, such as resiliency, security, and hygiene were common. The child, a natural organism like a flower, passed through particular phases and needed a healthy environment and nurturing in order to adjust to each stage and fully flourish.

On the contrary, progressivist texts revealing concern for social efficiency promoted educational reforms that envisaged individual students as cogs in an industrial and social machine. Education was more akin to management of industry than to nurturing or cultivating a garden. The aim of pedagogy was to assess, as precisely as possible, the abilities and inclinations of students in order to prepare them for vocational paths. Educational aims were not to be left to chance. The more specifically they could be identified, the more efficiently they could be realized.

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Advocacy for standardized testing and intelligence measures, as well as vocational guidance programs, surveying of professions, and auxiliary education programs is very closely associated with social efficiency progressivists. Education needed to be specific in order to train future citizens for their future careers. A progressive education fitting for a modern and complex existence would prepare students in the most efficient way possible for their lives in a contemporary, industrial context.

Progressivist texts revealing the social meliorist position depicted the preparation of students for a modern world in a very different way. The social meliorist position hinged on the unpredictability and mutability of social life. Wars, financial crises, and industrialization had wrought tremendous and widespread changes in Ontario and throughout the world. Further, unrestrained individualism, in education as in economics, led to social injustices and a prevailing ethos of competition.

From the meliorist orientation, if Ontario’s schools were to be progressive they would combat the spirit of competitiveness by promoting active citizenship and social cooperation. Schools could play a vital role in preparing the province’s future citizens to have the skills and habits of mind necessary for them to join together and deal with contemporary problems in society. An individual citizen was depicted as inextricably tied to his or her community. Educational activity needed to promote a critical spirit and mind, which would enable students to face a world ripe with change.

While the differences among these three progressivist orientations have been noted here and throughout this dissertation, the domains of common concern have also been discussed. The various types of progressivist texts differ in their interpretations of the meanings of three dominant and overarching themes: activity, individuality, and the relationship between education and society. In other words, each offers a different
perspective of what progressive education meant, but all are progressivist in that their reform rhetoric addressed the same themes. As an example, the relationship of the individual to the larger social order in Ontario can be considered.

As mentioned in previous chapters, efficiency progressivists were primarily concerned with the maintenance and management of the existing economic and social orders. Progressivist reforms would help those orders run more smoothly and efficiently. Schools could be managed and operated as industries were run. Ultimately, they needed to follow the industrial models in order to relate school studies as specifically as possible to the vocational realities in Ontario. Students’ aptitudes and interests could be gauged, businesses could be surveyed, training programs could be implemented, and guidance programs could help individuals find their vocational niches.

The meliorist position was most frequently, at the very least implicitly, critical of business, rampant individualism, and laissez-faire capitalism. The social order was, from this progressivist orientation, not only changeable, but also requiring change. Greater social cooperation was necessary if future citizens, the students in Ontario’s schools, could approach social problems and deal with them adequately. A healthy democracy required active citizens who would challenge the established social orders and think critically about their contexts. The good of any one person was indivisible from the good of all.

Similarly, child study progressivists depicted cooperation and social activity as vital in education, but for different reasons. Development and adjustment to different stages throughout life were characterized as necessarily social processes. Individuals had freedoms and needed to exercise these in order to retain distinct senses of self through life, but all actions had consequences with social implications. Social adjustment was not the
same as social conformity, and the latter was unacceptable because it imposed a pattern of living and thinking that limited the individual’s activity and creativity.

Reviewing the various types of progressivist positions described in the dissertation, albeit summarily, reveals how difficult the Department of Education’s task of bringing these together coherently was. As mentioned earlier, the introduction of health studies was one way of stressing the common concerns of Ontario’s progressivists. V. K. Greer’s appraisal of the new *Programme of Studies* made clear that the Department had aimed to cast its net broadly and appeal to all kinds of progressivists:

Those successful teachers who had found the former courses somewhat rigid now enjoy the freedom which they may use in the choice of subject matter…. The parents are also keenly interested, and very largely because they have noted the increased interest on the part of the children. A prominent University professor states that the psychology of the course is thoroughly sound and quite abreast of the present-day opinions of leading psychologists. The man on the street comments that his child is reading more and enjoying the activities and projects of the classroom. On the whole, there can be no doubt that a child-centred programme is a better programme than a subject-centred one.62

The Department of Education believed that centring the new course of studies on individual students as opposed to academic content would give Ontario’s educational stakeholders an agreeable foundation for reform. Greer stated confidently at the conclusion of his long appraisal: “There need be no turning back. All are agreed that we are now making progress under this new programme.”63 If Greer’s assessment of the situation was accurate, what did the curriculum revisions offer to progressivists of fundamentally different orientations to garner their support?

Health, which reached out to all progressivists, would have particularly appealed to child study concerns. Indeed, the core themes in the revised *Programme of Studies* appear

63 Ibid., 231. Greer’s article is spread over seven pages in *The Canadian School Journal.*
to be influenced in greatest measure by developmentalist concerns. In the *Programme*’s discussion of “The Child’s Need for Success,” for instance, Blatz appears to have written the following statement on the topic of security:

> The development of the individual takes place largely through social participation. Indeed, many capacities of the individual are brought out only under the stimulus of associating with others. But in order that development may be continuous, the efforts of the individual must be attended by success. It is true that “we learn from our mistakes,” but it is equally true that continued and prolonged failure stops growth altogether.64

An introductory section titled “Fostering Individual Talent” is similarly imbued with child study rhetoric: “This Programme of Studies accordingly attempts to provide for differences in the abilities, tastes, and interests of individual pupils; and requires that the teacher be alert to detect and foster the growth of individual talent.”65

Just as health studies were introduced with the intention that they would be woven through all aspects of the school, the ethos of developmental psychology permeated the entire document. It suggested that mathematics, for example, be instructed in a way respectful of the learner’s stages of development and understanding. Further, promotion from one grade to another would be based on the age of the student, and not solely on annual external examinations.67 The notion that school activities needed to be

