June 2014

Draft of Letter, Walter Truslow to Parents, Trustees, and Faculty

Walter Truslow

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/special_ms358_documents

Part of the Education Commons

Repository Citation

This Letter is brought to you for free and open access by the The Miami Valley School (MS-358) at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Miami Valley School Documents and Letters by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact library-corescholar@wright.edu.
Dear Parents, Trustees and Faculty:

This letter contains the first of what I trust will be a regular series - to be called the Headmaster's Bulletin. We will plan to circulate the Bulletin to Parents, Trustees and Faculty regularly, twice a year - in the late Fall and in the early Spring of each academic year. Of course, there may be other occasions to send out special notices of events and the like. But the Bulletin will serve as a report of the School's activities and progress.

We will want you to give our communications careful attention. And we will welcome your ideas and suggestions.

The first Bulletin contains also a separate preliminary announcement of The Miami Valley School's annual giving program.

Finally, let me use this occasion to extend to each of you from the School and from Mrs. Truslow and me our warmest greetings for the approaching holiday season. We are foregoing the usual custom of sending Christmas cards in order to reserve the expense involved for other purposes. Our feelings of thankfulness to all of you are nonetheless great - for your cooperation in many, many instances and for your faith that we can and will do our best to continue to be helpful in the education and growth of the youngsters entrusted to us.

Sincerely,

Walter Truslow
Headmaster
ENROLLMENT

On opening day in September, 78 boys and girls were enrolled in The Miami Valley School in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and in Grades 1 through 9. Since that time, two additional children have been enrolled, and two children - whose families were involved in unexpected moves to other localities - have been withdrawn. This leaves us at the beginning of December with no net change - we still have 78 youngsters enrolled.

Forty-nine children in classes through the Third Grade meet at Southminster Presbyterian Church at the corner of Route 46 and "Alex-Bell" Road, just north of Centerville. Grades 4 through 9 are conducted at the Munger Road Schoolhouse for 29 children.

There are a number of inquiries and application under consideration for additional enrollment after the holidays or at the beginning of the 2nd semester on February 1st. In this connection, we ask all who know about the School to comprise a "committee of the whole" on enrollment and to tell us about other families who might consider enrolling their children. Our only limitations at present are in Kindergarten, which is full, and in First Grade, which has only two or three openings. Other grades have a number of openings.

Our admissions procedure continues to require an interview and testing for each candidate, and we will continue to maintain effective standards of capability and character for admission.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

I have been particularly pleased this Fall, as I hope you have, by the performance of our teachers. Without exception, there has been willingness and capability to give the boys and girls not only stimulating instruction in the regular work of the classes and courses, but also a great deal of extra help and counsel during study periods or other spare time.

We do not have a full fledged developmental reading program as yet, but, here again a number of our teachers are able to give extra time and help to individual students in this area. Also, we have been able to guide parents, as needed, to outside sources of help.

We are giving a great deal of thought and study to techniques of instruction. Most of us at the School are impressed by developments in the so-called "motor-perceptual" approach, particularly as fostered by Kephart and Getman, and as administered in this area at the Harman School under Mrs. Mattie McDonald. Another
outstanding resource in this area, chiefly related to developmental reading, is the research and teaching program under way at Miami University under Dr. Edwards. I visited Dr. Edwards in Oxford during early November and was greatly impressed by his insights. We will plan, as possible, to have our teachers meet both Mrs. McDonald and Dr. Edwards.

In languages, we are giving Latin instruction in Grades 7 through 9, taught by Mr. Gayle. French is being taught in Grades 2 through 9. Mrs. Descours is giving oral instruction to 2nd and 3rd graders; she is also teaching the introductory French and second year college preparatory French for Grades 7 through 9. Mrs. Hughes is presenting elementary French to 4th, 5th and 6th graders.

