

What Children Should Learn In Elementary School

Part One
THE PRIMARY GRADES
by Kenneth S. Erickson

As you may or may not know, the week of November third to November ninth has been officially designated as National Education Week. With this in mind, one of the members of our community approached me the other day with the question, "What are you teaching the kids up there?" Well, like a good politician, I hemmed and hawed, beat about the bush a bit, while I collected my wits, and then tried to explain what I was teaching.

The local business man listened patiently while I rambled on in exalted terms and then said finally, "No, I'm not interested in just what you are teaching, but what is the school trying to teach the children?"

After almost six years of college during which my main concern had been the learning of how to help children learn, I thought that I could answer the

man's question, but much to my own amazement I could not give a concrete answer, one that would satisfy either the business man or myself.

My talk with the local merchant started me thinking about the purpose of education and the problem of public apathy toward education. If a teacher did not know the overall scope of the educational program in the elementary school in which he works then how could the community as a whole be expected to understand it? If the public does not understand the meaning and the purpose of our educational system, then how can they appreciate the problems of teaching and the ways in which they are overcome?

With these problems transfixing my mind like a double-edged sword, I resolved to do something about the lack of knowledge on both my own and the community's part. I resolved to investigate the duty of the school in American life and how the school, particularly the Vernonia elementary school, goes about tending this duty.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE JOB OF THE SCHOOL.

To start with it is the duty of the school not only to teach the basic three "R's" of the traditional Little Red School House, reading, writing and arithmetic, but also to install in the minds of the children of our community a sense of moral and social judgement. The school has the responsibility to teach them how to live with their peers and deal fairly and honestly with their social equals. Social graces and community living are as important to the well rounded student as a knowledge of addition and subtraction, who George Washington was, how to spell "cat" or that sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt.

MAJOR PROGRAM DIVISIONS

The plan of education in the Vernonia elementary schools can be divided into four major parts: First, the primary section, which consists of the kindergarten (from the German kinder-children x garten-garden), and the first, second and third grades; second, the intermediate section, which consists of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades; third, the upper grades, which consists of the seventh and eighth grades; fourth and last, but I hope by no means least, the special departments, which are art, chorus, band and literature.

THE ROLE OF THE KINDERGARTEN

Vernonia is unique in this area in the fact that it has a kindergarten in association with its public school. The state school laws do not require that public schools maintain a kindergarten, but the voters of the Vernonia district saw the necessity to establish such an institution in the program of developing well rounded young citizens when they, some nineteen years ago, voted to have a school integrated, district financed, kindergarten.

The kindergarten is a well integrated plan of work, play and rest. Its main duty is to teach social living, to teach the eager young pupils how to meet and accept their peers. For most of the children who attend this non-compulsory kindergarten, it constitutes their primary contact with children of their own age and interest level. We, who have long ago lived out our childhood, have a hard time trying to remember the thrill of such a new experience, but as I walk the play grounds I see excitement on each young face. I know that the joy of meeting ones peers can not be put into words, but it is there for those who have brothers and sisters at home as well as for the only child, for to deal with children of equal social, physical and mental development is an experience that has no equivalent. The children learn to live, work and play together, learn social responsibility of one child for another, learn to cooperate with each other for the betterment of the group, learn to merge ideas to

form a common plan. This is social living in its ideal state and the primary purpose of the kindergarten.

The kindergarten, however, does not limit its activities to the social development of the children. Attention is also paid to the physical development of the child. As is quite obvious to parents, the five year old child has not developed complete facilities of muscular coordination. To this end play periods stress cooperative games intended to aid the development of young muscles. Jump ropes, swings, slides, teeter-totters, blocks, monkey bars and the merry-go-round all give the young minds and muscles healthy activities.

The development of the young minds and bodies continues in the classroom, where hammers, nails, saws and wood are available for the young carpenters and clay, paints paper, crayons, brushes, easels are provided for the artistically inspired. All these provide the child with the opportunity to learn to coordinate mind, eye and hand in a creative, rather than a destructive, situation.

Through story telling, pictures, and personal observations, the kindergarten children are brought into contact with the world that they will, all too soon, be entering, the world of adults.

Story time is a very important time to the children. Mrs. Cousins, their teacher, is an expert in selecting stories that are not only a source of enjoyment to the children, but also teach a social lesson. Books in the kindergarten library are illustrated with large, easily understood pictures which help the children to follow their teacher as she spins the web of the tale.

In overview, the duty of the kindergarten teacher is to be a guide and leader to the children and to provide them with suitable materials and helps in the developing of a creative atmosphere. She guides the child in his learning of the all important lesson of how to live, work and play with his equals.

(Next week the role of the primary grades.)

