

Let's Visit Our Schools:

5th Grade Gets Guidance Along With Education

Students Share in School Government; Teachers' Pay Compares Favorably With Other Upstate Cities



Christmas theme furnishes many art inspirations for teachers and pupils in Salem schools. David Reed works diligently on a silhouette pattern to decorate the bulletin board at Richmond School where he is a fifth grader. David works at a desk, familiar in type to his parents, but almost a thing of the past in the Salem school system. Modern classroom furniture is more comfortable, better looking and more adaptable to the various classroom activities.



Teacher is still the pivotal center of classroom activity in Salem schools and here Miss Helen Zistel gets full attention to her demonstration during an art class at her Richmond School room. Watchful pupils are (l. to r.) Gary Olson, Vonda Watters and Gerald Stubblefield.



For the veterans of the hickory limb era of education this may not look like a typical classroom situation, but it is today. Most teachers permit a certain amount of free movement, whispering is not a punishable offense or even an offense. And if you have need of conferring with another pupil across the room, go to it. In this scene at Salem Heights are (l. to r.) Bonnie Ireland (back to camera), Billy Folk, Penny Nelson, Jim Buckley and Ronald Felner.

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By THOMAS G. WRIGHT, Jr. Staff Writer, The Statesman

Salem belies the buyer's adage that "You get what you pay for" by getting a much better bargain from its 440 public school teachers.

Though Salem teachers this week were still underpaid by most comparative business standards, they were still getting a "fair shake" when compared to other teachers in their own state and across the country. A cross-section look at Salem's teachers gave the impression that Johnny Fifth Grade for example, was getting a lot of guidance along education's path for the amount of money his parents were willing to pay. What could Johnny's teachers expect in the way of recompense for their years of preparation? Anything from \$3,080 to \$5,310, although actually the low man on Salem's teacher totem pole was getting \$3,210.

Single Pay System

Classroom teachers are paid on a single salary system in Salem, which means a first grade teacher at McKinley School with like training and experience would be drawing the same amount as a teacher at the senior level of North Salem High School. For each additional year of training and each additional year of experience, the Salem teacher could expect an increase in pay.

Salem's average teacher held a bachelor's degree and had about five years of teaching experience. For this background he was getting \$4,249.86 a year. For a master's degree (more than 100 held them) he could count on \$250 more. At these levels he was getting more than his fellow teacher in Eugene, Albany or Corvallis, and slightly less than Portland.

Compared to 210 cities across the nation in the 40 to 100,000 category, his pay was ranked 21st at the bachelor minimum level, 88th at the bachelor maximum, 25th at the master minimum and 80th at the master maximum.

While the Salem system permitted in some cases a dull, uninspiring teacher to draw down the same pay as a less-trained, less-experienced but top-rank teacher, it had its benefits. It served as an incentive for teachers to continue their education in summer sessions. It encouraged good teachers to stay in the Salem public schools.

Some 'Dodo' Teachers

Despite the favorable factors—comparative pay, favorably rated schools, "good town to live in"—Salem pupils could still consider themselves fortunate if they got through elementary school without striking a "dodo" teacher. Most of the poor (qualitatively) teachers were either in their first year of teaching or their first year in Salem. In most cases they had either belied impressive academic records, discovered they were not born to the teaching profession, or were hired at the last minute to fill unexpected vacancies.

During the Christmas season for the schools, a good teacher was expected to be a dramatist with the direction of a DeMille, a chorister with the flair of Waring, and still have the sympathetic understanding of grandma.

Because one sour teacher can quickly spoil a whole barrel of pupils, principals keep a close eye on their new teachers. The principal will spend more time in the classroom helping with control, biggest trouble of inexperienced teachers, suggesting teaching method improvements or even taking over some of the instruction. School system consultants on art,

music and physical education will be called in for extra help in their specialties.

So Johnny may not have a lost year in the classroom even with a poor teacher.

But with a good one, grade five could be a powerfully important one.

There was still reading, writing and listening along with all the rest, though the average fifth grader would rather talk than listen. Johnny was now an upper-classman by elementary school standards and he had the size and the duties to prove it.

On his credit side he was contributing considerable to the functioning of his school by serving on hall patrols, street patrols and helping out in the classroom duties.

Most principals admitted they would have a difficult and probably costly time operating their cafeterias without the help of fifth and sixth grade students who, in the name of citizenship, helped with setups in the dining room, sold and punched meal tickets, and scraped plates. Mostly on a

volunteer basis, principals had little trouble keeping the posts filled.

Girls Grow Faster

Johnny was growing by hands and feet and he was apt to trip, stumble and fall over them and blame it on Susie who was growing even faster. Both had a growing curiosity about sex and the older more mature class members were apt to be embarrassed by secondary sex characteristics appearing as the year rolled along.