An independent school such as Miami Valley School has, of course, a unique opportunity to bring to bear new and effective approaches to teaching. We do not intend to be "progressive" in the professional sense of that term; but we do expect to be thorough in our search for effective instructional methods and course materials. Also, holding to the concept of small classes - not to exceed 15 or 16 - we can give attention to individual student problems of comprehension and performance. A good teacher knows he or she must be to some extent adaptable to the needs of each child. We may not be concerned with "problem children" in the sense of providing special instruction for children whose problems are special; yet among most capable children there are many sorts of instructional problems - and these we expect to meet in the course of each child's growth and learning.

A word, again, about the Secondary School Admission Tests. I do urge parents of 7th, 8th and 9th Grades to register their children for these tests in February, if they have not already done so. We will use the results of these tests as indicators of the effectiveness of our curriculum and of the effectiveness of your child's study approach. I concede that for 7th graders, the tests are quite a challenge. Yet our purpose is to excite the desire to meet the challenge of high standard education.

ACTIVITIES

The students from Third Grade and higher have all had a number of field trips and will have more throughout the year. Among these are visits to:

- The Wright Library in Oakwood to learn and be familiar with the use of a good library;

- The Museum of Natural History
Faculty and students in the upper grades have organized a newspaper known as Quid Nunc.

Art is taught, with limited facilities but with enthusiasm and effect - for Grades 7 - 9 by Mr. Smith, and for Grades 4 - 6 by Mrs. Stepnowski.

We have as yet no proper facilities for good music instruction. However, again with earnestness and enjoyment, Mr. Gayle leads singing - at the Munger Road division during morning assemblies, and at the Southminster division during a brief period in the afternoons.

Mr. Millhon has organized a sports program that is effective and is very meaningful for the School's spirit and morale. He is responsible for the program in Grades 4 through 9, taking the children to the Kettering "Y" twice a week for swimming, exercises and games; and on other days organizing touch football in the school yard or basketball at the Frederick Smiths' barn. The latter activities are most popular with the boys. We are now devising a separate schedule for the girls for the days they do not go to the Y. We may suggest that interested Mothers help us with useful recreational activities for the girls at the Munger Road division, particularly on Tuesdays and Fridays.

GENERAL REMINDERS

These are important reminders:

- When bad weather occurs, our policy on school closing will match that of the Washington Township Public Schools. Radio and television announcements stating closing of schools in Washington Township because of bad weather will mean that M.V.S., at both divisions, will also close. When in doubt do not hesitate to call the School number, 298-7201, or my house number, 434-3765.

- The School office is at Munger Road. It is generally open between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. My home has an extension of the School phone, so that you can almost always get me or get a message to me if an emergency arises during non-school hours. Parents of children at Southminster should not try to call the Church. Mrs. Altherr or I can quickly get emergency messages to the Church when necessary. Also, I try to spend part of each day at
Southminster so that I can check on any problems that might arise there. If I have to miss my daily visit to Southminster, then Mrs. Altherr or Mr. Gayle goes. In any event, the school telephone is always covered.

Concerning the holiday season, two items:

1) certain assignments of review or related to deficiencies in certain subjects may be recommended or required for some students over the holidays. Teachers will prepare outlines and get them to you. If you feel any lack of information exists in this respect, please call the office.

2) we strongly suggest that you do not foster any custom of presents for teachers or staff. I have been associated at one school where this custom became pervasive, competitive and injurious to standards and discipline before it was stopped. I realize that children may want sincerely to give presents, but we hope you will guide their motive to some charitable purpose instead. The teachers concur with me in this.

As winter sets in let me ask all concerned to try to allow sufficient additional driving time for children to get to school by 8:45 a.m. Latenesses have risen in volume recently. We do want to try to eliminate them.

