

Basic Graded 'A', Frills Flunked, in Experiments

(Editor's Note: The trumpeting for better education is heard in all 50 states. Three years ago, the District of Columbia heard the call and went to work. The result was the Amidon elementary school a new element in education for the '60s. Here is a progress report.)

By JOHN H. MILLER
United Press International
WASHINGTON (UPI)—Three years ago, a new elementary school opened its doors within view of the U.S. Capitol. It was a curious school. There weren't enough students to put in it. But there it was, the Amidon school.

Congress had appropriated money for the 25-room school to serve an urban redevelopment area. But when the school was ready for use in September, 1960, the redevelopment wasn't.

It became a matter of arithmetic. There were only 148 elementary pupils in the area. They had been attending a nearby school slated for abandonment.

These 148 children were the only customers for the Amidon school, which had a capacity of 806.

Dr. Carl F. Hansen, superintendent of schools in the District of Columbia, was quick to recognize the unusual situation. He had been waiting for a chance like this.

In his many years as an educator, he had heard one question time and again:

"How can the quality of education be improved?"

Hansen thought he knew. The Amidon school, brand new with practically no one to put in it, was his opportunity to find out if he was right.

The superintendent felt that education was not preparing students to meet the "new, unpredictable and immensely complex problems which they will face."

"In other words," he wrote later in a book on the school, "in education we have to repair a leaky roof and at the same time rebuild weak foundations. I believe that the new Amidon concept is a demonstrably successful step toward these goals."

What is the Amidon concept? To many, it was a return to the 3 R's of the little red schoolhouse. In a way, that's exactly what it was. Only a souped-up version.

Under the Amidon plan, as it became known, emphasis is on basic subjects: Reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, science and history.

In the Amidon classroom, the teacher runs the show. You never will hear a teacher ask, "What will we learn today, children?" Teacher prescribes.

Amidon school isn't easy. First graders have homework. Students walk in the corridors in single file. They may not talk.

Discipline is important, not so much for discipline's sake but because a teacher can't teach as effectively if students are unattentive.

The principal is Dr. Dorothy L. Johnson, a professional, courteous and thorough.

"We believe that children have not been challenged enough in the past," she said. "We felt they could do better."

"The land on which this school is built used to be a slum," she said. "There is no other word for it."

Different backgrounds. "The children are from widely different backgrounds. Many are Negroes who live in public housing where the rent is only \$40 a month."

But only 50 per cent come from the Amidon school district.

"The rest come from every section of Washington," Dr. Johnson said. "They come here because their parents want them to. Their mothers and fathers have to bring them to school every morning and take them home at night."

They are sons of Army officers, daughters of diplomats, foreigners, children of wealthy parents and those on relief.

Although 65 per cent of the 640 students are Negro, there is no racial problem.

Amidon starts at the kindergarten level and runs through the sixth grade. One of the most important subjects in each of these levels is phonics.

"We found in the beginning that the children weren't listening to the words," Dr. Johnson said. "Now, our language instruction is 75 per cent phonics."

According to the results, the system works. Most of the children in kindergarten can read, and read well.

Dr. Johnson gives most of the credit to the teachers.

"The teachers here all have three things in common. They like children; they believe they can learn; and they show infinite patience with them."

Superintendent Hansen agrees. He said the most important quality a teacher can possess is the gift of caring.

Under this guideline, one teacher who does belong at the Amidon school is Miss Marguerite Jamieson. A tall brunette in her 20's, she believes in the Amidon way and practices it in her first grade classroom.

Been Eliminated. "The frills of education have been eliminated," she said. "We believe in pushing the child of average ability. They have been coddled in the past."

On discipline, Miss Jamieson said: "Some visitors said they did not like the idea of the children being required to walk in line in the corridors. They ask if the school isn't missing out by not teaching social graces. But is the school the place for this? I think it belongs in the home."

Every Amidon student took standard, national achievement tests at the end of each of the school's three years. The results from this year's testing are not complete, but here are the 1961 and 1962 results:

In 1961, 78 per cent of the students scored above the national average, 6 per cent equalled it and 18 per cent scored below.

In 1962, 96 per cent were above, 2 per cent equal and 2 per cent below.

But principal Johnson feels that even more important were the results of tests based on what was expected of the students, knowing each one's abilities and talents.

The report card: In 1961, 74 per cent scored higher than was expected. That figure climbed to 87 per cent the following year.

