

Reading Is A Thinking Process, Primary Consultant Tells Roman Catholic Trustees

When a child is first learning to read and write, do not destroy everything for him by correcting every error, warns Primary Consultant Susan Prosser of the York County Roman Catholic School Board.

At a meeting of the board on February 16, Miss Prosser gave a lengthy and enlightening presentation, explaining the primary program in the schools to the trustees.

"For too long the experiences which we have given the children during these formative years have been fragmented and incohesive," said Miss Prosser.

"Each teacher juggled the program to suit her mood and moment. The main goal seemed to be simply to stuff the children with skills and facts."

Teachers did not need the report on children with learning and emotional problems, "One Million Children," to tell them that there are too many children moving through the schools whose needs are not being met, said Miss Prosser.

"This problem is very complex. In the final analysis, however, it is the teachers in our classrooms today who have the power to bring about change."

The major concern of the newly emerging Primary Association in the schools of the region is to review goals, update methods and to undertake meaningful dialogue, Miss Prosser explained.

A language experience program includes the development of listening skills as well as skills in reading and writing and speaking, she told the trustees.

Some of the specific aims of the program are: language development to take place through meaningful experiences and the use of a strong sequential reading program; creative thinking to be given encouragement through dramatic arts and problem-solving opportunities; as well as professional growth on the part of the teachers through meaningful dialogue attendance workshops, etc.

"The small child retains facts and masters skills only through considerable repetition," continued Miss Prosser. "A good deal of imagination is required by the teacher to make these periods interesting and amusing."

It is a good thing for children to write their own stories, recounting their own experiences, than reading them back, she told the trustees, but it is also a good thing to take them outside of their ordinary spectrum. All subjects can be integrated into an imaginative program.

Miss Prosser cited the penguin as a starting point. A story about a penguin, she pointed out, could lead to geography and map work, weather, art, films, social studies of explorers and human relations, even mathematics and problem solving.

She told of one teacher who took her class to a dairy farm and built a full program around the story of milk from the cow to the kitchen.

Even good readers can be at different levels in understanding what they read, and with guidance can be led to see a lot more than they see at first reading. For this reason, said Miss Prosser, the quality of the text books in the classroom is important. Children should have books that offer opportunities to interpret.

"Reading is a thinking process," she continued. "Too many children fail to understand what they read orally or silently. It is increasingly clear that more emphasis must be placed upon discussion and meaningful follow-up activities. Dramatizing a sequence from a story is another excellent way to convey the true meaning of a story. The emotional response of the characters must be shown."

"When the work 'predicament' came up in a folk story, we dramatized predicaments which they had experienced. The word 'predicament' became a well-used word after that."

The primary association in York Region separate schools includes the teachers of all grades from kindergarten to grade 3, Miss Prosser explained. These teachers meet from time to time to discuss goals and methods and common problems, to share ideas and to learn.

The sharing of professional development inservice sessions with the York County Board of Education has been an excellent idea, she said, and the Roman Catholic teachers are gaining a great deal from this type of training.

Miss Prosser told the trustees she would like the teachers to have more time for workshops and training in the future. She expressed a hope that some arrangements might be made to have this during school hours, that it might be possible to arrange early closing in all the schools for perhaps two days a month so the teachers could get together.

An alternative, she said, might be to arrange for substitute teachers to take over classes part of a day at regular intervals.

The calibre of people in the primary division is very important, she told the trustees. There is a great need for continuing in-service sessions at both school and county level to give teachers an opportunity to look at the whole curriculum.

As a consultant, said Miss Prosser, a lot of her work is very intangible and difficult to evaluate. "Often I just sit with the teachers and talk."

It is extremely important for a teacher to have a sense of her own worth in order that she may, in turn, pass on to the child a feeling of personal worth. The suicide rate among young people, said Miss Prosser, is an indication that many of them have lost a sense of worth. A teacher who does not have a positive sense of worth, she warned, can destroy the faith a child has in himself, "and it is devastating to see an unhappy child in a classroom."

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Vaughan Trustee Noreen Lee enquired into the success of the language arts program in an open area school. Miss Prosser replied that an open area gives a greater facility for team planning, but that a good language arts program can be done in the ordinary self contained classroom.