Extra-curricular activities—Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs—were filling one of Johnny's powerful needs for hobby interests and membership in organized groups.

After a brief look at the world in the 4th grade, he was back for a closer look at his own country in his social studies. Through films, books, magazines, radio and phonograph, Johnny probed the four corners of the U.S. to see how they lived and worked and played.

He searched diligently through

magazines for pictures to cut out to illustrate the scrap books he was making on the New England states, the Central States, etc. If he couldn't find exactly the right picture to suit him he could illustrate it with his own art which was taking more directed form.

Johnny was becoming familiar with the tales of Christopher Columbus, Hernando De Soto, La Salle, Capt. John Smith the Roger Williams, the achievements of Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Paul Jones, Father Serra and George Washington, and the adventures of Daniel Boone, Zebulon Pike and Narcissa Whitman.

Part of these tales of history he was finding in his language and reading books. There were exciting stories of discovery, exploration and invention, funny stories, sad stories and even love stories. Each added a few more words to his vocabulary and he learned how to look them up in a dictionary, pronounce them, spell them and know their meanings. He was being encouraged to assume the responsibility for correcting his own language errors and to keep a list of his own hard words.

Verb Patterns Appear

Correct English usage which he had been learning by imitation was now coming Johnny's way in a formal pattern. Verb forms like begin-began-begun, grow-grew-grown, write-wrote-written would all be presented, but not conquered during the year.

But most 5th graders would, by next May, have mastered the uses of capitalization for countries, titles of persons and sacred words; commas for words of address, words of series, after yes or no; and the exclamation mark.

Along the way it was expected he would learn to make simple outlines in organization materials for speaking or writing, increase interest in using references such as the dictionary, encyclopedias, glossaries, atlases and current newspapers and magazines and learn the correct use of certain helping words and verb forms. He would increase his ability to enjoy good poetry, but would probably memorize only a fraction of the verses required of his father. But the fraction itself would be a problem—proper and improper fractions, comparison of fractions, reduction of fractions to the lowest terms, and addition and subtraction of like and unlike fractions, and mixed numbers. Elsewhere in arithmetic this year, Johnny will have more opportunities to make money change, meet the concept of area, and have an introduction to reading and understanding graphs.

While past particples, double divisors and Abigail Adams were making his head go around, Johnny was learning some other reasons why things go around. Blessed with a variety of attractive textbooks, charts and training aids, he was getting an understanding of electricity, steam, gas and atoms as elements of force man had put to work for him. And he was getting an idea of how it got that way. In his science classes he learned steam has force because it expands, gasoline when it changes from a liquid to a gas and explodes. He heard about erosion and conservation of natural resources. And he learned that all things are made of elements and that elements unite in chemical change to form compounds.

Diet and Sanitation

Either in his science class or in health education, or both, Johnny was learning to recognize the advantages of a good diet. He became aware that cost is not an indication of the nutritive value of food. And he realized that careful sanitation in food handling was important in the prevention of disease and in the preservation of foods.

Johnny's art had more purpose than it did a year ago. He needed it to help his social study projects and to impress the lessons of other fields. He still needed it most for an emotional release. But the teacher wasn't allowing the indiscriminate activity of the first grader. Johnny was being guided to make discriminations with respect to size, shape, color, general appeal and usability of objects. He learned about primary colors and secondary colors, and from a color wheel he constructed himself he learned about complementary colors.

Singing was still the basic music experience in grade five. With singing some music expression was available to everyone in Johnny's class. The class was introduced to two-part music, not mechanically but by ear. If the teacher taught music enthusiastically, Johnny learned it enthusiastically. If not, those members of Johnny's class with no special musical talent began to drop it into the "sissy" category, a dull period of lackluster singing which it unfortunately was.

The "Frisivolous Fifth" is nonetheless a knowledgeable one for Johnny. Though he may well be in the "wise guy" age he'll still have a lot to learn in the "Sophisticated Sixth."



"Think," is what Richard Severson is invited to do here by Mrs. Nan Denhem, his fifth grade teacher at Salem Heights School. Scene and situation are typical of Salem classrooms. Teachers invite youngsters to work out their problems to increase self-reliance. They discourage homework in most cases for this same reason and because they are unable to tell where Johnny's efforts end and papa's begin. (All Statesman Photos by Thomas G. Wright Jr.)



Though some activities in Salem classrooms call for considerable movement and apparent disorder, it may be straight-line attention in the next. Modern classroom furniture and modern ideas about education find a place for both types of classroom decorum in this Salem Heights 5th grade room.