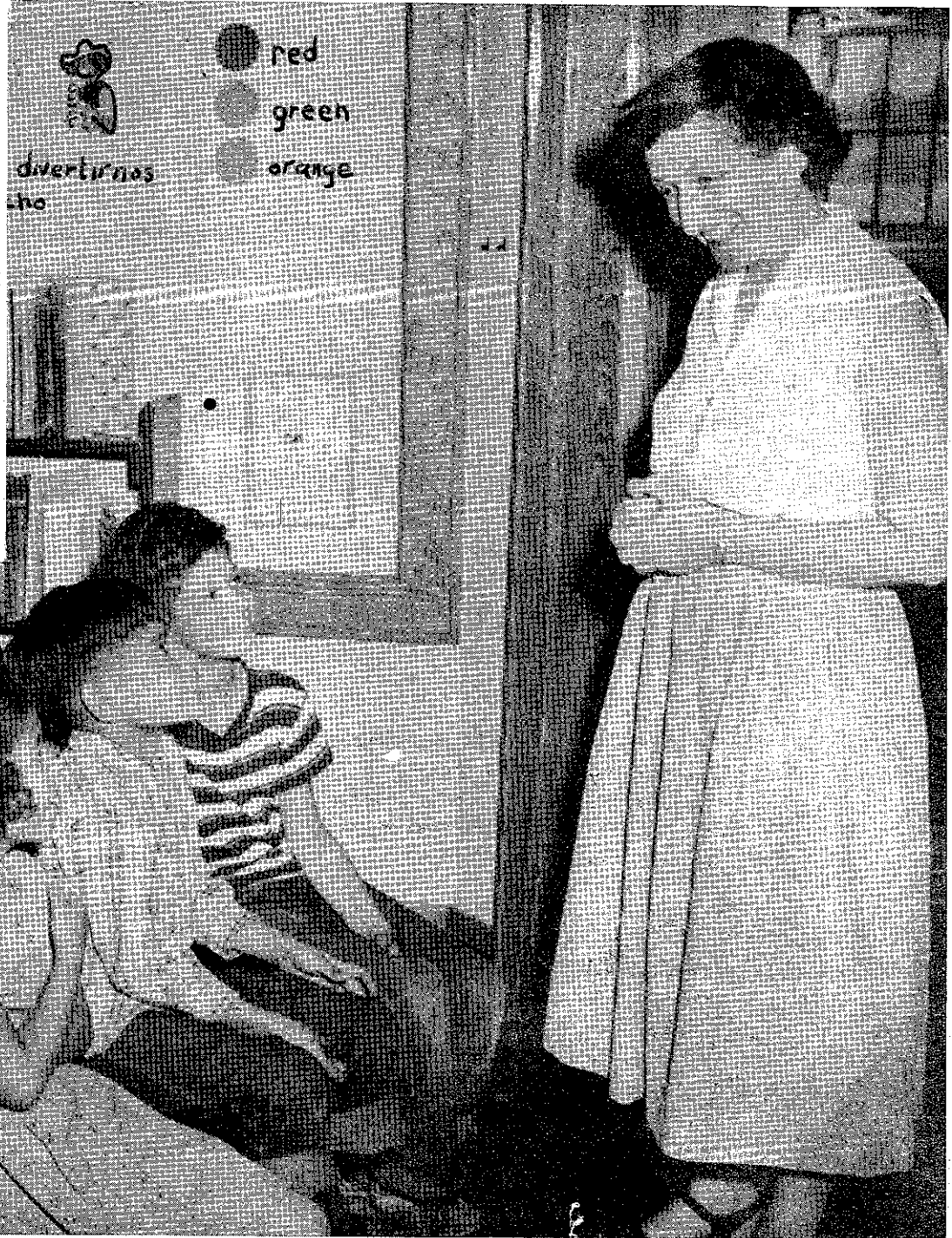


# THESE *are the* CHILDREN



— YOU HAVE HELPED —  
THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT  
of the  
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECT



A REPORT of the State Migrant Committee —

WISCONSIN WELFARE COUNCIL



## P R E F A C E

This spring, 1954, school superintendents and teachers in those areas of our state where there are migrant workers, will have a manual describing in detail a teaching unit which may vastly enrich the education of children - migrant and resident. This manual was developed and tested in a classroom-laboratory during the summer of 1953 at Oak Center School near Waupun.