Results Equal. The results at home were equivalent. Parents say their children are happy to be chal-

lenged. In turn, the parents are happy.

Here are some representative remarks from the children:

"Amidon," a sixth grader said, "is some swell school! We have to work hard but I like it. You know, I never liked school before."

Another sixth grader told his teacher, "We played a lot last year (at another school). It was fun but we didn't learn much. Now we hardly ever play but we're having fun just the same."

And there was the fourth grader who shook hands with his teacher at the end of the year and said with a smile, "I

don't know whether I am going to pass but I enjoyed being in your class."

"The Amidon plan is designed to utilize the best of the old and new in education," said Hansen. "It is simply the logical union between what has been discovered about the way people learn and the content to be learned. It is not a return to the horse and buggy days, although much good education was available in those days."

Said Hansen, "The decade of the '60's should tell the story of the success of this type of education for children today."

Said a six-year-old to her teacher last term: "I like homework. When can we have some more?"

while he was showing her how to fire a .22 caliber rifle.

The woman was held by police on a public intoxication charge.

Ingram said a coroner's inquest has been scheduled.

Goodwin formerly owned extensive ranch property near the community of Juntura. He sold his holdings recently and moved to Vale.

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Officials of the Bureau of Yards and Docks said Friday the cost of the project would be "in the neighborhood of \$20 million."

PHOTO BY AP/WIDE WORLD

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Accidental Shooting Kills Vale Resident

VALE (UPI)—Tom Goodwin, 70, a long-time resident of Malheur County, was shot to death in his home here Friday evening.

Sheriff Robert Ingram said Mary Rita Stark, 38, told him she shot Goodwin accidentally.

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BURIAL FOR PETS—The four beloved poodles of Georgia White Montano were buried in a Colma, Calif., pet cemetery under a costly tombstone. Mrs. Montano, 37, apparently smothered the dogs before she shot her husband, Air Force Sgt. Pedro Montano, and her ex-husband, Henry H. White. A few minutes later she died in an explosion which demolished her home. Police speculate she set fire to the house to cover the crime and perished when she failed to escape out a window. The burial arrangements for the dogs cost an estimated \$1,000. Mrs. Montano made no arrangements for burial of the three humans. (UPI)

School News

McLoughlin Jr. High Hedrick Junior High

Current enrollment figures show a total of 1,204 students at McLoughlin. This is an increase of 25 over last year when 1,179 were enrolled.

The largest class is the eighth grade with 408. The seventh grade has 404 students and the ninth grade has a total of 392.

Student elections are under way with primary elections of class officers scheduled for Friday, Sept. 20. General election will be held Wednesday, Sept. 25.

Primary election of student body officers will be Monday, September 30, and the general election will be held Thursday, Oct. 3.

Seventh and eighth grade yell leaders will be elected next week.

Ninth grade cheerleaders were elected last week. Those elected were Teresa Allen, yell queen, Berlette Stephens, Zella Mason, Cathy Bradford, and Alice Schaler.

Eight McLoughlin teachers are involved in team teaching this year on an experimental basis.

The teams are composed of Mrs. Marvel Yung and Mrs. Louise Davis, geography; Jack Sutton and Larry Brunette, history; Mrs. Sherril Harshbarger and Miss Sandra Lien, English; and Mrs. Eula Foley and Gordon Morris, math.

Mrs. Henrietta Leon and Mrs. Maydell Daniels are teacher aides working with the teams.

Six teachers were added to the faculty this year.

Mrs. Margo Mayes teaches typing, Mrs. Kay Brashears, seventh and eighth grade art, and Bob Bork, band.

Three former McLoughlin students are among the new teachers, Ed Albright, English; Tony Brauner, history and geography, and Tom Morris, math.

Coach Bob Radcliff reports that 41 ninth graders are out for football with 22 lettermen in the group.

The first game of the year matched McLoughlin and Klamath Falls at 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 21, on the McLoughlin field.

The eighth grade team, coached by Bill Esselstyn, has 53 boys out for the team. The first game is with Ashland, Sept. 26, on the Mac field.

Seventh grade coaches Chuck Madary and Tony Brauner have divided 75 boys among the two seventh grade teams. The McLoughlin White team plays Hedrick Reds and the McLoughlin Blacks meet Hedrick Blues Oct. 3 in their first games.

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