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64 *Programme of Studies for Grades VII and VII of the Public and Separate Schools*, 6.
65 Ibid., 7.
66 Greer, “Appraisal of the New Programme of Studies.” Greer boasted: “The new courses and the new textbooks in arithmetic will make the work more interesting and will delay complex processes until they are more readily understood by the pupils,” 198. See also, “The Aim of the Course” in the *Programme of Studies for Grades VII and VIII*, which states: “The teacher should endeavour to lead his [sic] pupils at each stage of their growth to explain for themselves, in terms that are intelligible to them at the time, the social world in which they are a part,” 26.
67 Greer, “Appraisal of the New Programme of Studies.” Greer argued that the new curriculum offered a more holistic view of learners, focusing attention on the individual’s development and not merely on academic achievement: “No doubt the authors of the new courses intended that less emphasis should be put upon the annual external examination used solely as a basis for the promotion of pupils. It would be an equally faulty extreme, however, to promote all pupils on the basis of age. The best procedure will be the careful study for the work being done by pupils when
centred on the learner’s interests in order to engage him or her in studies that are meaningful and motivating is woven throughout.⁶⁸

The social efficiency progressivist rhetoric also weaves in and out of the document at various instances. On occasion, it is wedded to a child study theme in a way that seems to show the two orientations as perfectly compatible: “Learning takes place most efficiently when the interest of the learner is aroused.”⁶⁹ Such instances beg the question as to whether a teacher should aim to arouse the learner’s interest in order to make education more meaningful for the student or more efficient for the teacher. The Programme of Studies was most certainly seeking to establish common progressivist ground; in this case, the engaged student is less likely to provoke disturbance and more inclined to work fastidiously on a task. Similarly, the provision of greater options and elective courses following the common Grade 9 program seems favourable to both child study and efficiency progressivists. For the former, elective subjects would allow for greater experimentation and individual choice in school whereas, for the latter, freedom to select courses would permit the tailoring of educational programs suitable for particular abilities or vocational channels.

In other sections of the Programme of Studies the school’s role was depicted as having to “assist the pupil to master those skills that are essential to human intercourse in a they first begin to show retardation. Individual attention will then be given, and there is no doubt that by doing this we shall avoid demotions and failures to a much greater extent than we have done in the past,” 199.

See, for example, the section on “Activity and Interest,” in the Programme of Studies for Grades VII and VIII of the Public and Separate Schools, 1942, which states the following: “All learning involves activity and effort on the part of the learner. ‘Learning is an active process.’ ‘We learn to do by doing.’ ‘The child develops through his own activity.’ In applying these precepts one must remember that the term ‘activity’ does not refer to physical movement only. It must be borne in mind that mental processes—thinking, reflecting, planning—are as truly ‘activities’ as conducting an experiment or acting in a play,” 9.

Ibid., 9.
These skills included those involving “the conversion of materials to serve human purposes,” such as agriculture, home economics, manual training, and crafts. The descriptions of these subjects in the *Programme of Studies*, however, do not go nearly as far in their espousal of efficiency rhetoric as the mildest of such articles in the source journals. The value of the course in crafts, for example, is stated in very Deweyan language:

> The value for older children of some training in the traditional crafts is now generally recognized. In doing and making, students not only develop manual skill, but the ability to think their way through the difficulties presented by materials and processes. Handwork has value also in helping children to realize the importance of accuracy, for mistakes in the concrete are easily recognized and can seldom be erased or wholly corrected. Moreover, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the brighter children require manual activity of this type as much as those of lower mental capacity.

Manual and craft work were thus presented as subjects that could help students develop useful skills and habits independently of any vocational pursuit. Further, manual training was not to be treated as a subject toward which students would be streamed if their academic work was insufficient. The message promoted greater inclusivity, not classification.

> Home economics is a very notable exception, clearly stating that the subject:

> Possesses a definite educational value, not unlike that of craftwork for boys, but more important in its practical bearing. Chief among these educational values is the development of a girl’s natural interest in her home, together with the cultivation of desirable attitudes towards the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of life in the home. Scarcely less important, educationally, is the opportunity afforded by the work in Home Economics to train the girls in proper habits relative to their personal appearance, the care of their belongings, and the conservation of their health.

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70 Ibid., 9.
71 Ibid., 9.
72 Ibid., 105.
73 Ibid., 116.
In terms of the efficient management, maintenance, and preservation of social order, nothing in the *Programme of Studies* makes a statement as transparently social efficiency progressivist as this: “The practical value of skill in the various activities of the home must be apparent to all. Regardless of their station in life, practically all girls will share, sooner or later, in the management of a home.”

Gauging by the descriptions of courses offered in the curriculum alone, one might surmise that only Ontario’s girls required particularized training for their predestined domestic role in society. On the whole, however, the *Programme of Studies* did not go as far in its espousal of efficiency rhetoric as it did with the language of child study and meliorism.

The social meliorist emphasis is emphatically clear in a number of instances, most notably in relation to social studies. “The aim of the whole course in Social Studies is to help the student to understand the social world in which he [sic] lives,” announced the provincial curriculum document. The meliorist concern for studying current events in the contemporary context was encapsulated in this new subject, which offered an opportunity to relate historical, geographical, and social studies to problems in students’ lives outside of school. Discussion was identified as a useful tool for the teaching of social studies, a tool by which students could develop critical habits of mind:

> Children will acquire in a very meaningful way a great deal of geographical and historical material, and what is more important, learn to think geographically and

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74 Ibid., 116.
75 The value of home economics extended from the cultivation of girls’ “standards of good taste in clothing and home-furnishings” to the fostering of “an appreciation of scrupulous cleanliness in person, dress, and surroundings,” 116. The content of the course included particular activities that each girl needed to learn, including: needlework, familiarity with various textiles and sewing equipment, cooking, laundering, and furnishings.
77 Ibid. The document states: “Every event occurs in a geographical setting, has roots in the past, has implications for the present and may have repercussions in the future,” 29.
historically and to watch for further items of information confirming or refuting the views expressed in class.\(^{78}\)

While espousing such meliorist ideas, the *Programme of Studies* weighed in far more cautiously than many of the discussions in the source journals did.

