A Study of the Nursery Schools Conducted at Western Kentucky Teachers College in 1934 and 1935

Ethel Barnard

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A STUDY OF THE NURSERY SCHOOLS CONDUCTED AT
WESTERN KENTUCKY TEACHERS COLLEGE
IN 1934 AND 1935

BY

LEAN MORTON BARNARD

A THESIS
SUBLITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Approved:

Major Professor
and
Department of Education

Minor Professor, Music

Graduate Committee, Chairman

[Signatures]

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PREFACE

The author wishes to express grateful appreciation to Mr. T. L. Matthews for the aid he has given in making available the data used in this study. Acknowledgments are also due Mrs. Carolyn Todd Seward for suggestions and helpful advice. To Dr. Lee Francis Jones, my major professor, I wish to express appreciation for guidance and counsel during the writing of this thesis.
CHAPTER I
HISTORY OF THE PRESCHOOL AND PARENTAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT

The movement in preschool and parental education is not entirely new, because it is the result of the thinking of educational leaders during many centuries. Plato was one of the first to emphasize the importance of influence in early childhood:

"Education and admonition commence in the first years of childhood and last to the very end of life. Mother and nurse and father and tutor are vying with one another about the improvement of the child as soon as ever he is able to understand what is being said to him." 1

In the early part of the seventeenth century John Amos Comenius advocated a "School of the Mother's Knee" in every home for the purpose of improving the soul and the physical well-being of the little child, thus implying the advantage of parental and preschool education. 2

During succeeding years interest in infant education continued and there slowly developed a favorable attitude toward the institution known as the nursery school. In Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a definite movement toward preschool education. Among the early leaders in this movement were Oberlin in France, Pestalozzi in Switzerland, Froebel in Germany and Robert Owen to whom we owe the beginnings of nursery schools in England.

Nursery Schools in the United States Prior to 1933

In the United States the nursery school developed rapidly after the World War. The schools were of various types such as: research nursery schools for

2 Ibid., p. 10.
child study, teacher-training schools and home economics nursery schools in connection with colleges and normal schools, social service schools or day nurseries for the accommodation of employed mothers, behavior problem schools which care for and study mal-adjusted children, cooperative nursery schools operated by groups of mothers of young children, and private nursery schools. 3

Between 1920 and 1930 the number of nursery schools reported to the United States Office of Education increased from three to 252. 4 In a survey of institutions for the education and training of young children in 1930, there were 343 nursery schools reported to the White House Conference with a total enrollment of 6,500 children. The White House Conference estimated the total number of such institutions in the United States to be about 500 and stated that "the movement is not a fad but represents an effort to meet new social conditions characteristic of modern life." 5

Scientific Research Concerning Nursery Schools

During the years when nursery education was developing, many studies were being conducted to further scientific knowledge concerning children of preschool age. The Twenty-eighth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education lists 238 publications of a scientific nature which are concerned with research in the field of child development. These studies are classified under five headings: (1) motor development, (2) language development, (3) intellectual development, (4) emotional and social development, and (5) physical growth. 6

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Within the last decade there have been some valuable investigations concerning the effect of nursery training on the intellectual growth, personality development, and health habits of young children. Studies concerning intellectual growth vary as to results, Goodenough, Kain and Hoefcr, and Hildreth finding practically no correlation between intellectual growth and nursery school training while Barret and Koch, and Wellman found a positive effect of nursery school training on mental growth. Investigations concerning personality development made by Walsh, Cushing, and Green show that children who have had nursery school training are superior to those not having such training in self-assertiveness, independence, and self-reliance, and are more easily adjusted to kindergarten or first grade. Among the studies relating to health habits are those of Updagraff, Walsh, and Anderson, who found that children who attend nursery schools show greater resistance to communicable diseases, develop superior habits of health, and are affected in the home diet situation to some degree by the school although there seems to be little transfer to the home of eating and sleeping habits acquired at nursery school.7

It is probable that many other desirable changes are being made as a result of nursery school training and that these changes will be discovered by current and future investigations. The problem of the nursery school then appears not to be whether it is of value, but rather how it may best be made available and how it should be administered to provide for the needs of those with whom it is concerned.

Purpose of the Study

As a result of the recent rapid increase in number of nursery schools in

in the United States a great deal of interest in nursery education has been
evidenced. The purpose of this study is to present a descriptive sketch of the
nursery schools conducted at Western Kentucky Teachers College in such a manner
that some results of the work may be shown.
CHAPTER II

EMERGENCY NURSERY SCHOOLS

Establishment of Emergency Nursery Schools

Emergency Nursery Schools constitute the sixth Emergency Educational Program authorized by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and sponsored by the United States Office of Education. The announcement of the proposed program was made by Harry L. Hopkins, Relief Administrator, on October 23, 1933.

