

Talks About Our Winnetka Schools

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LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

Training in punctuation and capitalization constitutes the formal side of language work in the lower grades. As the children reach seventh and eighth grade some rudimentary knowledge of English grammar is given for the purpose of helping children to correct any defects in their own speech and to give them a reasonable intelligence in regard to the structure of our language. Advanced formal grammar is given to all children who expect to take any foreign language in the high school. This last course is not required for graduation, but is taken by children in order to help them with their high school foreign language work.

Statistical investigations have shown that the most commonly used punctuation mark is the period, and that knowledge of where to put periods is very frequently lacking even in adults. With children the developing of the sentence is a long hard pull.

How to tell what words begin with capital letters, when to use commas, when to use periods, when to use question marks and exclamation marks, how to write informal letters and business letters, how to write invitations and acceptances and regrets, the correct way of writing the title of a book—these and many other things which seem to us adults commonplace have to be developed and constantly reviewed with the little children.

Learns to Punctuate

The method by which we do part of the training and all of the testing in formal language is this: A child is given a paragraph in which every kind of punctuation or capitalization which he has learned up to date is omitted. He copies the paragraph, capitalizing it and punctuating it correctly. If he makes a mistake, he is referred back immediately to special practice on the thing he missed. Every test is a review of everything the child has had up to date. Each grade's work begins with a review of the entire previous grade's work. Through this means we are striving to give children a sensitiveness to wrongly punctuated and capitalized material and a knowledge of how to correct it.

We are not 100 per cent successful in our effort. In spite of reviews and constant training, children graduate from our eighth grade who still make mistakes in punctuation and capitalization. It is true that they must have turned in many 100 per cent papers before they were promoted from any grade to the next, and before they were graduated from the eighth grade. But in spite of this some of them slip back and do sloppy work.

Difficult Subject

It has long been a complaint of the universities that even four years of English in the high school fails to develop the ability to write simple, straightforward English, rightly capitalized and punctuated. No subject is so hard to teach effectively and permanently as correct English composition. We do not feel that we have solved this problem. We can only say that we recognize the problem and that through the requiring of many written compositions, through giving a great deal of oral work in our socialized periods, and through specific training in carefully prepared practice exercises and tests in formal language, we are struggling toward the solution of the problem.

Grammar is a subject concerning which much controversy exists. It was originally introduced into the schools for two reasons: First, because Latin was the universal language of learning and required a thorough knowledge of grammar for its understanding. And second, because the study of grammar was supposed to be good mental discipline. Latin is no longer a universal language; and it has been proved that the type of mental discipline given by the study of grammar is relatively useless for any other purpose.

People now speak of grammar as an aid to English. Unfortunately, there is no scientific evidence that a knowledge of grammar does make people use better English. We have in Winnetka, however, selected on the basis of investigations carried out elsewhere, those bits of grammatical knowledge which are necessary to the correction of most commonly made errors in speech. These we are teaching thoroughly. Furthermore, we have in the absence of any investigation assumed that probably most intelligent people know something of the parts of speech in the English language and their functions. We are consequently giving our children training in the knowledge of these parts of speech.

Course in Formal Grammar

Finally, even if Latin is not a universal language, many of our children study it in high school. They also study other foreign languages. We do not believe that English grammar should be taught for the sake of this foreign language work. We believe

that the grammar of Latin or French or Spanish or German can be taught more effectually in direct connection with those languages in high school than in elementary school in connection with a language as irregular as English. Nevertheless, high schools have always expected the elementary school graduates to know a certain amount of formal grammar, and we are not willing that graduates of the Winnetka schools should be at a disadvantage as compared with graduates of other elementary schools. We therefore offer an advanced course in formal grammar in the eighth grade. This course is based upon the outline furnished to us by the teachers of the New Trier High school, and is the same outline as followed by the Wilmette, Kenilworth, and Glencoe schools. This course is optional and not required for graduation but almost every child takes it and gets thorough drill in this useless material before leaving us.

"A MAN OF ACTION" COMMUNITY PICTURE

Not since "Officer 666" has there been produced for lovers of snappy comedy-drama a picture comparable with the latest Thomas H. Ince mirthful melo-dramatic farce, "A Man of Action," to be shown at Community House Friday evening, December 17. Douglas McLean as Bruce MacAllister, a "Poor Little Rich Boy," who gets more "action" in twenty-four exciting hours than he ever dreamed of, was never funnier. Marguerite de la Motte as his spirited fiancée, and Raymond Hatton as "Hoppy," bent on the invention of a "noiseless explosive," head a strong supporting cast. Another unique comedy characterization is "The Deacon," who has a decided penchant for carving "secret exits and entrances" not only down in his own dive, "The Chat Mort" on San Francisco's picturesque Barbary Coast, but also in the MacAllister mansion on Nob Hill, where he goes, with a band of crooks, to steal a half million dollars in diamonds.

