

## THE PERSONAL-HYGIENE CAMPAIGN CARRIED OUT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF SAN JUAN, PORTO RICO

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The interesting personal hygiene program which has been so enthusiastically carried out by both teachers and pupils in the graded schools of San Juan, has proved a great success ever since it was adopted two years ago, and a marked change has been noted both in the physical and moral condition of the children.

The individual inspection of over ten thousand children has been made. This work has been carried out from the first to the eighth grades, and has been the means of arousing the interest of the pupils as to hygienic methods of living. A minute investigation of the condition of the clothing, shoes, stockings, handkerchief, finger nails, teeth, neck, ears and hair was made of all these children, and teachers were given instructions in order that the examinations might be resumed in the respective grades.

Children suspected of tuberculosis, as a result of the individual examinations, were given treatment and observation at the tuberculosis clinics of the Department of Health. Children suffering from other affections were treated by the physicians in charge of school-hygiene work in the emergency rooms and at the Health office of Barrio Obrero (Workmen's Settlement).

Of four thousand children who were weighed and measured only fifty per cent were normal. The majority of unnourished were those children who have insufficient food because of poverty. Others were undernourished because they were ignorant as to the value of foods, and as to the basic rules of hygiene, so their food was not varied. These were instructed as to the food they should eat in order to be healthy, and were shown how these foods would cost them no more than the food they consumed which was lacking of nutritive properties. They were taught to prepare menus for the different days of the week and emphasis was given to the necessity of using fruits, vegetables, cornmeal and milk.

A chart was hung in each schoolroom, bearing the name of the pupils enrolled, giving their normal weight and their actual weight.

Three thousand cards were distributed containing the name, height, and the eight principal rules of personal hygiene. These points were discussed in detail in the personal-hygiene classes, and were illustrated at the same time with colored posters. The children who were underweight were put in observation and these were instructed as to what they should do to bring their weight up to normal.

On inspecting the pupils' teeth it was found that three-fourths did not use tooth brushes, and others did not know how to use them. Last year the school children provided themselves with more than six thousand tooth brushes, but this year the Red Cross distributed fifteen hundred of very good quality among them.

The pupils responded with great enthusiasm to the various drills prepared by the Personal Hygiene Department. The tooth-brush drill was practiced vigorously and hundreds of children promised to brush their teeth three times a day. Those children who could not buy tooth paste were instructed to use salt water, soda or chalk with lime water prepared by them.

The handkerchief drill was enthusiastically carried out and many of the pupils made handkerchiefs and little sachet bags for the poor pupils of their respective rooms. The bath drill was also practiced eagerly and the large percentage of children who were accustomed to bathe once a week were impressed with the necessity of the daily bath. They were also instructed in the nose and throat wash which should be taken on retiring and rising as a means to prevent diseases and disorders in the respiratory organs.

An interesting feature of the personal-hygiene classes was the practical lessons given in shoe-shining. Expert bootblacks were taken to the public schools and asked to demonstrate how every schoolboy can shine his own shoes for the modest cost of two cents.

Of the four thousand children who kept the personal-hygiene rules as daily tasks, 3,910 received diplomas and shield pins. The Department of Health furnished posters, pamphlets and leaflets on rules of hygiene which were distributed, and in many cases explained to the pupils. The teachers and pupils also prepared very interesting posters demonstrating the proper diet for a child.

A series of conferences was carried out in which prominent physicians took part, and in their interesting addresses gave valuable advice to the pupils as to their health and physical development. Special programs were planned for most of these occasions in which

the pupils presented dialogues, recitations and other instructive and original numbers which had been chosen by their teachers. On dif-



**Toothbrush Drill.**

ferent occasions practical demonstrations were given by the nurses as to the proper methods of bathing an infant. Various films on



**Handkerchief Drill**

anemia, tuberculosis and health matters in general were exhibited in which both parents and pupils took great interest.

The Red Cross cooperated readily with this work and furnished money for tooth-brushes, clothing for the poorest children among the pupils and treatment and food for other needy pupils. This organization also furnished glasses for children whose sight was being impaired because of the lack of same. It also gave premiums to the schoolrooms that made the best record in cleanness and order. These premiums consisted of pretty cards, pencil boxes, books, etc.

The Inspector of Schools of San Juan as well as the principals and teachers all gave valuable assistance in the carrying out of this program, and the Superintendent of the Department, Miss María Fraile Ferrer, who has given unstinted service in the development of the campaign, is to be congratulated for the success achieved and the cooperation obtained. A great change has been noticed in the general appearance of the school children, as well as in their state of health and in their responsiveness to good habits.

It is hoped that this work will not only be continued in the public schools of San Juan but will be extended to the other cities and towns of the Island.