Teachers were advised to confine the discussion of current events to matters of fact, rather than opinion: “Little good and much harm can come from airing opinions upon international, political, or religious problems—opinions probably founded on inadequate information.”\(^{79}\) The note of caution can be interpreted as suggesting that teachers lead their students to make claims based on warrants and evidence, which would stimulate research. It can also be seen as a way of limiting potential controversy associated with this new subject arising from overly provocative discussions or critical attitudes expressed in school. Ultimately, the *Programme of Studies* stood firmly in its assertion that the principle of cooperation and the ideal of democratic citizenship were foundations for future social growth and activity. As asserted in the 1942 edition of the document, published in the midst of World War II: “The world has become an interdependent social and economic unit, and the future advancement of civilization, following the settlement of our present troubles, will be dependent upon the establishment of ideals of co-operation rather than those of rivalry.”\(^{80}\)

Social studies, of course, came at the expense of history and geography, which were no longer treated as separate subjects in Ontario’s elementary schools. The province’s humanists could have, at the very least, found the centrality of English in the *Programme of Studies* valuable. The first aim for English study identified in the document

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 29. Emphasis in original text.

\(^{80}\) *Programme of Studies for Grades VII and VIII of the Public and Separate Schools, 1942*, 29.
was the cultivation of “a genuine and abiding love of good reading,” which implied that
literature would persist in schools.\footnote{Ibid., 40.} In fact, every classroom was seen as requiring “a
small, well-chosen, attractive library” that would help “to cultivate properly the love of
reading and to form the habit of finding in books information and enjoyment.”\footnote{Ibid., 43. See also Greer, “Appraisal of the New Programme of Studies.” Greer argues for the
importance of libraries in schools to support academic work: “The course places strong emphasis
on the advantages of supplementary reading, and again the success of the course will depend
largely on an ample and well-chosen library and on the ability of the teacher to inspire the pupils
to read good books,” 197–98.} The second aim, “to develop in the students the power to express themselves correctly and
effectively in oral and written language,” suggested that formal study of grammar and
usage should remain in the school program.\footnote{Programme of Studies for Grades VII and VIII of the Public and Separate Schools, 1942, 40.}

V. K. Greer’s assessment of the new curriculum stated clearly that a progressive
program did not imply unfettered activity catering entirely to children’s “whimsical
desires” and “changing interests.”\footnote{Greer, “Appraisal of the New Programme of Studies,” 196.} In fact, Greer seemed to acquiesce to humanists’
critiques of progressivist reforms, stating that Ontario’s schools would maintain their
academic rigour:

\begin{quote}
It will be wrong to interpret the new course as inviting the teacher to do away with all distasteful tasks. It will also be wrong if the acquiring of factual knowledge is belittled. It will be dangerous also if too much emphasis is placed upon play and upon activities which have very little or no worth-while purpose. The inexperienced teacher may easily mistake physical bustle for mental activity, with the result that much energy may be spent and little progress made. Drill, review, and examinations will still be needed, and it will continue to be very important that the child’s factual knowledge at the end of any period will be at least equal to, if not greater than formerly.\footnote{Ibid., 196.}
\end{quote}
In fact, Greer cited Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University, stating that the pupil should “use his own language with exactness, freedom, and charm.” For the time being, English, a broad term “made to include English literature, English grammar, English composition, supplementary reading, spelling, and writing,” remained useful in Ontario’s *Programme of Study*.87

**World War II, Ontario’s Schools, and the Educational Journals**

As the 1940s and World War II neared, certain minor revisions to the 1937 and 1938 curriculum documents were undertaken. In W. G. Fleming’s assessment, the “general nature of the recommended approach remained essentially the same. The introduction was rewritten in 1941 with much greater stress on the objective of preparing

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86 Ibid., 197. Greer’s use of Eliot is all the more interesting in light of Herbert Kliebard’s identification of Eliot as standing “in the forefront of the humanist interest group…. Eliot, a humanist in his general orientation, was also a mental disciplinarian, but, although this thinking affected his thinking on curriculum matters to a large extent, he was not exactly a defender of the status quo in curriculum matters.” Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 9. Emphasis in original text.

87 Greer, “Appraisal of the New Programme of Studies,” 197. Incidentally, L. J. Bondy, seen in the previous chapter, writing in the same year as Greer, wondered for how long English would be deemed useful by progressivists. The humanities had lost ground with the demise of classics, and they would continue to be marginalized in the face of ongoing reforms: “It is enough for my purpose that, in a scheme of this kind, it is only by mere accident that modern languages will be found useful, and their defenders will find it increasingly difficult to explain why they should be retained…. For a brief moment a few of the more thoughtless among the defenders of modern languages seemed to welcome the change. The loss of the Ancients would be the gain of the Moderns. Now it is becoming more and more evident that the forces that have achieved such success in ostracizing Greek and Latin are being arrayed with the same deadly purpose against the modern languages. The success of these efforts is already being felt. Italian and Spanish have practically disappeared from our high schools; German is slowly yielding ground. For reasons that are largely extraneous to education, French has not suffered so much in this province. However, unless something is done to improve its position, we may confidently expect that it will join its vanishing companions. And all this in the magic name of progress.” Bondy, “The Present Situation in Modern Languages in Our Schools,” 121. Emphasis in original text.
children to live in a democratic society.”88 Indeed, “Education for Social Living” was the first theme treated in the 1942 publication by the Department of Education.89 “Co-operation in a democratic group,” was depicted as the highest social value, requiring that students practice “self-control, intelligent self-direction, and the ability to accept responsibility.”90 Ontario’s schools, the introduction argued, needed to facilitate opportunities for students to work together in order to plan, execute, and complete worthwhile and common learning tasks.