"Something doing every second" is the record of "The Man of Action," which sets a new standard for comedy-drama. The situations of the story, an original by Bradley King, are as novel as they are funny. There will be two shows, one at 7:15 and another at 8:45 o'clock.

Give Practical and Useful. CHRISTMAS GIFTS



We offer the following suggestions:

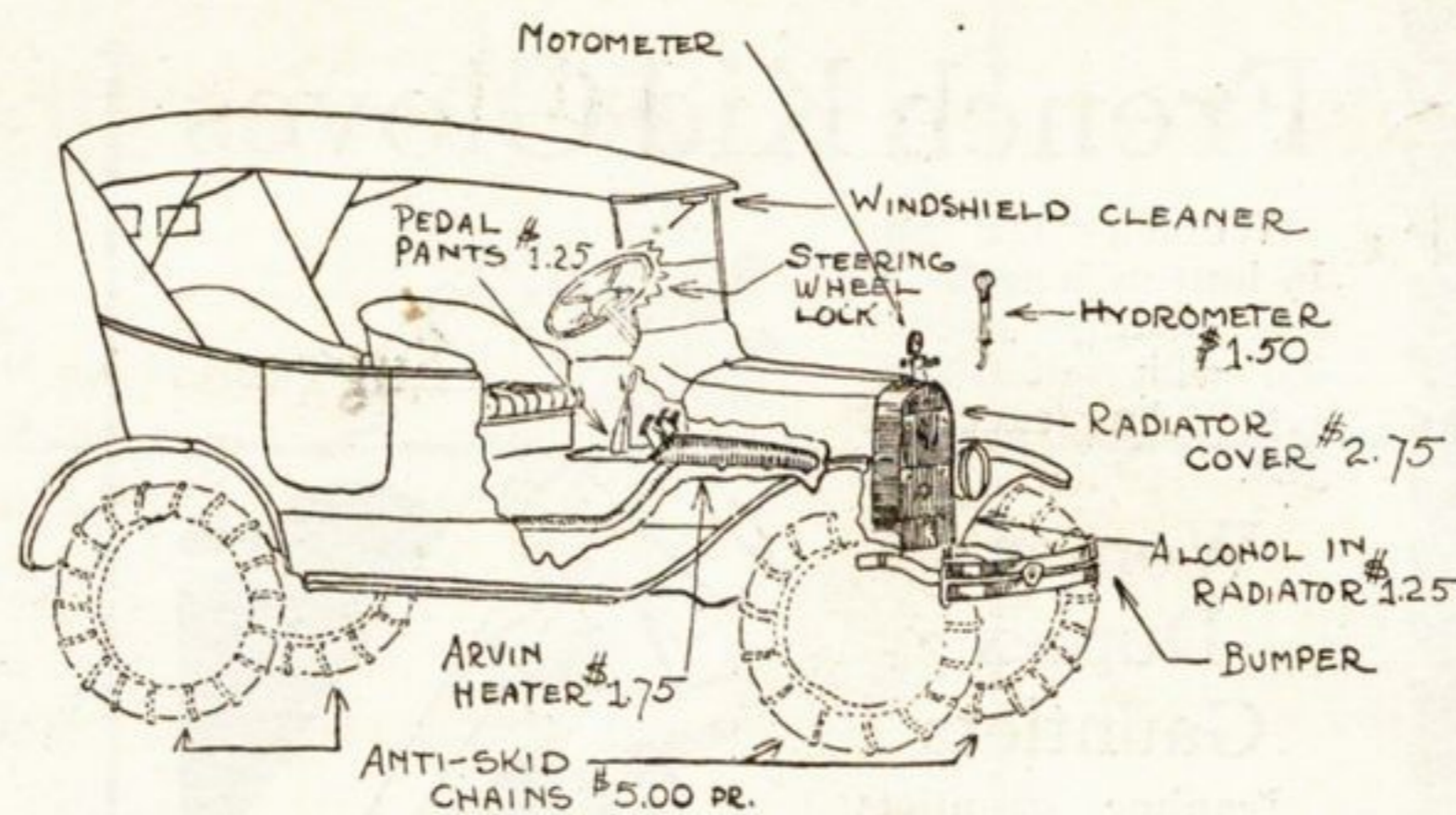
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