The concept is still quite new, she pointed out. "There are no pat answers to the question now, and I have to admit that personally I would find it very difficult to teach in a large area."

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A written report on the primary education program distributed to trustees by Miss Prosser recommended kindergarten equipment costing about \$565, for each of the board's 15 kindergartens. This included a sand table, housekeeping unit (including sink, refrigerator and stove), listening program and listening station, large building blocks, work bench and tool set and play screen.

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Pointing out that the equipment recommended is quite expensive, Richmond Hill Trustee Malcolm Peake observed, "I always thought kindergarten was a time of great creativity. Can't the children improvise with boxes and cartons?"

Equipment in kindergartens gets a lot of hard use, Miss Prosser pointed out, and would have to be sturdy to survive.

"Primary children need time to play and express their feelings in a secure home-type setting," she added. "Such equipment gives the pupils a chance to create situations for oral and written experience."

Mrs. Lee asked if there is too-much girl-oriented equipment in kindergartens and not enough for boys.

Miss Prosser agreed that there is this danger and that is why the large blocks, work bench and tools were so important. Some teachers had husbands who had come to

the rescue and built sand tables, blocks and work benches for the classrooms, she added.

Richmond Hill Trustee Father Francis Robinson asked Miss Prosser if she thought field trips were a good thing, giving the rural child insight into urban life and the urban child an opportunity to visit a farm.

Miss Prosser replied that they are very good, and added that many areas offer interesting excursions right in the vicinity of the home and the school. It was surprising, she said, to learn that many country children have never visited a dairy farm.

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such trips," Miss Prosser reported.

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The calibre of people in the primary division is very important, she told the trustees. There is a great need for continuing in-service sessions at both school and county level to give teachers an opportunity to look at the whole curriculum.

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Your Legion Reports

Branch 375, Royal Canadian Legion
By Chris Ratchford — 884-5260

Busy Weeks Ahead For Legion Members

Recently the word went around that spring was nearly here. Wonder what spring every- one was talking about! Right now it would seem that we are the middle of a sudden blizzard. So, on with the news that will dispel the gloom. My courier just came in having jogged four miles before breakfast.

The date book is rather heavy, so grab a pencil in your hot wee fist and we're off:

March 6 — Rather heavy day. To start with is the district euchre competition to be held in Newmarket. Any branch members who want to play—dash right in and sign up. Transportation leaving Legion Court no later than 12 noon. In the evening there is a minor hockey dance. For only \$1.50, come on out to have an evening of fun and prizes; also support a worthwhile project.

March 13 — Competition day again. This time Branch 375 is hosting the district darts tourney. In the evening its time to put on your dancing shoes.

March 20—No other way to

celebrate St. Pat's but with a dance. The Ulster Accordion Band is on for this one. Admission price will be checked.

March 22 to 28 — Minor Hockey Week. On the evening of the 26th the usual Friday evening social night will be held. Noted talent is being imported for this night only. Come March 27 your terpsichorean efforts if you will, trip the light fantastic, at the tournament ball being held at the court. I'll let you know more about this later.

This closes out the month of March. We will surprise you with the choice of entertainers for these. I can assure you they are all A1.

One other do is coming up before the Easter recess and that is a MUST. Our ladies auxiliary is having its annual pub night, April 8. This is a must for all because these girls really put their hearts into any endeavour they undertake.

Come one, come all, join us in getting rid of those winter blues.

The invasion forces are massed and the troops are ready to go over the top. Hockey week will be upon us. Billeting is rather a problem. If anyone can help us in this time of emergency, would you please call either Mrs. Brickets at 884-4688 or Mrs. Oakley at 884 - 5510. Please accept our sincere thanks in this effort.

Help! Help! Your assistance is desperately needed. There are two hockey teams flying into Toronto International Airport March 20. These boys and their coaches and equipment must be transported from Malton to Richmond Hill. They land at 1600 hours. One team, Kenaville N.S. is then being transported down to Maple Leaf Gardens to see the game between the Leafs and Rangers. Won't someone please come to our assistance?

I hear via a stethoscope that some of our friends have finally succumbed to the advances of that old friend "winter." Could be you all haven't been taking your vitamins. Come on one and all, throw off the doldrums, and be your usual cheery selves. We miss you.