So vital were these cooperative activities to the vitality of democratic education that a lengthy, nine-page description of “Enterprises” was included in the document immediately following the introduction.91 While the 1937 curriculum had stressed individualized learning and self-direction, in 1941, in light of the war experience, the individual learner was depicted as having to learn and practise cooperative and democratic habits of mind.92 Fleming has argued that the stress on democratic citizenship also affected themes and topics in Ontario’s textbooks and educational resources from the late 1930s and early 1940s.93

Modifications made to the province’s curriculum documents when reprinted in the early 1940s reflected the most dominant theme running through The School and The Canadian School Journal between 1940 and 1942. In that period, the editorial articles in the two journals repeatedly reinforce the necessity of fostering democratic habits of living in

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88 Ibid., 128.
89 Programme of Studies for Grades VII and VIII of the Public and Separate Schools, 1942, 5.
90 Ibid., 6.
91 Ibid., 13–21. The section provided Ontario’s teachers with directions regarding how to use enterprise activities to foster purposeful activity, natural ways of learning, integrated subject matter, self-direction, and fundamental skills.
93 Ibid. These themes, Fleming noted, dealt more with contemporary social problems and issues. Increasingly, they concerned Canada’s growing relationship to the United States and its role in the North Atlantic.
Ontario’s schools to counter the forces of Nazism and fascism.\(^94\) And Duncan McArthur, as befit the Minister of Education, demonstrated his commitment to the idea of democratic education in a flurry of speeches and publications between 1941 and 1942.\(^95\)

On December 7, 1941, for example, McArthur published an article in *Saturday Night* titled “Education for Democracy” that *The Canadian School Journal* found compelling enough to discuss at length for trustees and ratepayers throughout Ontario.\(^96\) In the article, McArthur stated that the purpose of education was the creation of good citizens. There were no self-contained individuals, he argued, who were not also social beings with responsibilities to the school, town, municipality, province, Dominion, and Empire. Ontario’s schools had to prepare the province’s youth to “undertake the responsibilities of citizenship, fortified by habits of mind which accustomed them to the recognition of the rights of others and to their obligations to the community.”\(^97\) Eventually, the war would end, McArthur stated; at that time, society would require citizens with courage, endurance, and understanding capable of building a new and forward-looking world.

In his Christmas message to Ontario’s trustees and ratepayers, the Minister of Education reminded readers of *The Canadian School Journal* that the strains provoked by world war had imposed extra responsibilities upon the province’s schools.\(^98\) Because many fathers were engaged in military service and many mothers were occupied in war

\(^{94}\) This theme is discussed at greater length in Chapter IV in relation to social meliorism and active learning.


\(^{97}\) Ibid., 13.

\(^{98}\) “Message from the Minister of Education,” 373.
industries, “the home has too frequently become one of the first of our war casualties.”99

The teachers, in particular, had borne a greater burden in providing anchorage for boys and girls in the province, through curricular and extracurricular supervision. Education had come to represent for McArthur a great model of public service and citizenship committed to the preservation of democracy.

“In no other war or national crisis,” explained an editorial in *The Canadian School Journal*, “has the school occupied such an important place as at the present time.”100 Ivan Schultz, Minister of Education for Manitoba, echoed this sentiment when classifying “teaching as a war profession.”101 The first duty of teachers, he argued, was to the schools and the children. Schultz implored educators across the country to remain in the classrooms, where they could be of best service to the community and the youth of society.

The Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), with radio broadcasts reaching homes across the entire province, was increasingly regarded as having “direct responsibilities, educational and cultural” with regards to the fostering of democratic citizenship.102 “The citizen’s task,” explained the CBC’s Gladstone Murray, “might be described as learning how to play his or her individual part—through self-sacrifice, discipline and initiative—in adaptation to new conditions.”103 Preserving democratic ways of life was the primary responsibility of schools; radio, like education, touched the lives of the entire body of Ontario’s citizenry. In times of war, Murray argued, the

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99 Ibid., 373.
103 Ibid., 113.
responsibility of public institutions was to exert a unifying influence on the public’s temper and thought, stimulating national consciousness. In times of peace, which would follow, educational organizations had the responsibility to impart information and opinions that could enable citizens to participate in democratic life, “i.e., reconstructing and reshaping the Post War [sic] world.”

It is, perhaps, these last two points which can best describe the responsibilities that Ontario’s periodicals appeared to assume in the context examined by this dissertation. The exclusion of oppositional discourses from, for example, socialist and separate school sources, offered a limited range of definitions regarding progressive education. It can even be argued that the progressivist editorials in the journals represented a consensus view of educational reform, casting a net not broad enough to encompass actual debate, tension, or rhetorical cutting and thrusting. Both the journals considered here depended on subscriptions for their survival. Generally speaking, The School reached an audience of teachers, teacher educators, and teacher candidates. The Canadian School Journal appealed directly to taxpayers and school trustees. The rousing of political debates and controversy was not in the interests of either source journal, and, perhaps to a fault, the journals isolated pedagogical matters from any political entanglements.