The need for a workable teaching unit expressly designed for migrant children was voiced by teachers, superintendents and members of the staff of the State Department of Public Instruction. The State Migrant Committee members understood the need and envisioned a way to meet that need. They knew of two especially qualified persons ideally suited to developing the needed teaching unit. The "64-dollar question" was, "how can the project be financed?"

Before a committee could fully explore the various possible sources of funds, most of the needed money was pledged! It seemed almost miraculous.

The teaching manual will be distributed by the State Department of Public Instruction to a selected group of superintendents and their teachers. This is a manual by teachers and for teachers. It contains a technical description of the specific language handicaps of migrant children and suggestions of how to help the children overcome their accents and inability to speak English effectively. Included in this manual is a unit-of-study called "Traveling We Go" designed especially for migrant children. There is a complete bibliography including a list of many free materials available from corporations and governmental units. The common characteristics and common needs of these children are outlined for the prospective teacher of migrant children.

From the manual was gleaned the material for this report to you - University students; Catholic, Protestant and Jewish women; and members of the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor. It is written in both the first and second persons because YOU are directly responsible for the project, and because WE want you to share in the experience of the Oak Center Migrant School, known as "the Curriculum Development Project".

February, 1954

# THESE ARE THE CHILDREN

Picture yourself outside the Oak Center rural school building near Waupun, peering through a window at the summer-time classroom activities inside. You have been told that the children - some 15 - 20 of them - are the sons and daughters of the migrant workers who are in the sugar beet fields. The children, you notice, are clean, neatly groomed and have eager expressions on their faces.

To your left, along a wall, is a black board and a map of the United States. Five children - you'd judge these to be the oldest group - face the blackboard; the teacher, Miss Marion Hull stands between the line of children and the board. She is talking. A child's hand goes up; he speaks.

To the right is another group of children - younger ones. They are sitting in chairs or on the floor as near as possible to Miss Delores Brown who is reading a story to them. They laugh in unison and follow avidly every word.

You have the impression that here, in Oak Center school, some important and successful learning is going on.

Come inside and talk with Miss Hull and Miss Brown. Ask them about the class, the children and the learning you observed. Ask, first, Miss Hull about the class at the blackboard. The group at the blackboard, Miss Hull tells you, are the older children.

Our plan is to combine a teaching of language skill development with their knowledge of geography in a teaching unit, called "Travelling We Go".

These are the children, who have come from Texas, have worked and travelled through several states. We assumed that they have picked up, informally, of course, a great deal of knowledge about the Southwest and Midwest areas of our country, and about the agriculture of those areas in which they worked. This morning, I asked Juanita if she had been through Oklahoma (which seemed nearly certain from what she had told us.) "I don't know", she replied, "I was in the back of the truck."

The children could talk endlessly about picking cotton. After watching Maria gesture, I could easily picture myself in a cotton field.

Yet Maria was amazed to learn that her dress was made from cotton. So were the others. Cotton, to them, was taking something out of the plant, putting it into sacks, and moving down long rows.

We located on a map of Texas, Consuelo's home town. Consuela was puzzled to learn from it that her home town was near a river and a large gulf. She had seen neither.

When Alberto was asked what states he had been through, he replied, "Texas, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, Waupun, Rochelle and Illinois", Alberto, like the other children, confused states and cities. It seemed that if a state was known to have a largely dominant crop - cotton and Texas, for instance, the state would be known. To these children, Sturgeon Bay with its cherries to be "worked", was as different from Waupun, with its sugar beets, as was Texas and cotton from Illinois and asparagus.

Since many of the children could speak no English, language difficulties became apparent. The children's experience was often so limited that it was extremely difficult to convey some of the concepts which we take for granted as basic to our youngster's understanding. It was easy, for instance, to explain "barnyard", but try to explain "summer" to a migrant child who follows ripening crops!

The group you observed was, as you probably noticed, composed of five children, 7 to 10 years of age. Some of these could not speak English. Only three of these children enrolled could read at a level higher than first grade; the highest had a "poor" third grade reading ability.