MOTHERS ASSOCIATION

In many independent schools the functions of a Mother's Association are most helpful in many activities. Mrs. Robert Hughes, president of The Miami Valley School Trustees, has authorized the formation of The Miami Valley School Mothers Association. An organizing group of Mothers has met twice and has designated Mrs. Gordon Allen (1635 W. Rahn Road - Tele. 434-2501) as chairman sine die, and Mrs. Raymond Gayle (322 Skyview Drive, West Carrollton - Tele. 859-7638) as secretary-treasurer. Mrs. Allen has three boys at M.V.S. and has given many hours in the past of volunteer help with activities both at the former Marti School and M.V.S. Mrs. Gayle is the wife of our Latin teacher, has two boys at M.V.S., and gives part-time help at the School office. She can be particularly helpful in the organization and records of the new Association. Membership in the Association will comprise automatically all Mothers of children enrolled. Mothers will be asked only to contribute time voluntarily to any activities that interest them and according to their convenience. Two committees have been formed— one to foster the development of the School library; the other, an enrollment committee to help publicize the School and to arrange meetings for interested parents to meet the headmaster or to visit the School. Several other activities Committees have been suggested:
- social affairs: to help the faculty organize social occasions for the children

- field trips and cultural programs: to help the faculty arrange and conduct interesting instructional visits outside of the regular school program

- girls' recreational activities: referred to earlier in the Bulletin

- scholarship identification and benefit: to identify capable youngsters who might qualify for admission and scholarship aid, and to organize benefit affairs (cookie sales, book fairs, et al.) That would partially support the School's Scholarship Fund.
AN ANNUAL GIVING PROGRAM FOR THE MIAMI VALLEY SCHOOL
(Appendix to Headmaster's Bulletin - Fall 1964)

Virtually all independent schools and colleges which foster effective educational programs must rely on income in excess of tuitions to meet their total operating as well as their capital improvement costs. Setting aside, for the moment, consideration of funds necessary for capital improvement, let us look at the sources of additional income derived for operations. In brief outline they are:

1. Annual contributions designated for scholarship awards;

2. Annual contributions designated for special programs, such as the expenses of equipment and salary for a new academic department or for a new sports activity, or the like;

3. Annual contributions, unrestricted by the donors, but usually designated in advance by the school for a special program;

4. Contributions to endowment principal, of which the income is reserved for a particular program, or is unrestricted but normally designated by the school for a special purpose.

The National Association of Independent Schools makes an annual survey of its members (over 600 schools) showing the proportions of operating income that are derived from different sources. The current figures show these approximate "average" results:

- 85% from tuitions
- 13% from annual giving
- 2% from endowment income (schools with substantial endowment, few, it is increasingly hard to have and to expect, the demands on eleemosynary funds being ever more numerous and frequent.)

The sources of annual giving are several - individuals are most numerous, corporations and foundations. Increasingly, corporations and foundations have contributed to educational institutions, but chiefly to colleges and technical organizations. Very little corporate or foundation money as yet finds its way below the college level, primarily because such contributions are usually designated for particular pre-industrial or pre-professional training programs.

The burden is chiefly, therefore, on individuals. What individuals? For most established schools, the alumni and alumnae are usually the largest supporting groups. But most schools also approach their trustees, present and past parents, and people in their communities who are interested in fostering independent education.
Why does this situation pertain? Primarily, because over the years and particularly in recent years the desire for new programs, the need to pay better faculty salaries, and the costs of all kinds of facilities and equipment, have risen sharply and faster than the tuitions most schools have felt they could charge and still attract an effective proportion of capable children. A notable example of the effect of alternate financing lies in the comparison as of 1963-64 of two very famous leading boarding schools in the East both of which have excellent college preparatory programs:

School A over the years has fostered and attracted a very large endowment. Its operating cost per student is about $4200 per year, yet because of its substantial endowment income it is able to charge a tuition of only $2100. It has a faculty-student ratio of 1:3 and a scholarship program giving assistance to the over 30% of its enrollment which pays less than the stated tuition. It also fosters annual giving, but the degree to which it must rely on this resource, while significant, is not as vital as a-

School B which relies heavily on annual giving to make up its deficit between a $4000 per student cost and a $3100 tuition, because while it has raised substantial funds for capital improvements it has relatively little endowment. Its scholarship program affects fewer than 20% of its enrollment.