There certainly were differences between the publications, but these were most evident outside of the editorial articles and reports concerning this thesis. The School, for instance, included sections on model lessons, assessments, and templates that could be of immediate practical use to educators. The journal reported on matters happening in schools and of interest to those who worked in schools. The Canadian School Journal

104 Ibid., 113. Murray argued that “radio listening has become a part of the defence mechanism of democratic society,” 113.
included sections reporting on meetings of trustees, school councils, and school boards. The journal brought to the attention of its readership events related to taxation, policy, jurisdiction, and funding. This journal, in particular, concentrated its editorial topics during the early 1940s on themes related to democracy and citizenship. This emphasis reflected the journal’s base in the O.E.A., which, in the early years of World War II, had emphasized the idea of education for citizenship, with the aim of bringing together Ontario’s educationists for that purpose.105

This is not to say that The School neglected the war effort and its implications for Canadian students. The journal’s angle on events was one that typically addressed classroom practice. In 1940, for example, under the editorial management of Charles Phillips, The School began publishing a monthly diary that teachers used to help their pupils “follow the course of momentous events in Europe.”106 The diary recounted significant events happening in Europe during the war, and suggested that students mark these happenings on an outline map, follow the reports in local newspapers, and write a monthly essay recounting the “Achievements of the Month.”107

Two months later, a lengthy article by H. E. Smith from the University of Alberta reminded Ontario’s teachers that the basis of the educational philosophy “caught up in the phrase ‘progressive education’” could be summed up in “an abiding belief in the superiority of the democratic way of life over any other known way of life.”108 Living democratically, he explained, entailed an emphasis on “the desire to co-operate rather

106 A. S. H. Hill, “Towards Victory: A Current Events Notebook,” The School (September 1940): 7. It was in this same edition that Phillips published the controversial editorial “Declaration of Faith,” which was discussed in Chapter II.
than to compete, tolerance of the rights of others rather than selfishness, critical-mindedness rather than suggestibility, and concern with present conditions of living rather than with the life of the past.”

Progressivist rhetoric in the early 1940s predominately represented a means of asserting democratic attitudes and dispositions in educational contexts. In this meliorist progressivist vision, active and critical citizens were the greatest hope for democracy.110

What is certain is that both journals, despite their editing out of certain controversial or oppositional discourses, were forums where the moulding of Ontario’s educational future could be explored. This future, particularly with regards to citizenship education and training, was depicted by progressivists as necessarily broadening the vision of education to include more than book learning and academic knowledge. Schools were means of bringing Ontario’s youth into contact with the actualities and problems of life outside the classroom. Faced with global conflict and world war, progressivist articles generally depicted the school’s role as one promoting greater interest in public affairs, readiness to subordinate individual welfare to the common weal, and national unity.111

**Shifts within the Spheres of Politics and Pedagogy**

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.) was a socialist party that had emerged from the Depression years as a national political force. In Ontario, partly in

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109 Ibid., 188.
110 See, for example, Charles Phillips, “Editorial: School and Society,” 1. Phillips informs readers of *The School* that “many articles on a variety of subjects will be found to refer repeatedly to education for democratic citizenship. Beginning with this issue, emphasis will be placed on a particular monthly theme.” These themes were all related to classroom practice. In September 1941, for example, the theme was classroom management.
response to “Hepburn’s anti-Labour policies during the 1930s and the substantial growth in labour organizations and collective bargaining during the war years,” many of Ontario’s educationists rallied behind the party.\textsuperscript{112} It was, according to Robert Stamp, a “mixture of status consciousness and utopian idealism that prompted some Ontario teachers to flirt with the C.C.F. and other left-wing political groups in the early 1940s.”\textsuperscript{113} His assessment might explain why the Canadian Association for Adult Education put forward a 1943 document advocating greater social responsibility and social planning, and why the National Council for Canadian–Soviet Friendship gathered 15,000 people in Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens that same year calling for teacher exchanges between Russian and Canadian institutions. In the 1943 election, Ontario’s Liberal government was ousted from power in favour of Colonel George Drew’s Progressive Conservative Party, which secured a minority government by gaining a mere four more seats at Queen’s Park than the C.C.F.\textsuperscript{114}

While the start of World War II had provoked a shift in progressivist rhetoric, leaning it predominately toward meliorist espousals of democratic citizenship, the global conflict would persist longer than the almost singularly meliorist visions for progressive education could endure. In Robert Stamp’s assessment, “while a few educational leaders would keep the progressivist spirit alive throughout the war years, its viability as an educational philosophy was now under consistent attack. Education for peace had been

\textsuperscript{112} Baskerville, \textit{Ontario: Image, Identity, and Power}, 204. Hepburn, Ontario’s Premier, bitterly opposed labour unions and refused to allow the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.) to form unions in the province. He not only took the side of General Motors when a C.I.O.-led strike began in Oshawa on April 8, 1937, but also formed a volunteer police force to suppress the striking workers. At the same time, the C.C.F. supported the strike.

\textsuperscript{113} Stamp, \textit{The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976}, 180.

shelved in favour of military preparedness.”\textsuperscript{115} The League of Nations, which had been represented as the model of educational cooperation and democratic citizenship, had proven feeble and toothless in the face of Nazi and fascist threats.\textsuperscript{116} In 1945, with the war in Europe clearly won, Drew lost a vote in the Legislature and immediately called a new provincial election.

Emphasizing the word \textit{progressive} in his party’s name, Drew equated the C.C.F. with fascist Germany’s National Socialism and represented the impending election as one between the warring forces of fascism and freedom.\textsuperscript{117} The Progressive Conservatives actually did secure a majority government; the C.C.F. slipped to eight seats. W. G. Fleming’s suggestion that the 1937 \textit{Programme} would have borne very different fruit had certain events transpired differently is abundantly clear in light of the politics of postwar Ontario. Less than four months before the sudden passing of Duncan McArthur due to illness, Drew made clear that he had assessed progressivist ideas and found them wanting: “Teaching democracy was important, but there’s been a little too much carrying the ideas of democracy to the point that children have as much right to express opinions as the teachers.”\textsuperscript{118} The \textit{Toronto Daily Star}, with an ominous tone, predicted the end of progressivist thinking in the Department of Education, noting:

What the Colonel has overlooked is the fact that the only way to learn democracy is to practise it. And the best way the teachers can put their lesson across is by fostering and encouraging self-confidence, initiative, and independent thinking among children. Col. Drew would have the youth strapped into obedience.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{116} The social meliorist concerns for social justice, international cooperation, and active citizenship were persistent throughout the interwar period and survived the demise of the League.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 6. In fact, when critiquing democratic, progressivist education, Drew had argued that “firm measures supported by the mandate of the strap still have an important place.”
Premier George Drew, like his Conservative predecessors George S. Henry and Howard Ferguson, maintained the Education portfolio and steered the Department in a different direction from his Liberal predecessors, including the progressive-minded Duncan McArthur.

