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SCIENCE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

“What sciences should be offered in a consolidated high school?” “Our high school enrollment is about three hundred. What sciences should we include in our course of study?”

For several reasons no dogmatic statement will be made in answer to such questions, but it is hoped that we may be able to offer some suggestions which may help the individual superintendent or principal in deciding the questions for himself. Trying to answer the question of what sciences should be offered in any particular high school involves so many determining factors that no general statement can be made, even for a particular type of high school.

Some of the most important determining factors are:

1. Kind of school, such as
 - a. Consolidated or rural high school.
 - b. Normal Training high school.
 - c. Smith-Hughes school.
 - d. Small city.
 - e. Large city.
 - f. Vocational high school.
2. Amount of laboratory and other equipment available.
3. What will be the training of the teacher or teachers who will handle the science work?
4. Will the work be made elective or required?
5. What size of classes will there be?

A brief discussion of the more important of these determining factors will have to suffice. For example, in the con-

solidated high school or the town school with a large percentage of rural tuition pupils, there can be little doubt that at least one year of agriculture should be offered because of its direct usefulness to a large proportion of the students. The offering of other sciences in such schools will depend upon other factors enumerated.

In the Normal Training high school at least the following sciences must be offered to meet the requirements of the state department: agriculture, physiology, normal training geography, and a year of physics. The offering of additional sciences in such schools again depends upon other factors. Requirements set up by the state and federal authorities determine the kinds and amounts of science which must be offered in Smith-Hughes schools, and need not be discussed further here.

Few general statements can be made regarding the offerings in science by the small and large city high schools except as they are affected by other factors to be discussed later, such as size of classes, training of teachers, etc.

There is probably little doubt that it is better to offer no science in high school for which fairly adequate equipment can not be secured. Trying to teach a science without at least this minimum of equipment is almost sure to result in very little beyond memorization of the textbook, which violates every principle of good teaching and makes science lose much of its natural interest and usefulness. Inadequate training of science teachers too often has the same effect and is equally disastrous to interest and good learning.