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School Bells Will Signal Disaster

By JEROME KRAUSE
United Press International

CHICAGO (UPI) — School bells will signal danger of death and injury in traffic accidents for the 43 million young Americans headed back to classrooms.

The National Safety Council reports that accidents take more deaths among children 1 to 14 than the five other leading causes of death combined. In 1962, 4,323 children in the 1-14 age group died in traffic accidents across the nation.

Among high school and college students, more than half of the accidental deaths are due to mishaps.

What can the average driver do to halt the resumption of the slaughter on the roads? The safety council recommends a three-point program.

—Be ready for the unexpected whenever you see a group of children in a schoolyard or near a street. Baseballs, basketballs and footballs take at times uncanny and make children forget about oncoming traffic.

—Give yourself an even greater margin for safety in rainy or winter weather, when streets are slick and it becomes much harder to stop quickly.

—Whether schools are in session or not, keep your car in top mechanical condition. Be sure it will respond in your command.

In addition to its campaign for the prevention of deaths in traffic accidents, the council has urged better fire protection in schools, more school bus control and safety, and continued expansion of driver education courses in the high schools.

The council urges all school districts to install automatic sprinkler systems as well as fire extinguishers and fire alarms. As the result of an extensive testing program, the council found that no fire alarm system was universally satisfactory.

Nearly 43 million children will use school buses daily this year. School officials stress that the students' safety depends much on the behavior of passengers. Pupils should board buses without delay, but without crowding or pushing. They should be urged to follow the driver's directions promptly and willingly.

Summer Music Classes Report High Enrollment

GORHAM — The summer music program at Gorham Central School has an enrollment of 160 pupils including 50 beginners. At Middlesex Valley Central School, the summer music program has 148 pupils. Of this number 45 are beginners.

These pupils are taught by three teachers, each a specialist in his instrument. Jack A. Bullock, instrumental instructor at Gorham Central School, has been instructor in brass at both Gorham and MVCS. A graduate of Ithaca College, has been a member of the Gorham faculty for six years.

Charles Morey, instrumental instructor at MVCS, has been instructing the percussion classes. A graduate of Roberts Wesleyan College, he has studied at Ithaca College. For the past six years, he has been a member of the MVCS faculty.

The reed instruments at the two schools have been taught by Robert Mader, a June graduate of Eastman School of Music. He was hired through the board of Cooperative Educational Services.

Washington's Amidon School Sets High Education Standards

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 concept 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. But when the school was ready as an urban redevelopment area, 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 896.

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 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 those goals."

Little Red Schoolhouse

What is the Amidon concept?

To many, it was a return to the 3R'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, 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.

There are 400 students eating lunch at one time in the cafeteria. 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."

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 phonetics.

"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 phonetics."

System Works

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.

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

In 1961, 76 per cent of the students scored above the national average, 6 per cent equalled it and 18 per cent scored below.

In 1962, 86 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 cards:

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

Parents Happy

The results at home were equivalent. Parents say their children are happy to be challenged. 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 are 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 embodies a track method. Bright, average and slow learners are put into separate classrooms.

A specific period of time is allotted for every subject in the curriculum. There is room for imagination but a teacher can't spend 90 minutes on one subject when she should be devoting only 45 minutes to it. If this happened, something else would be neglected.

With the exception of reading, every subject is taught to the class as a whole.

"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 '60s should tell the story of the success of this type of education for children today."

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

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