Mr. Hopkins stated that,

"Young children of preschool age in the homes of needy and unemployed parents are suffering from conditions existing in the homes incident to present economic and social difficulties. Education and health programs of nursery schools can aid in combating physical and mental handicaps; furthermore, the nursery school program includes participation of parents which will raise their morale, also that of the family and the community."

"To supply this need, rules and regulations of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration may be interpreted to provide work relief wages for qualified and unemployed teachers, and other workers on relief, who are needed in organizing and conducting nursery schools under control of the public school systems. All plans for organizing, locating and supervising nursery schools shall be subject to the approval of local superintendents of schools and local relief administrators."

"Completed plans are to be sent to State Superintendents of Public Instruction and State Relief Administrators to obtain needed authority to proceed. Money granted for general relief to each state and those designated for work relief in education may be used."

Mr. Hopkins further stated that the National Association for Nursery Education, the Association for Childhood Education, and the National Council of Parent Education have offered assistance to relief administrators and school authorities in the organization of emergency nursery schools.  

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2 Ibid. p. 155.
At the time of the announcement concerning Emergency Nursery Schools the National Association for Nursery Education was holding a conference at Toronto. As a result of the announcement a National Advisory Committee on Emergency Nursery Schools was formed, with twelve members, who immediately formed tentative plans for procedure. In cooperation with the United States Office of Education the committee prepared two bulletins to be used by persons organizing and conducting Emergency Nursery Schools. The material in the bulletins is based upon a canvass of the best professional advice and the bulletins give suggestions as to the administration and program, housing and equipment of nursery schools. The bulletins have served as guides for the administration of Emergency Nursery Schools and thus the schools have been developed in accordance with high standards.

Many experts in nursery education have approved the plan set up by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. George D. Stoddard, Director, Child Welfare Research Station, University of Iowa, said, "The authoritative plan for Emergency Nursery Schools is consistent with the best practices of the preexisting nursery schools." 3

Plan for Administration of Emergency Nursery Schools

According to the original plan for Emergency Nursery Schools, units may be developed in the following ways:

1. Units for preschool children within elementary schools.

2. Laboratories for courses in the care and education of preschool children in high schools, normal schools and colleges.

3. Units in urban and rural areas of need, such as mining, factory,

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and mill districts.

The children in the schools must be between the age of two and the local legal school age, and the education and health program is under the supervision of the local public school system. The eligibility of the teachers and other workers is based on their qualifications and need for employment. The workers in nursery schools must be eligible for relief and partially qualified workers must receive training. 4

Plans for a training program for prospective nursery school teachers were prepared by the National Advisory Committee on Nursery Education, and the following factors were suggested as being important in the selection of teachers:

1. Training

welfare work with children under six years of age either individually or in groups.

2. Genuine enthusiasm for the program and an interest in young children.

3. Willingness to study and train for the work. 5

Each State desiring to take advantage of the nursery school program does so under the direction of a State Supervisor of Emergency Nursery Schools, and the training of teachers is to be developed whenever possible in cooperation with teacher training institutions and colleges or universities. Four to six week's training is given to untrained nursery school teachers, following assignment to a project, and two or three day institutes are arranged at intervals through the year as needed. Instruction is planned so as to help the

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prospective teacher in organizing the nursery school, seeing that children have adequate health care, training children in good habit formation, working with parents individually and in groups, and in cooperating with various social agencies.  

Growth of Emergency Nursery Schools

After the launching of the Emergency Nursery School program in October 1933, the projects developed rapidly, until in May 1934, thirty-six states had submitted and received approval of plans for nursery schools under the State Department of Education. Each school was under the supervision of a trained head teacher with an adult worker for each ten children, each school had someone trained in nutrition on the staff, and parent education was a part of each program. Teachers were being trained in schools, institutes and by correspondence.  

In October, 1934 more than 2300 Emergency Nursery Schools had been established with more than 50,000 children enrolled, the schools being located in thirty-eight states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. In March 1935 the report of a survey of Emergency Nursery Schools showed that the total number of such schools was 2,972 with a total enrollment of 64,491 children. Approximately 7,448 persons were employed as teachers, janitors, nurses, dietitians and in other capacities. The average salary for the head teacher was $73.26 per month and the average per capita cost for the unit was $16.20. 