What about attendance? Well, before the first day of school, Miss Brown and I went to visit the three camps from which we expected our enrollment. We talked with many parents and saw many, many, children.

We wondered if our 42-passenger bus would accommodate the number of children we anticipated would enroll. Yet our attendance was, for the most part, under 20. Why? We have thought of several reasons and there may be some we haven't considered. Some school-age children may have been needed to watch their smaller brothers and sisters; perhaps some were needed in the fields (though parents had previously indicated that an education for their children was of prime importance to them); some may have been ashamed of their lack of clothing (though we did everything possible to convey to the parents the idea that the children need not "dress up" for school, and did make it possible at "rummage sales" for families to purchase adequate clothing at prices they could well afford). Perhaps, unless people have hope for the future, education cannot become important.

The migrant children are, in many ways, very similar to our children. Perhaps all children have some things in common. There are, however, differences which must be considered. In many ways these children are different - different colored skin, different language, different type of home life, different type of family relationships, different type of community relationships, and different educational background. Such differences are projected into school behavior, learning ability, interests and attitudes.

Because of his repeated migrations, the migrant child lacks a feeling of "my school", "my community", "my home". He then turns, to what may be constant, to what may be depended upon, "my family". The family as a unit assumes more importance to the consciousness of the migrant child than we normally see. Experiences outside the family unit - such as school - may well be much more threatening to the migrant child than to our children. The family is constant, accepting, comfortable; the outside world is bewildering, always changing, and as often as not, hostile. It seems understandable that there is a basic element of fear in the migrant child when he is outside the family. This, I am certain, plays a part in his inability to accept new ideas, in other words, to learn. Teaching these children is difficult.

Are we discouraged? No! To become discouraged is a luxury we--meaning the teachers, you, all of us--cannot afford. We cannot, if we are to break the vicious cycle of uneducated migrant parents rearing uneducated migrant children who will grow up knowing no other way of life, finding no other opportunities.

If we are to meet this problem, we must face realistically, but resolutely, our difficulties. This project at Oak Center School has enabled us to more accurately appraise the educational situations we face with regard to migrant children. From this experiment in Oak Center School we have gained some tools to help us break through the barriers of fear and of inertia.

We are developing more than curriculum material here. With the help of the County Superintendent and the Supervisor of Elementary Education of the State Department of Public Instruction, Miss Brown and I are gaining an understanding of what successive migrations do to a child's ability to learn. Because of his pattern of living the migrant child has certain weaknesses and certain strengths. We are learning here how to help overcome the weakness and how to capitalize on the strengths. If we are able to communicate this understanding to the teachers who will have migrant children in their classes, we will have helped open new doors to learning for the migrant child and for his classmate, the resident child.

In spite of their educational handicaps, in spite of their less-than-twenty five mornings which were available to them in this school program, you know that these children who could be earning nearly as much as their parents earned in the field, must have experienced some learning which had a great deal of significance for them. You wish to know more about these children, and noticing that Miss Brown's group having recessed, you ask her to tell you about some of the children.

This is Elena\* or "Nita" as her older brother, Miguel, calls her,

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\*These names are fictitious, but the children are very real--their pictures are on the front cover.

leaning there on the table. Doesn't she look intent? Notice her sturdy hands gripping those tanned little arms. She is a very alert little six year old. She knows how to behave herself, and so it wasn't hard to tell her wrinkled, old-looking mother that Nita had been a good girl in school. What a giggle she had! When we would go on a "Lion Hunt" in Spanish, Nita would anticipate the exciting game; she would throw back her head, stick her feet out, put her hands over her eyes, and let out an impish, elfish giggle. Neat as a pin, she always had ribbons on those braids, a solid little girl, physically, mentally, morally. She is a mighty fine addition to our school.