Summary

Robert Gidney, whose historical consideration of Ontario’s system of schools *From Hope to Harris* begins where this thesis ends, at World War II, described the province in 1945 as “just beginning to emerge from fifteen years of wrenching dislocation and haunting insecurity.”120 While the war, which stimulated economic growth and instilled a sense of common purpose, solved some of the serious problems provoked by the Depression, it also “bred its own dislocations, of people and resources, and the dominant mood of the immediate post-war years was a deep yearning for normality, security, and stability.”121 Gidney’s general observations regarding Ontario’s population in the latter part of the 1930s and early 1940s have some relevance with regards to progressivist rhetoric in the province’s journals.

Canada’s active involvement in World War II began in 1939 and, by 1940, the sense of common purpose just referenced coalesced as a common interest in democratic education. The discursive communities brought together by the journals agreed, despite different interpretations of what progress in schooling might entail, that democratic schools providing opportunities for active learning and citizenship training were vital to

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121 Ibid., 10.
the nation. In Robert Stamp’s words, “teachers’ magazines and teachers’ meetings were preoccupied with the question of how best to teach citizenship and democracy.”

Perhaps, beyond the war effort, the coalescence can be attributed to the efforts of the Department of Education in Ontario, which, under the influence of Duncan McArthur, brought together various progressivist themes in the revised *Programmes of Studies*. The new curricula introduced in 1937 and 1938 attempted to weave together distinct visions for progressive schools in the province and to derive some order and consistency from them. The revised course of studies rejected a strictly academic model of learning based on memorization and examination of facts or figures contained within textbooks. In so doing, it related to the domains of progressive education treated in this dissertation: active learning, individualized instruction, and links to contemporary society.

In the foreground of the revised curriculum, seen as weaving its way through all the subject matter, was the introduction of health study. Social studies, a new course at the time, was likewise intended to bring together various subject matters. Social studies, history, geography, and civics could be interrelated thematically for the purpose of addressing extant social problems or questions. Enterprise tasks and project-based learning were depicted as useful ways of engaging students in the active and cooperative study of issues that had actual relevance outside of academic texts.

Students in secondary schools were given a common foundation through a general Grade 9 program that would allow them to explore various subjects before deciding on a focus. From Grade 10 onward, they had increasing opportunities to select courses of study that were both useful and relevant to their interests and vocational or academic paths. The loss of Latin as a mandatory subject caused some concern, but it

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was, McArthur argued, the only way of ensuring that the individual learner could “try himself [sic] out along different lines under the guidance and direction of teachers, that he might reach conclusions regarding his particular capabilities and aptitudes.” The varied program enabled Ontario’s students to actively engage with “different lines of approach to education” in order to free them from the bonds of a strictly academic and traditional course of study.  

123 “Dr. Duncan McArthur,” *Canadian School Journal* (April 1937): 126. This article reproduced a speech that McArthur, then Deputy Minister of Education, delivered to the Trustees’ Department at the O.E.A. conference in 1937.  

124 Ibid., 126. McArthur depicted Grade 9, which provided opportunities for students to sample different topics and programs, as the core of modern schools: “That year, I say without any hesitation, will be the most important year for the boys and girls of our Collegiate Institutes. The decisions likely to be made during the course of that year, discussions with parents and teachers, will have a most important bearing on the future of our boys and girls.”
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

The most popular new ideas were associated with progressive education, which represented a revolt against existing formal and traditional schooling. It also meant expansion of the school’s purpose and curriculum through emphasis upon the child’s place in the larger society. New pedagogical ideas founded on research and growth in psychology were central to the changes of the progressives. Within this broad framework, however, there were many variations and differences in philosophy of practice.¹

The principal aim of this research was to explore the various meanings of progressive education that Ontario’s educationists articulated in two of the province’s journals, *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal*, between 1919 and 1942. These meanings were organized according to three domains, or themes, common to all progressivist articles: active learning, individualized instruction, and the strengthening of links between Ontario’s schools and contemporary social life. Each theme was further categorized according to one of three distinct, progressivist orientations: child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism. These orientations toward progressive education, identified by Herbert Kliebard as representations of competing interests within the progressive education movement, were employed as heuristics for my research aim, the description of distinct depictions of progressive education in Ontario’s educational journals.

The dissertation offers an inclusive, working definition of progressive education that can focus the field of examination for future historical or philosophical research on the meanings of progressive education in Ontario. Within this model, which describes

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¹ Patterson, “Society and Education during the Wars,” 373.
themes or programs for reform that Ontario’s educationists framed and projected onto the province’s educational context, the divergent orientations to schooling can be compared and contrasted with regards to their interpretation of progressivist ideas. The dissertation sheds new light on familiar themes, including a potential relationship between the decline of classical studies in Ontario’s schools and advocacy for school libraries as citadels of great literature and canonical texts. Further, the curriculum reforms introduced by Ontario’s Department of Education in the late 1930s and early 1940s, heralded for their progressivist vision for the province’s schools, can be seen as appealing to fundamentally different progressivist orientations for different reasons. In the context of interwar Ontario, this dissertation identifies progressivist rhetoric as a meaningful source for descriptions of pedagogical and programmatic responses to social change and modernization, bringing together three sets of common concerns in the critique of provincial education. The rhetoric of progressive education—at least with respect to official state discourse on education, and despite internal divisions regarding the reasons for or the aims of educational reform—reveals common concern for relating schools more closely to contemporary society, stimulating students’ individual interests and abilities, and encouraging active learning skills and inquiry.