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6 Ibid., p.4.
CHAPTER III

EMERGENCY NURSERY SCHOOLS AT WESTERN KENTUCKY TEACHERS COLLEGE*

The outline of policies for the training of Emergency Nursery School teachers, as designated by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration provides for the establishment of training centers to be conducted for periods of from four to six weeks. The work consists of regularly or specially organized classes together with observations of nursery school practice. Deviations from the suggested program are permitted when consistent with local conditions and with high standards of training. Where there is a six weeks program it is suggested that the two additional weeks be devoted mainly to actual practice in teaching under competent supervision.1

Distribution of centers for training teachers is determined largely by the following factors:

1. Geographical distance.
2. Number of teachers to be trained within a given area.
3. Adequate facilities such as staff, library, classrooms, living accommodations, and adequate maintenance at a minimum cost.
4. Effectiveness of cooperation of various organizations able to make contributions in a comprehensive training program.2

Nursery School Set-Up at Western Kentucky Teachers College

Western Kentucky Teachers College was one of the five colleges in Kentucky

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2Ibid., p. 2.
3The data from which the information in this chapter was compiled are filed in the office of the Director of the Training School, Western Kentucky Teachers College.
chosen as a training center for Emergency Nursery Schools because of its strategic geographical position and because of its facilities for the training of teachers. The first Emergency Nursery School conducted at this institution was initiated July 16, 1934, and continued for six weeks. On July 15, 1935 another teacher-training nursery school project was begun which lasted for the same period of time. Both schools were housed in the Kindergarten room of the Training School and used the playground and equipment of the Kindergarten. The projects were supervised by the Director of the Training School in cooperation with the local relief administration.

The schools had as their main purpose the training of partially qualified nursery school teachers in the various phases of pre-school and parental education necessary for the successful administration of Emergency Nursery Schools. The people receiving training had previously been assigned to nursery school projects and each person received $15.00 weekly from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration during the period of training.

In 1934 the staff of the nursery school consisted of a head teacher, an assistant teacher, and a nurse supervised by the Director of the Training School. There were twenty-four women taking the training. In 1935 the staff was composed of a head teacher, an assistant teacher, a nurse and a diettitian. During this second training period there were seventy-eight women enrolled for the work.

Children's Activities.—The children cared for in the two nursery schools were enlisted from the relief rolls of the Bowling Green, Kentucky relief office. In 1934 there were twenty-four children, ranging in age from two to five years, and in 1935 there were thirty-six children between the ages of fourteen months and five years. These children were taken to the school daily (except Saturday
and Sunday] at 6 a.m. and were returned to their homes at 2 p.m. in automobiles driven by the teachers. The daily schedule follows:

(6:00 - 6:45 a.m.) Arrival, Nurse's Inspection, Toilet and Elimination Routine. Each child was inspected by the nurse and given cod liver oil and fruit juice. They were urged to go to the toilet, bathed and dressed in sun suits. These activities were supervised by the teachers.

(6:45 - 10:30 a.m.) "Free play" period. During this period the group was divided, half the children going to the outdoor playground, the others remaining inside. At the middle of the period the groups exchanged places. The play period was supervised by small groups of student teachers and one of the teaching staff. At the end of the period children were encouraged to put the toys away.

(10:30 - 11:00 a.m.) Toilet and Elimination Routine and Preparation for Lunch. At this time the children were given shower baths, taken to the toilet and then were required to rest on cots until time for lunch.

(11:00 - 11:30 a.m.) Lunch Period. Three or four children and an adult sat at each small table. The meal was preceded by grace after which each child ate at his own rate. Second helpings were not urged but were given when requested.

(11:30 - 1:30 p.m.) Toilet and Sleep Routine. Each child went to the toilet, then to his bed for the daily sleep. The
younger children were permitted to sleep as long as they would do so.

(1:30 - 2:00 p.m.)

Music and Literature. The older children and those of the younger group who wished to participate were given opportunities to hear stories, look at picture-books, listen to the phonograph or join in rhythmic activities.

(2:00 p.m.)

Children were taken home in automobiles.

A wide variety of play equipment was available. On the playground there were swings, a merry-go-round, sand pile, slide, bars for climbing and a great deal of temporary apparatus such as elevated platforms and ladders for climbing, sliding, and other forms of exercise. Such materials as modeling clay, puzzles, enseis and drawing boards, dolls, doll buggies, wheel-barrows, tricycles and other toys were available as well as many informal materials. Packing boxes, wooden blocks and kags were provided for encouraging ingenuity and resourcefulness.

The play period was supervised but with as little interference by adults as was possible. Whenever the children could settle their own difficulties and solve their problems, they were permitted to do so. A definite effort was made to establish habits necessary for the routine of the school as early as possible.