Did you notice Gerald\* who is in Miss Hull's group? He is the boy in the stripped shirt that sat nearest the wall. Gerald has the brightest eyes and most cunning smile line around his eyes of any child imaginable. His skin is fair; his hair, medium brown. His last name in Spanish is as common as Jones is in English, but he is "Gerald" and wants to be called that. The night we went around to different camps with a nobile T.B. unit, I remember seeing Gerald. He hadn't been to school for several days as he was working in the fields. Those bright eyes were dulled--the first time I had seen that. They were tired eyes, eyes that had been looking into the glare of the sun for many long hours. But he was still friendly and as vivacious as his fatigue would let him be. And the pride he had in speaking English! It was spoken with an accent and was often faulty in construction, but he would try first to say what he wanted to in English. Gerald and his family moved from the Waupun area to work in cucumbers before our school classes concluded. Because his younger brother had left a pair of shoes in our school bus, we drove one evening to find the family. When we found the farm house in which they were living, we were hospitably welcomed. As we drove away, Gerald and Ricardo ran along the side of the car to wish us on our way. As we stopped to turn on the road, Gerald cried out, "Wait". He leaned down and picked up a pebble which he gave to me as a "recuerdo"--a souvenir. That is a custom deeply ingrained in Hispanic peoples, giving a keepsake to remember them by.

Roberta and Juan were brother and sister. Roberta is the little girl who was leaning on my lap and Juan is the boy in the white shirt. Both love story telling. They look very much like their mother. Roberta has an excellent sense of color. It was delightful to watch her daintily curved fingers handle the brush as she painted. She was five years old and a most self-sufficient little five year old, indeed! More than once we told Roberta that she had said a bad word, but any reprimand she easily shrugged off. There was only once when I saw Roberta cry. It was after a swim in the county swimming pool. I was sitting in the bus waiting for the children to get dressed when I saw Roberta walk out of the bath house robed in a long turkish towel; she climbed into the bus, went to the back of the bus where she had been sitting and not finding her clothes there (they were unobserved on a near-by seat) immediately burst into tears. Generally, though, she could handle herself very capably. Her flat-footed, deliberate walk and her air of having lived many years, made us think of an old, old woman. Roberta, "LaViejecita", "the little old woman".

You feel that from your observations and from what Miss Brown has told you of the children, that you really know some of the migrant children who have been attending classes here. Miss Brown has succeeded very well in individualizing some

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\*See front cover

of these children for you. But have they as a group, a story?

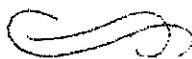
Yes, their story could be entitled "the story of the have-nots". They have not a twelve-month home; they have not uninterrupted schooling; they have not social acceptance; they have not economic security; they have not common community privileges. Their story could be sub-titled the story of the "futureless ones" for it seems to me that the right migrant children are deprived of is the right to a future brighter than their present.

These children need desperately more of a feeling of independence than they now have. They are greatly dependent on the crew boss who makes decisions about crops they work in, when they move, how many belongings they can have in the truck, and even when the truck goes into town for groceries or for a social gathering. The children need to realize that they are not singled out for special care, but that education and justice are principles which apply to all; they need to feel that there is an alternative way of life if they don't choose to follow their father's manual labor.

Symbolically, if the children could ever get to feel that they are "Americanos" too, part of the victory would be won. So much of our hope for the improvement of ourselves and our society we base on education, believing that by using our intelligence and capabilities and by applying them in a trade or profession, we can contribute to the general welfare.

I would like to think that Juan would have his tremendous curiosity and inventiveness encouraged and directed along moral lines, along creative lines. I would like to see Roberta's dainty fingers used for something else besides sweeping the dirty, rough floors of a migrant worker's shack; I would like to see Carmen's sense of rhythm used in an artistic way and not to find its outlet and final fulfillment in a cheap dive in southern Texas. I don't mean to say that these children are geniuses, because they are no different from other children. I have the same dreams of happy and productive lives for our children, too, who have all the apparent "breaks" in social status, heredity, and security. I just think that these children deserve a future that is easier and brighter than that of their parent!

You see, the remaining chapters of these children's lives are yet unwritten. Each of us can help write them by studying this problem, by counteracting generalized thinking, by assuming our share of these children's education and their families' social contacts. Yes, we can have a share in writing a few happy pages of the yet unwritten story. We can help change the title from "The story of the futureless ones" to "Future, Unlimited".



