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Science Clubs in High School

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SCIENCE BULLETIN

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IOWA STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
Cedar Falls, Iowa

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SCIENCE CLUBS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

This age is often characterized as an age of science. It has been said that we are much further removed from our colonial forefathers in the material things that we use every day and which contribute to our well-being and comfort than they were removed in the same way from the ancient civilization. If one will consider the things that he does and the things that he uses during the day, he will be struck with the fact that most of them were made possible by some scientific discovery within the last hundred years. It is the place of the high school to present science in such a way that these relationships are clearly seen and to make science function in the lives of the pupils. High school science should be more than merely formal study.

The high school has placed a great deal of emphasis on certain extra-curricular activities such as athletics, debating, dramatics, etc., but very little attention has been given to any extra-curricular activities in science. Since science does play such an important place in our lives, it seems desirable to consider the possibilities of some extra-curricular activities in high school science. The high school science club offers such an opportunity. A really live club with carefully planned programs and well organized projects would be of much value in stimulating an interest in science. Such a club can function locally in the community.

Up to the present there has been no organized plan in Iowa for the formation of high school science clubs. Science club work needs the stimulus of a state organization. Such an organization could act as a means for the exchange of ideas

among clubs; it could provide a means by which competitive work could be carried on between clubs; and it would give the whole science club movement a prestige not possible with isolated clubs scattered over the state. We have our state organizations and contests in athletics, debating, music, etc.; why not similar work in the field of science?

The Iowa Academy of Science at its meeting in Davenport last year adopted the report of the high school relations committee recommending the organization of high school science clubs into an organization to be known as the Junior Academy of Science of Iowa. The Iowa Academy of Science is an old established institution of Iowa composed of the scientists and those especially interested in science in Iowa. The organization is over forty years of age. The Academy considers this movement of much significance and proposes to sponsor the organization of the Junior Academy.

It should also be noted that Junior Academies of Science are being formed in other states in the United States. In fact, this is a nation-wide movement backed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science looking forward to a possible national organization of high school science clubs. The national committee has as its chairman Dr. Otis Caldwell of Columbia University whom many of you know from his textbooks and from his leadership in the methods of science teaching. Mr. Louis Astell of Columbia University is chairman of the extension committee. There are at present fifteen or twenty states considering the formation of state organizations. Illinois has a very successful and well established Junior Academy.

The Iowa Academy has created a Committee on High School Relations

which will take charge of the organization of the Junior Academy until it can assume control of its own work. This committee consists of Dr. C. W. Lantz, Iowa State Teachers College, Chairman; Dr. J. C. Gilman, Iowa State College, Professor Frank Goodell, East High School, Des Moines; Dr. F. E. Brown, Iowa State College; and Dr. C. J. Lapp, Iowa State University. Aid will be given as follows: (1) Provide a plan of organization for clubs and issue charters to organized clubs. A constitution subject to amendment by the Junior Academy has been prepared and will be submitted to science clubs who wish to become a part of this state organization. (2) By means of mimeographed material suggest science projects, suitable club program materials, and lists of available speakers. It might be possible later for a Junior Academy to have a publication of its own for the exchange of ideas. Illinois has such a publication. (3) Arrange for a state meeting of the Iowa Junior Academy to be held next May in conjunction with the annual Senior Academy meeting. We plan to have a program of interest to high school boys and girls. (4) Provide prizes for science projects carried out by high school clubs. These projects will be exhibited at the state meeting and prizes will be awarded at that time. The Academy voted at their last meeting to award a trophy to be known as the Iowa Academy of Science Trophy to be given for the best science project exhibited. It is planned to have other awards given at the annual meeting. A list of awards and the rules for competition will be available at a later date.

What kind of clubs will be accepted in a Junior Academy? Any branch of high school science or mathematics may form a club and is eligible for membership when they adopt the constitution. It might be a physics club, a biology club, a bird club, a health club, or a mathematics club. The aim is to be quite liberal in the interpretation of the definition of a science club and to give each club much freedom in its own work, but to offer it the prestige and advantages that would come with the affiliation with other similar clubs in a state organization.

Much of the success of this movement will depend upon the high school science teachers. It is very true that the average high school teacher has a very full schedule, but here is an opportunity to put a new zest and new interest into high school science.

While the Iowa Academy of Science wishes to give aid to the teachers of science in their club work and provide a state organization, it in no way wishes to dictate to a club. Each club will have its own peculiar conditions and should be given much freedom.

It is planned to have a luncheon at the State Teachers Meeting in Des Moines in November for all of those interested in the Junior Academy movement. Plan to be there and we can talk it over. Further announcements concerning this luncheon will be made at a later date.

You will find enclosed with the Science Bulletin this month a blank for you to fill out and return. We would much appreciate receiving suggestions from those who have had successful clubs in the past. Tell us how you have done it. By all working together we can make the high school science club work in Iowa through the Junior Academy of Science a movement of much significance to high school science and one that will be recognized throughout the United States. We would appreciate hearing from every high school science teacher in Iowa. Send in your suggestions and criticisms. Fill out the blank and return to my address.

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High School Relations Committee,
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GENERAL SCIENCE

What is General Science? It is wholly an environmental study—not merely one's natural environment but more particularly his man-made environment. In this day and age three-fourths of a man's existence is spent in an environment of invention whether it be in the home or on the street. One of the great accom-