Observance Due For Book Week

Mrs. B. J. Horn was hostess for the November 6 meeting of the Vernonia Study Club and members who attended responded to roll call by naming a food or product of the Middle East. Mrs. Harry Culbertson gave an interesting view into a super market in an oil town in Saudi Arabia. Comparative prices of groceries in this country and the Middle East were noted.

It was announced that a tentative date, Thursday, December 4, has been set for the Great Decisions kickoff. The definite date and speakers will be announced soon, it is expected.

Since the Columbia county extension clubs have as one of their projects encouragement of participation in that program, the Study Club stated a desire for the extension groups in this area to act as co-hosts for the symposium.

The annual coffee hour in observance of National Book Week will be held next Tuesday, November 18 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the city hall. This is an affair which the Study Club has sponsored for a number of years.

The next meeting of the club will be at the home of Mrs. Darold Proehl November 20 and Mrs. B. J. Horn will present the program.

Barnell Singing With Choir At OCE, Monmouth

Otto Barnell of Vernonia has been chosen a member of the choir at Oregon College of Education.

The 50-member choir sings at special events throughout the school year. It annually puts on a traditional Christmas program at the end of fall term for the students, faculty and townspeople.

The choir will join with the band in ceremonies early next year at the dedication of a new \$230,000 music hall at OCE which was opened this fall.

Baby Shower Given By Party Line Club

The Party Line club had a surprise baby shower for Myrtle Montgomery on November 6. A variety of nice gifts were received for her baby son. Those present were Mrs. Violet Felnerston, Mrs. Betty Chambers, Mrs. Isabel Laurilla, Mrs. Margaret Berg and Mrs. Shirley Hill. Refreshments of coffee, cake and ice cream were served.

Earl Wantlands To Be Honored at Open House

An open house honoring Mr. and Mrs. Earl Wantland and family will be held Sunday, November 16 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Webb on Cedar street from 2 to 4 p.m. Friends are invited to drop in and wish them Bon Voyage before their departure December 1 for the Isle of Guernsey in the English channel where Mr. Wantland is being sent on an assignment by the Tektronix company by which he is employed. They will make the trip by plane and will arrive in London the next day after leaving here.

OES Chapter Honors Guests

Worthy matron and worthy patron, Mr. and Mrs. Sam L. Hearing, used the harvest theme Wednesday night when Nehalem chapter, O.E.S. held its Friendship night. Officers and members of many Portland and vicinity chapters were present to enjoy this special evening.

Honored were: Irene McKinley, past grand matron and member of the scholarship awards committee; Florence Messing, grand representative to the state of Iowa, in Oregon; and a group of "Starlighters" (matrons and patrons of this year), Katy and Ernest Risberg of Martha Washington chapter; Gladys Meisner of Portland chapter; Kathryn Hensel, Orenomah chapter; Cora Franklin of Pioneer chapter; Helen Hart, Minerva chapter; Edna and Zenas Williamson, Gresham chapter; Betty Lee and Elmer Hevland, Rose Croix chapter; and Jack Smith, Rose City chapter.

Two delightful trombone solos were played by Sam Hearing III, Apollo by Butchel and Tin Roof Blues by Melrose. He was accompanied by Alvida Hearing. The group enjoyed Rev. Robert Sargent's tenor solo, "Bless This House," accompanied by Elizabeth Serafin.

Delicious refreshments were served by Marie Hawkins, Jayne Shaw, Louise Harnett, Stona Serafin, Alvida Hearing and Florence Messing, assisted by Wilbur Davis and Sam Hearing Jr. The tables were beautifully decorated in fall flowers, horns of plenty filled with fruits and nuts, by Nell Thomas. The chapter room was decorated with baskets of flowers by Isabelle Brunson, Lottie Swanson and Jayne Shaw.

Each guest was given a Port Orford cedar tree to plant in their friendship garden as a remembrance, courtesy of Crown Zellerbach corporation through Glen Hawkins.



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Cub Committee Plans Projects

The Cub Scout Committee meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Workman Tuesday evening, November 4 and was well attended by committee men and den mothers. The committee has planned for a faster moving, more lively pack meeting in the future. One new idea which will be started at the next pack meeting is that of a Cub Scout demonstrating in front of the group something he has done to help earn a badge or arrow. This boy will be chosen ahead of time by his den mother.

At the next pack meeting, Den 3 will put on the skit and Den 4 will serve. The next committee meeting will be held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dave Brunson. Delicious cake and coffee were served by Mrs. Workman.

Magician To Entertain At 4-H Achievement Meeting

The county-wide 4-H achievement meeting will be held in the gymnasium of the Clatskanie union high school at 2:00 p.m. November 15. All 4-H club members who completed projects during 1958 will receive their achievement pins and certificates at this meeting. One of the outstanding magicians of the Northwest has been engaged to provide entertainment for the group. All parents are invited to come and share in the fun and the rewards received by their boys and girls.

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