## THE WAUPUN MIGRANT PROJECT

by

Mrs. Harmon Hull, Member of the Waupun Community Council on Human Relations  
and Governor's Commission on Human Rights

The Waupun Community Council on Human Relations--a voluntary, citizen's group--came into being in the winter of 1949-50, as a community response to the needs of the migratory workers in the area. These needs had been revealed in a survey made by the Provisional League of Women Voters during the previous summer. Although the problems of the migrants were numerous and complex, and many could be dealt with only through the slow and laborious process of legislation and public education, it was felt that a few of the most basic ones could be mitigated through an immediate, local and direct approach. Accordingly, with the assistance and counsel of the Governor's Commission on Human Rights, and several departments of the University of Wisconsin, the Community Council on Human Relations undertook to provide a program of education for the children of migrant workers, recreation for family groups, adjustment and welcome to the community, and general health and welfare--which came to be known as the Waupun Migrant Project.

The program has been continued every summer since that time, through the vicissitudes of fortune and finance, for it was felt that as a pilot project in the state, it could, even in its mistakes, help to point the way to a better life for our migrant citizens.

This summer, in response to a recognized need in the field of education, a special project in curriculum development was carried on. Waupun was selected as the site.

From experience in our own school we realized that teachers, although eager to offer the greatest possible opportunities for development to their young pupils, are at a great disadvantage when confronted with a group of Spanish-speaking disadvantaged youngsters who have entirely different economic and cultural background from the children ordinarily in their charge. This applies equally to teachers in our public schools and to those in special summer schools, such as ours. How to go about it to achieve the greatest progress in the all too brief time at their disposal - that was the question! Special helps for such teachers were greatly needed. Because we had an opportunity this summer to secure the services of two teachers of the highest caliber and professional training, we felt that we were in a particularly favored position to serve as a laboratory for developing these special aids, and accordingly we offered our facilities to that end. The project is greatly indebted to the Oak Center School District which made the school building and its facilities available to us.

Our Community Council on Human Relations which continued to carry on the other phases of the Waupun Migrant Project, is most happy to have served as host to this special curriculum project. It is our hope that the work so well begun this year may be of help and significance to all who labor in the field.

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

by

Mr. William Kahl, Supervisor of Elementary Education  
State Department of Public Instruction

(Mr. Kahl, representing the State Migrant Committee, was the Project Coordinator, and as such participated in the original planning and gave supervision to the Project.)

The influx of migrant workers in Wisconsin during recent years has posed many problems for local communities. Yet one encouraging by-product has been the development of a cooperative approach by various related groups, uniting their resources to solve the problems.

While the educational needs of migrant children have many common similarities to the needs of children who are permanent residents of a school community, there are certain factors operating to limit the educational opportunities available for migrant children. The State Migrant Committee in reviewing the migrant problem felt that the educational needs of migrant children should be studied, and as a result, a sub-committee on education reviewed the problem. One recommendation resulted in the creation of the Curriculum Development Project, which was located near Waupun.

The major objectives of the Project were:

- a) to provide a meaningful and worthwhile educational experience for migrant children based upon their common needs and interests.
- b) to develop units of instructional materials which may be used in regular classrooms with migrant children.
- c) to determine the types of materials which would more adequately meet the educational growth of the migrant child.
- d) to discover a potential contribution which migrant children could make toward the enrichment of schools in which they become active enrollees.
- e) to explore the possibilities of a summer education program which may be employed to fill in the gaps which migrancy has created in their school experiences.

The Project was fortunate in securing the services of Miss Marion Hull and Miss Delores Brown, who conducted the Project at Oak Center School near Waupun. The financial contributions of the Wisconsin Council of Catholic Women, United Church Women of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Council of Jewish Women, Federation of Moravian Women, University of Wisconsin Student Board Association and the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor were responsible for the successful completion of the Project.

While the educational objectives are reached in varying degrees, it is possible to report that some real contributions to the education of migrant children have been realized as a result of the Project. The teaching

units and analysis of the language difficulties will be helpful to teachers who come in contact with migrant children and their material should enable teachers to better adjust their teaching to the needs of migrant children, including more realism and a better understanding.

The broad interest base which exists makes it possible to provide educational possibilities for migrant children. The continuous concern and support of many groups and communities can do much to promote broader educational opportunities for this migrant population in our state.

Summer school attendance, it must be remembered, however, is not an adequate substitute for the present interrupted school experiences of the migrant child. The deep-seated problems resulting from irregular school attendance must be squarely faced if the migrant child is to receive his just share of "equal educational opportunity".

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