

Helen Parkhurst, D.H.S Class of 1904

Helen Parkhurst was an extraordinary woman. Helen Parkhurst was significant because, though she began life in our small town she went on to make a difference in the world of education. In this web page I will be talking about Helen Parkhurst, her ideas, and what became of them.

On March 7, 1886 Helen Parkhurst was born into Durand, WI. Little did anyone know that she would impact hundreds of life's around the world. While Helen Parkhurst was growing up her father, James, and mother operated a hotel where the Beauty shop is today. In 1904, Helen Parkhurst graduated at the age of 17. After graduated she taught in a Black School near Arkansaw. During the time when Parkhurst first started teaching in the the one room schoolhouse it was overfilled with farmers. Parkhurst was being hired to teach the farmer's children, to her that meant free play was allowed in her spirit.



While working in the one room schoolhouse Helen Parkhurst came about the idea of changing the educational area forever. In the 1920's Parkhurst succeeded in changing the traditional education. It was filled with independent objectives-



driven learning and individualized instruction. Helen Parkhurst said if the children had their own independence they would excel and succeed. Parkhurst also noticed the benefits of having the older children helping the younger ones. After putting forth her goals, Parkhurst founded The Dalton School or first known as The Children's University in 1919. The main reason for the founding of the Dalton school is to have children learn at their own pace and to budget their learning time. Not only did Parkhurst think the students should be academically strong but

also they should be informed and sensitive citizens. This school became and still is one of the most successful educational institutions in the nation. Although many years have passed since the school was first founded it still stays committed to Parkhurst and her ideas.

To sum it up, I believe Helen Parkhurst was more than what she led on to be. Parkhurst is a very important person in history. I am grateful for what Helen Parkhurst did to the educational area. If it wasn't for Parkhurst we would not have the independence like we do today. As we now know today children learn and think differently and Helen Parkhurst found that out earlier than anyone else. Not only did Parkhurst realize it she acted on it. She went for what she wanted and she wanted children to have their independence, and she succeeded. I enjoy knowing that someone was looking out for our benefit of education before I even was born.

“What does a pupil do when given, as he is given by the Dalton Laboratory Plan, responsibility for the performance of such and such work? Instinctively he seeks the best way of achieving it. Thus having decided, he proceeds to act upon that decision. Discussion helps to clarify his ideas and also his plan of procedure. When it comes to the end, the finished achievement takes on all the splendour(sic) of success. It embodies all he has thought and felt and lived

during the time it has taken to complete. This is real experience. It is culture acquired through individual development and through collective co-operation. It is no longer school-it is life."

Helen Parkhurst in Education on the Dalton Plan, 1992

Who was Helen Parkhurst?



This hotel was owned by Helen Parkhurst's parents in Durand. This photo of the hotel was from about 1880. It was located on 4th Street.

Parkhurst live on ABC Radio in New York . She hosted a very early educational show...hardly Sesame Street....





The Dalton School in New York City
in 1919.