First among the limitations of this study was its description of only one level of reform in the province, the rhetorical one. By concentrating exclusively on journals, this dissertation was able to include the perspectives of educationists from across the province, but any dramatic confrontations, cutting debates, and flourishes of elocutionary elegance that may have been reported outside of the journals were rendered to the cutting room floor. In addition, this dissertation can make no claims about the present state of schools, but it does recount how some of the more significant aspects of Ontario’s present-day
schools were depicted at the time that they were being introduced into schools, and suggests underlying reasons for their establishment. Special, or auxiliary education, and vocational training, as examples, were closely related to social efficiency progressivist concerns for measuring mental aptitude and classifying students into courses of study leading to particular niches in life. Parent-teacher associations, as another example, began with parent education programs and home and school associations intended to bring the home life and the school life of children into closer correlation.

Despite its limitations, this study opens exciting apertures for future historical research. An examination of distinct progressivist orientations in the rhetoric of educational reform following World War II might reveal whether and how child study, social efficiency, and social meliorism persisted as orientations to school reform in the province. The *Living and Learning* document, composed by The Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario and published by the province’s Department of Education in 1967, thirty years after the province’s revisions to the program of study, might be interpreted, similarly, as an attempt to relate disparate progressivist tendencies and give them coherent expression. How did the humanists’ critiques of progressive education evolve in the postwar period? Certainly, Hilda Neatby’s *So Little for the Mind* (1953) represented a significant marker in the postwar anti-progressivist (or, later humanist) rhetoric. One might examine whether her critiques of progressive education address any particular progressivist orientation, or whether they treat more general domains.

Considering, even within the same context of study as this thesis, sources such as the parliamentary debates and popular media might flesh out some of the controversy and debate that was held back in *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal*. McArthur
certainly had the respect of the mainstream discourse community of educationists in Ontario, but it would be interesting to see how his notions regarding community building, examinations, and electives were received by representatives of, for instance, private schools such as Upper Canada College. One suspects that such an institution, with a mandate to prepare its students for academic work in prestigious universities, regarded McArthur’s ideas with a more critical eye than that presented in most of the editorials examined here. It would be interesting to consider the extent to which the progressivist orientations described could be related to political ideologies and parties in the context. And how do orientations to and interpretations of progressive education in Ontario’s educational journals compare to those in other contexts and countries? This study aims to provoke many questions about divergences within progressive education, without resorting to the collapsing or discarding of internal complexities or ideological contexts.

In order to describe what progressivists meant when they demanded an active curriculum, Chapter III addressed the question from three different orientations. From the perspective of the first progressivist orientation, child study, active learning was depicted as entailing learning tasks that were developmentally appropriate, correlated different subjects around a unifying theme, facilitated socialization, and allowed for some degree of self-direction or nonconformity. From the perspective of the second progressivist orientation, social efficiency, active learning involved practising the application of skills and knowledge in particular contexts that would facilitate adjustment to industry or vocation. From the perspective of the third progressivist orientation, social meliorism, active learning was an educational process that developed a critical attitude to an unpredictable world with the ultimate aim of fostering active citizenship and engagement with civic problems.
With regards to the second progressivist domain, individualized instruction, Chapter IV first explored the child study orientation. The orientation described a process of holistic child study intended to understand each learner’s needs with regards to freedom, happiness, and well-being, and future citizens’ adjustment to social contexts. Secondly, the social efficiency orientation described individualized instruction as a process beginning with the scientific measurement of each learner’s mental aptitude with the aim of tailoring the course of study to individual ability. Thirdly, from the social meliorist orientation, individualized instruction entailed preparing children to be self-directed citizens who were responsible to their peers in a democratic context.

Chapter V considered different orientations toward the role of schools in contemporary society. From the child study orientation, relating schools to society entailed increasing child health, in part through medical inspections and improvements to school buildings, as well as including parent education and participation within the definition of schooling. From the social efficiency orientation, bringing schools and society closer together was largely depicted as a process of relating the courses of school study more closely to industrial demands, as well as helping students make wise vocational choices through guidance programs. From the social meliorist orientation, schools and society were positively related to each other when students learned to take an active role in the creation of a more just, democratic, and cooperative world.

Chapter VI treated the humanists as the critics and objects of progressivist critique. The overarching common ground among progressive educators in Ontario was their complete disavowal of a humanistic curriculum that trained the mind and developed the spirit. The humanists first defended the belief that a classical curriculum could strengthen students’ mental faculties. They then attempted to demonstrate the utility of
subjects such as Latin for the study of modern contexts. Humanists also threw their weight behind the development and maintenance of school libraries that would house classic works of literature and make these available to children who no longer studied them in school. The interwar period in Ontario was one of decline for the humanists. In terms of the rhetoric of schooling, the period witnessed, conversely, an efflorescence of progressivist ideas, in all their contradictory diversity.

These various currents of progressivist discourse ran parallel courses in the source journals without engaging in an epic struggle for influence over the domain of schooling, as they might have in other media. Representations of progressivist practices entrenched at the Institute of Child Study by child study advocates such as William Blatz could thus be juxtaposed with depictions of intelligence testing and vocational adjustment or social reconstructionist arguments without advocates of these positions necessarily crossing swords. In this context, an individual such as Duncan McArthur could weave consistency and order out of the various strands of progressivist rhetoric, planning educational reforms that brought together distinct visions for schooling into a unified program of study.