Which school probably has a more effective enrollment policy offering opportunity to a broad base of capable students able to attend because of the more attractive tuition rate?

The point is, of course, not to rationalize nor to promote operational deficits. But it is very much to the point to face realistically what policies and financial decisions will most effectively set an independent school on course with good academic facilities available competitively to capable students, who, as much as possible, can be selected for admission because of their ability and promise rather than because of their families' financial circumstances. This is not a naive presumption. Families with sufficient income to afford the full tuition, who also have capable children, are numerous. A competent admissions policy will perform have to be guided by financial exigencies and acceptance of a large proportion of capable children from families of good income will occur.

Having stated all these rather general facts about independent schools, there is no precise rule of thumb by which to guide a particular school. The variables are many:

- size of enrollment
- cost per student
- interest and resources of the community
- basic philosophy of teaching
and others.

In setting policies for The Miami Valley School we assume that there is ample interest to conduct a good independent school, now and in the future.

It is true that, to date, the interest and sacrifices of relatively few families and individuals have made possible the reorganization and plans of what is now The Miami Valley School. But to succeed for the future interest and support must broaden. Here, then, are the outlines of our approach:

The Miami Valley School - A Plan for Outstanding Pre-College Education in the Dayton Area.

I Objectives for the period 1965-68

a) Capital Improvement Project - to develop the 17-acre site immediately north of Hahn Road, near Mad River Road, in Washington Township, donated to the School by Mrs. George Mead, and -

- to erect a new school building containing nine classrooms, a science room, a library, offices, four small rooms for reading and music instruction, a multi-purpose high ceiling room (for cafeteria, sports, assemblies and meetings) a storage room, and a basement under the multi-purpose room for lockers, an art facility and additional storage.

- Estimated total cost $424,000

Of this amount unallocated contributions received and pledges outstanding total . . . . . . $ 113,000.
To raise the balance required, we plan to conduct an intensive fund-raising campaign between now and February 1st next, deriving

- from special gifts prospects, other individuals, and corporations and foundations . . . . . $ 161,000, or more

- by borrowing, ten year loan . . . . 150,000, or less

b) M.V.S. Current Operations
The excess of our current operational budget through June 30, 1965 over the deficit anticipated last Spring when fund raising was first instituted by the trustees affecting the School's reorganization, amounts to $42,000.

Some of this amount about $11,000 is due to an underestimate of the costs of closing out the Marti School's obligations. But the bulk is due to an excess of overhead for the current year's operation. Some of you may recall that we were optimistic last winter, a year ago, about having a new building ready this past September, and we continued to hope for this eventuality until almost the middle of April. In such an event, we felt we could plan on an enrollment of at least 120, and we had at the time to make contractual decisions about engaging faculty. We then ran headlong into the prolonged action of the zoning case, which effectively forestalled our building plans for a year, and postponed our fund raising activities to a time when we could be positive about the availability of the new site.

We are now positive. We now, also, must count on the continued active interest of many individuals to contribute the support we need for the future. The new building and site are necessary for expansion. Our present Munger Road facility simply is not large enough either as to building or land space; we cannot acquire adjacent land at Munger Road except at too high a cost; and rental of outside facilities is simply too high for the long range.

In this review, I have tried to be concise as well as candid about our circumstances. The reorganization of a school is not a simple task.

But the objectives are vital and with support from all, manageable. It is in this context that we will approach you in our Annual giving campaign over the next few weeks. We hope no one feels that we are demanding or even requesting an obligatory assessment. By the same token, we ask those who are able to consider seriously what they can afford as a contribution to the School. If parents would take on $20,000 of the operational excess item, the average individual contribution would be $365. Obviously some cannot afford this amount; a few may be able to give more. But that amount is a guide line, and we do want to try to erase the deficit before entering another active year.