The pictures which follow illustrate many of the daily activities of the nursery school children.
Figure 1. View of Children in Kindergarten Room During Labor Day, 1917.
Figure 2. Outdoor Play Period Showing Children on Temporary Apparatus
Figure 3: Children Playing in the Sand Pile

Figure 4: Outdoor Play and Exercise Activities
Figure 5. Playing on the Merry-go-round.

Figure 6. Children Exercising on the Jungle Gym.
Figure 7. Using the Drawing Materials.

Figure 8. Taking a Sun Bath.
Figure 9. Taking a Shower Bath.

Figure 10. Daily Sleep Period.
Procedures and activities of persons taking the training.—The program of the adults taking the training consisted of observation of nursery school practice as administered by the teaching staff, participation in the care of the children, keeping records of children's activities, making book reports, visiting homes of the children, and regular classroom work.

Three courses of the lecture type were offered by the head teacher, the assistant teacher and the dietitian. The courses were entitled "History, Methods, and Materials in Nursery Education," "Observation and Practice," and "Child Nutrition." These courses were scheduled for hours when the children had been taken home and on Saturday morning.

For active participation in the work students were divided into groups which alternated duties so that everyone had experience in every activity. Groups were designated for such work as assisting in the toilet routine, play activity, kitchen duty, or supervision of rest periods. The program was so arranged that there would always be someone observing and recording the behavior of each child and at the end of each week accumulative records were compiled from these records. Health records were kept which were based on the daily nurse's inspection.

Since parental education is an important aspect of the program of Emergency Nursery Schools, the students were required to engage in that phase of the work. Visits were made by the students to the home of all the children, the head teacher accompanying each student at least once. Wherever possible suggestions and advice on the care of children were given to the mothers. In order to secure greater cooperation between the school and homes, parents were urged to visit the school and observe the procedures.

In addition to the class work, observation, and participation in care of the children there were frequent opportunities given the students for hearing
lectures related to the work by well qualified persons. Some members of the faculty of Western Kentucky Teachers College as well as officials of the relief administration talked to the group on such subjects as "Child Psychology," "Health Problems," and "The Learning Process."

Realizing the importance of diet among children of pre-school age, much attention was given to the selection and preparation of the food, under the supervision of a capable dietitian. The federal government allowed twelve cents per child for the meal, but by careful planning the cost was kept at an average of less than eight cents per child during the 1935 session. Students were required to spend some time assisting in the preparation and serving of the food.

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* No figures are available for the food cost in 1924.*
CHAPTER IV

REVIEW OF THE NURSERY SCHOOLS STUDIED

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate correctly the results of the nursery school projects which have been described. Since the schools were not experiments conducted for the purpose of scientific research, there is little basis for evaluating the effects of the training on the children except by reviewing the opinions of the teachers. However, the daily records provide data which show some significant changes which were probably brought about because of the nursery school training.

The only available record of the children who attended the first session are the health charts. The charts show that every child attending the school made some gain in weight, the gains ranging from seven ounces to three pounds for the six weeks.

The children who attended the nursery school in 1935 did not gain as much in weight as did those who attended the first session. This was probably due to the fact that the children who came in 1934 were entering nursery school for the first time, while in 1935 many of the children enrolled had spent a year in local Emergency Nursery Schools. These local schools had been organized and administered by women who had taken the training at Western Kentucky Teachers College in 1934. It is the opinion of the teaching staff that routine habits were more easily established during the second session, due perhaps to the example and influence of those children who had already had nursery school experience.

In the second session detailed records were kept which provide information as to behavior, social and emotional adjustment, and physical growth. The records show that progress of some kind was made by every child enrolled in the
The following case studies selected at random show some of the changes 
effected during the period of nursery school training.

Case 1 is a girl under two years of age. Upon entering nursery school 
she had not been warmed, did not chew her food, her toilet habits had not 
been established, her daily nap was about fifty minutes long, and she lacked 
muscular control. At the end of the training period she showed improvement 
in all these habits, her sleeping period having increased to ninety minutes 
daily. She learned to handle her cup and spoon, to follow directions, and to 
check simple acts on command.

Case 2, a boy three years old, is from one of the cleaner, more wholesome homes. At first he was timid, cried frequently, and seemed unhappy; 
but after a few days he became adjusted to the group and seemed eager to be 
in school. He is described at the close of the school as a child who enjoys 
books, wants to be clean and insists on having his hair combed. He learned to 
eat vegetables which he had previously refused and showed rapid improvement 
in neatness of person and surroundings. Case 2 seemed to overcome his timidity 
to a great extent and became interested in keeping the room in order and in 
constructing and repairing toys for himself and others.