The two primary sources, *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal*, proved useful resources for mining progressivist rhetoric in the province. In terms of editorial content, both journals were forums for exploring and publishing visions for progressive education. Each cast a net wide enough to access and address a broad discursive community, but one might never gather that other oppositional discourses—including those from socialists, secondary school advocates, and many private school representatives—were posing critiques of traditional modes or models of schooling in the province. The journals obscured fundamental conflicts in the province, particularly those that appeared overtly
political or controversial. In terms of the non-editorial content, it is evident that the two journals were primarily intended for distinct, although parallel, communities of Ontario’s educationists. *The School* addressed teachers, teacher candidates, and school administrators. *The Canadian School Journal* addressed trustees, taxpayers, and administrators at the school board level.

Each represents the model of an educational journal that no longer exists in Ontario. Despite their relatively clear concentration of pedagogical matters in isolation from political matters and the exclusion of overly controversial subjects and sources, both journals published, side by side, a rather disparate group of educationists. In any given issue, progressivist visions written by professors of education could be seen paralleled with those of school inspectors, classroom teachers, administrators, community group representatives, and representatives from the Department of Education.

Shaped by two world wars and enduring the Depression, Ontario was an environment in which the forces of modernity appeared to alter dramatically the cultures of the province. Ontarians, in this context, saw their world as shifting, progressing, and evolving. Schools were seen, particularly for educationists, alternatively as instruments enabling social adaptation, managing or controlling relationships to the changing order, or making the world a more just and equitable place. The journals were forums from which many educationists interpreted the aims and effects of progress in relation to education.

The notion of public intellectuals, which might appear foreign in many contemporary contexts, including education, was embodied quite powerfully in the journals. Rather than operating, idealizing, and representing progressivist visions in separate spheres, educationists in schools, school boards, and the Department of
Education shared these media for the publication and sharing of ideas. Debate and controversy, so common in domains as important to society as education is, were excluded, perhaps because they were deemed inimical to these forums. What is made more certain by this study is that through *The School* and *The Canadian School Journal*, distinct visions, meanings, and interpretations of progressive education were explored in Ontario’s educational context.
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*The Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa, ON)
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## APPENDICES

**Figure A: Public School Enrolments in Ontario**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SCHOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELEMENTARY</td>
<td>SECONDARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>429,030</td>
<td>32,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>458,436</td>
<td>33,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>471,729</td>
<td>33,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>519,271</td>
<td>48,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>535,691</td>
<td>59,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>476,892</td>
<td>65,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>565,777</td>
<td>67,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>543,323</td>
<td>73,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>525,441</td>
<td>62,671</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Sources: Reports of the Minister of Education to the Government of Ontario.*
Figure B: Composition of the Department of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREMIER OF ONTARIO</th>
<th>MINISTER OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>CHIEF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James P. Whitney</td>
<td>R. A. Pyne</td>
<td>Arthur H. Colquhoun</td>
<td>John Seath*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Conservative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William H. Hearst</td>
<td>H. J. Cody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914–19</td>
<td>1918–19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Conservative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. C. Drury</td>
<td>R. H. Grant</td>
<td></td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919–23</td>
<td>1919–23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(United Farmers of Ontario)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Howard Ferguson</td>
<td>G. Howard Ferguson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Francis W. Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923–30</td>
<td>1923–30</td>
<td></td>
<td>1923–30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Conservative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George S. Henry</td>
<td>George S. Henry</td>
<td></td>
<td>George F. Rogers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930–34</td>
<td>1930–34</td>
<td></td>
<td>1930–34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Conservative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitchell F. Hepburn</td>
<td>Leo J. Simpson</td>
<td>Duncan McArthur</td>
<td>Duncan McArthur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934–42</td>
<td>1934–40</td>
<td>1934–40</td>
<td>1934–43</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Liberal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George A. Drew</td>
<td>Duncan McArthur</td>
<td>John P. Cowles</td>
<td>John G. Althouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Progressive Conservative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Reports of the Minister of Education to the Government of Ontario.

* Until the passing of John Seath, the Chief Director of Education position was titled Superintendent of Education.
** The position of Superintendent/Chief Director did not exist between 1919 and 1923. Other empty spaces in the figure denote vacant positions.
## Figure C: Circulation Statistics for Source Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>THE SCHOOL</th>
<th>THE CANADIAN SCHOOL JOURNAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>5,250†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5,500†</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
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<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>6,000†</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>6,750†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>6,682*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>7,072*</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>7,470*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>7,062*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>7,631*</td>
<td>6,500†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>7,460*</td>
<td>6,500†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>7,388*</td>
<td>6,500†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>6,970*</td>
<td>6,500†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>7,251*</td>
<td>6,500†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>8,859*</td>
<td>10,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>6,554*</td>
<td>10,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>5,129*</td>
<td>10,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>5,229*</td>
<td>10,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>5,510*</td>
<td>5,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>6,074*</td>
<td>6,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>5,745*</td>
<td>6,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>7,713*</td>
<td>5,250†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>7,882*</td>
<td>4,500†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>8,000†</td>
<td>4,500†</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *McKim’s Directories of Canadian Publications.*

† Where a number is followed by the (†) symbol, an affidavit of circulation was not furnished, and the circulation rating listed by *McKim’s* was provided as accurately as possible. The figure represents a minimum number of readers.

* Where a number is followed by the (*) symbol, the publisher of the journal furnished an affidavit of circulation confirmed by the Audit Bureau of Circulations in order to confirm circulation ratings for advertisers.

-1 Before 1922, *McKim’s* has no record of the source journal. In 1923, it appears under the title *Ontario School Board Journal*. No circulation rating is available. The record shows that the journal is published in Port Perry, Ontario, at the press of the *Port Perry Star*.

-2 In 1925, the journal description in *McKim’s* is modified to reflect a new title, *The Canadian School Journal*. The journal’s publisher is listed as the OSTRA, based at 1104 Bay Street in Toronto. The printer remained in Port Perry, Ontario.