

# 'LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE' SYSTEM MAY HAVE NATION-WIDE EFFECT ON EDUCATION

By RALPH R. GOMPERTZ

(This is the first in a series of four articles on a new teaching development in the Torrance Unified School District. The idea has been labeled the "little red school house" plan. This is the first time that it ever has been tried and the first school district that has tried it. If successful, it might set a national trend.—Editor's note.)

A classroom experiment which may have a nation-wide effect on education is now being tried in Torrance. Some startling results have already been observed.

The new idea calls for the elimination of the first, second, and third grade distinctions and placing those students all into one general class. The same goes for students who would normally be in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade.

Because of its resemblance to the old-fashioned classroom arrangement, this idea, which is being tried out in a number of classes at Waleria elementary school, has come to be popularly referred to as "the little red school house plan."

The underlying principle on which it is based is that individuals learn more because of their differences than their likenesses.

So stated Walter Rehwoidt, director of instruction for the Torrance Unified School District and originator of this inter-age grouping (or little red school house) plan.

"Ever since the grading system came into being around 80 years ago, educators have wrestled back and forth with the problem of classifying and grouping pupils," he explained.

### Family Unit Good Example

Rehwoidt thought that he had the solution to the problem when it occurred to him that the family unit, especially where there are a number of children, represents the best learning environment.

He observed how much more rapidly the younger child learns if he has an older brother or sister to learn from and model himself after, and how the older child benefits both in understanding and responsibility by looking after the younger children.

### Faults of Present System

The trouble with the grouping system that has been in use all this time is that it is not doing full justice to the individual student, Rehwoidt maintains.

The slow learner can't keep up with the class and the fast learner wastes unnecessary time waiting for the rest of the class, he explained.

The little red school house plan represents the best arrangement for coping with this problem, Rehwoidt firmly believes.

A teacher may group or re-group students according to their abilities in the various subjects. Thus a pupil who is better than average in English may join an older study group, while that same student may be placed with students who are younger than he if he happens to be a bit slower than average in arithmetic.

This way the classroom is kept flexible and pupils are given the greatest amount of individualized instruction that is possible, Rehwoidt explained.

The problem of promotion is eliminated from this system. The teacher tries to develop the individual child's potential as far as possible during the three-year period, after which the pupil is sent to the next little red school house level.

Rehwoidt calls this the idea of "continuous progress" instead of "continuous promotion" which is the practice now.

There are 245 students and seven teachers trying this method now at Waleria elementary school.

### Looks Promising

Results so far indicate that the plan is very promising and Rehwoidt thinks that he will have some favorable findings after evaluating the total results next June.

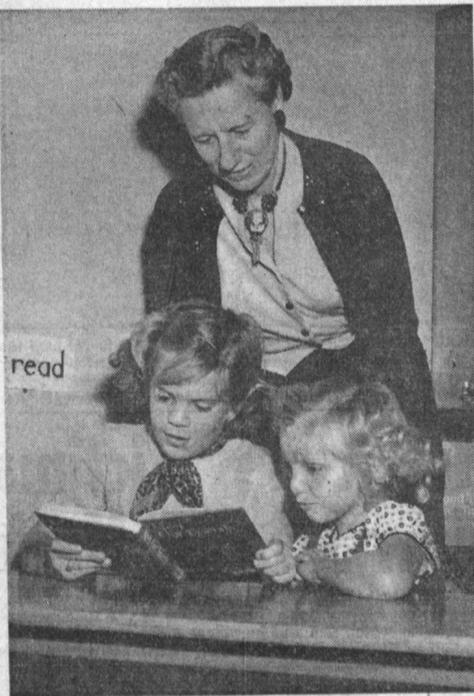
There will probably be a few more classes at other schools which will try the plan. Eventually Rehwoidt hopes that the plan may be carried to the high school level. If it proves its worth in Torrance, it is possible that the plan may be adopted on a nation-wide basis as the best solution to the grouping problem, Rehwoidt hopes.

The inspiration for his idea came from Dr. Howard Lane, professor of education at New York University. Dr. Lane suggested the theory that individuals learn more because of their differences than their likenesses.

What has caused educators to lose sight of the little red school house idea? Rehwoidt maintains that the merits of the idea were obscured by other theories and developments in education.

But to abandon the best of the little red school house system is to throw away the baby with the bath, Rehwoidt argues. "The basic merit of the little red school house plan is that it enables more individualized instruction and permits children to better learn from each other," the educator said.

(The next three articles will deal with the following considerations: What do the teachers who are teaching these



LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER... Maren Langum, 8, (left) helps Alexia Gilmore, 6, with her reading in Mrs. Irene Dolan's "little red school house" class at Waleria elementary school. In return, Maren is gaining a sense of responsibility and qualities of leadership.—Press Photo.

classes think of them? How do the parents feel whose children are enrolled in these classes? What are the apparent strengths and weaknesses of the plan?

### "DEAR SANTA"

## Post Office Asks Help In Making Children Happy

The faith of children that their letters to Santa Claus will be delivered will give the Post Office Department one of its annual problems during the coming holiday season, O. H. Fuller, regional operations manager, Post Office Department, San Francisco, said today.

"Postal workers know that Christmas, instead of being happy, can mean broken hearts for many unfortunate children," Fuller said, "because there will be letters like the following typical examples."

Dear Santa Claus:

I am nine years old and I would like you to please send me a mama doll that cries and sleeps so I don't forget me Santa. A big mama doll. If you do send me it I would be very happy. And also a warm blanket to cover myself.

My Daddy is in the hospital because he has heart trouble and my Mommy is sick too but she is home with me and my brother Allan. I wrote last year to you and you forgot about me.

Dear Santa Claus:

We wrote you last year and year before, but you never sent us nothing. I am eight years old now. Please try to stop at my house.

Dear Santa Claus: Last year you only brought us oranges and some popcorn. Gee, Santa, that wasn't very much.

Fuller said, "The Post Office Department has a soft spot in its heart for these children. There is a special provision in the Postal Manual with respect to letters from children to Santa Claus. Such letters do not have to be stamped 'Un-Deliverable—Address Unknown' and sent to the dead letter office. Postmasters are authorized to turn over Santa Claus letters to individuals or groups which request them for exclusively philanthropic purposes."

The regional postal official concluded, "Anyone who would like to help make Christmas 1955 a merry one for some de-

## Safeway Plans Store Here

Decision of Safeway's application for a change of zone for part of the site proposed for a new store on the south side of Carson st. and west of Western ave., will probably be made December 8 by the Los Angeles City Planning Commission.

Hearing on the matter was held Tuesday. A one-story building measuring 125 feet by 185 feet is planned.

## Ice Cream Customer A Cold Number

A Torrance youth who works part-time as an attendant for a Foster Freeze stand in Redondo had a cold spot in his heart this week for an unknown customer who bought some ice cream with a forged \$10 bill.

Larry Stamper, 17, of 1011 Arlington, said that he noticed the phony \$10 when he started to close shop Saturday night. The base was a \$1 bill but the edges had been pasted over with corners from a \$10 bill.

"It hit me suddenly that George Washington's picture shouldn't be on a \$10 bill," Stamper, a student at El Camino, said. "First I was puzzled, but after figuring out what had happened and realizing that I would have to make up the difference I felt kind of sad," he mused.

**Boy Injured**  
William Moeder, 9, of 1115 Patronella, received painful injuries when he was hit by a car while pushing his bike across Crenshaw Blvd. last week. Driver of the car, James W. McCutcheon, 26, of Los Angeles, was not held. The boy was taken to Gardena hospital.



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