Case 3 is a girl two years of age who was described upon entering nursery 
school as a shy, sensitive child, afraid of everything and unable to care for 
herself. At the end of six weeks she had conquered her fear of people to the 
extent that she frequently joined groups of children and initiated conversa-
tions. She learned to use the play equipment and was seen climbing the ladder 
and walking on the elevated planks. She learned to put on and button her sun 
suit and to wash her hands after going to the toilet without aid or sugges-
tion. Evidently she had learned some degree of independence because she
would defend herself when teased by other children.

Case B, a boy four years old, came to the nursery school a shy, silent child who wanted to be alone and who showed little imagination or interest in play. After a few days of encouragement and interest from the teachers he developed an aggressive and sometimes cruel spirit which at times made him difficult to manage. Many times it was necessary to remove him from the group, but he finally seemed to recognize to some extent the rights of others and by the fifth week had become a good follower, well adapted to the routine of the school, and accepted by the children as a member of the group.

Case C is a boy four years old. His home environment was deplorable.

The home was dirty, there were ten children in the home, the mother pregnant, and the father had been in the penitentiary. Case C entered school the first day with lice, malformed bones, and anemia. He was very quiet, never smiled, and was entirely lacking in self-assertiveness. Because of the home environment it was difficult to accomplish much but his record shows some improvement in social adaptation. He became interested in other children and seemed happy upon arrival at the school. He easily adjusted to the routine and was quick to respond to commands. In the opinion of the teachers the child needs a change of environment or improvement of home conditions in order to develop normally.

A study of these and other cases shows that even in a training period of only six weeks the children were easily led to form desirable sleep, diet, and health habits, that emotional adjustments were effected to some degree, and that in many cases there was significant improvement in social attitudes and conduct. It is probable that continued attendance at nursery school would aid in the formation of permanent desirable habits which might carry over to the home situation.
Another important outcome of the nursery schools studied is the effect of the training upon the students taking the work. It is believed by the writer that the projects conducted at Western Kentucky Teachers College conformed with the standards set up by the government for the administration of such schools and that the training program for teachers was a highly satisfactory one. The program fulfilled the requirements of the government and at the same time provided features not specified as necessary.

Since the 102 women who took the training were approved by the teaching staff as capable prospective nursery school teachers, it is probable that they were more successful in the administration of the projects to which they were assigned as a result of having had the training.

It would be impossible to evaluate the effect of the nursery school program on the homes from which the children came. Parents were urged to visit the schools and in 1935 almost every mother did so. The teachers noticed that after a few days of having the children brought home clean in the afternoon, the mothers were more careful to bathe them before sending them to school. It is likely that the eating and sleeping habits acquired at the school were transferred to the homes in cases where the mothers were interested in better methods of rearing the children and had received advice.
Since the data studied for this thesis consisted largely of the opinions of those engaged in the work and since there was no attempt made to test scientifically the effect of the nursery school training, there is little basis for an accurate measurement of results. However, in the opinion of the writer, there is sufficient evidence to warrant some conclusions regarding the nursery schools studied.

The children who took the training showed improvement in physical health at the end of the training period. The nursery school provided a more wholesome environment from the standpoint of cleanliness and general health routine than would have existed in the majority of homes from which the children came.

The nursery school environment provided better opportunities for social adjustment because the children were living in groups and their play was supervised. It is probable that the children who attended the school were better able to adjust themselves socially than they would have been otherwise.

Under the guidance of persons trained in the education of young children, undesirable personality traits were encouraged and undesirable ones controlled among the children. Continued attendance at nursery school under such guidance would probably be very beneficial in this respect.

These conclusions are in harmony with the findings of investigations concerning the effect of nursery school training on children.

The habits acquired in the nursery school may have carried over to the home situation in some or all cases.

The establishment of the nursery school routine demonstrates the ease with which children of pre-school age may be trained in the formation of correct habits.

The student teachers who received the training were obviously better equipped to establish and administer similar schools.
A further study of the children who attended the nursery schools should be made to determine whether or not the results obtained through the training continued. A comparison might be made of the children who attended nursery schools with others who had not attended in order to determine the value of the training.

It is suggested that a systematic and detailed method of record keeping in the nursery school would aid greatly in furthering study of this kind.

A study of the ratings of the nursery schools conducted by the women who took the training at Western Kentucky Teachers College as compared with those conducted by people who were trained in other institutions might be made to show the success of the training.

It is hoped by the writer that the description of the nursery schools used in this study may benefit others who are interested in this phase of education.


Supplement No. 5 to bulletin No. 19, "Nursery School Projects."

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