

sters adhere to their own rules.

Student-made codes of conduct start with simple matters like dress. In one school, students have barred boys from wearing duck-tail haircuts, clomping metal plates on their shoes, sweat shirts, low-hanging pants without belts, leather jackets, and large club insignia.

The girls' taboos preclude tight skirts, exaggerated hairdos and make-up, and sheer blouses.

"We found that better conduct followed improved standards of dress," the principal reports.

Codes are often drawn up and agreed upon to cover dating practices. A number of schools use the question-box technique. Questions are put in a box on a folded slip of paper, unsigned. What to do about adolescent acne is one of the most-asked questions. But perplexities about going steady and petting run close behind.

"When girls ask me if they should go steady," says a teacher, "I usually tell them: 'When you go into a store, you don't buy the first pair of shoes you put on, do you? The same is true about selecting your friends. Since the right boy friend is so much more important to you than a pair of shoes, wouldn't it be wise to look around a bit and make sure you have the one best-suited to you?'"

SAYS ANOTHER health-education teacher: "Just don't fall for everything the boys tell you. Remember: they have motives of their own."

More sensitive and personal topics are discussed by boys and girls in separate groups. But dating and social behavior are frequently aired in lively mixed-group sessions. Boys and girls often startle each other with their different points of view. But out of these meetings comes a more considerate and understanding attitude toward each other.

Although the Washington program is centered in health-education classes, it extends through the entire curriculum with each step preparing the child for the one to follow. In kindergarten and the early grades, children become

familiar with the life process. They study the life of the bird from the egg. Animals live in the classroom. In one second-grade class, a mother brought "baby brother" to class for monthly visits. The children played with him and watched him grow.

Later, the children begin their study of the family as a unit. The family is not presented as a stereotype ideal with a father and a mother, a brother and sister, for in the children's experience this may not be true. They are shown the family as a place of warmth and security, even though it may consist of a father or mother only, or grandparents, or an aunt and uncle. Thus, the family ideal is made desirable even to children from broken homes.

AT THE eighth-grade level come study of the functioning of the body and the reproductive process and discussion of moral concepts. Because of the preparation that has gone before, the students react to this, not as something special, but as a natural part of the whole miracle of living.

All materials are carefully screened; a film on the reproductive process is usually approved by the parents before it is shown to a class.

The full impact of the five-year-old Washington program will not be felt until students begin to graduate who have had the benefit of full instruction from kindergarten to senior year. But teachers and counselors are heartened by some of the things they already see.

One is the interest and enthusiasm with which students respond to instruction in this field. Another is the readiness with which they subscribe to principles of good conduct once they can see the reason and common sense behind them. Still another is the manifest improvement in attitudes and daily behavior.

"If, five years from now," said an official, "some of our students set up homes that are happy partly as a result of what they've learned in our schools, that's the payoff as far as we're concerned."

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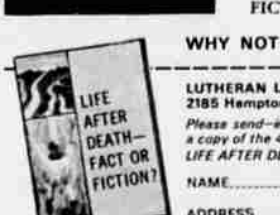
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