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This Is The School Situation Here

Little Red Schoolhouse Finds Favor at Walteria

The "Little Red Schoolhouse" project now being carried on in seven classes in Walteria School is not a radical new idea, but rather a return to certain very old ideas according to Walter Rehwoidt, district director of instruction, and "father" of the program.

The plan now underway places children in the first, second, and third grades in the same room and children in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades in a similar situation. At the end of the school year, progress of the 245 youngsters in the multi-graded rooms will be compared with that of their schoolmates in single-graded rooms.

The idea, Rehwoidt said, goes back to the "little red schoolhouse" itself and the ancient idea of individual instruction through tutoring. Although modern mass education has to a degree abandoned these principles, the program is a return to certain of the features of these systems, Rehwoidt declared.

Two Assumptions

"Our project is designed to test two assumptions," Rehwoidt said. "The first is that children learn from one another because of their differences rather than because of their likenesses. The second is that greater attention can and must be given to the individual in these groups than in single-graded groups."

It is based too on the accepted educational axiom that within every single-graded classroom there is a spread of about five grades in ability, just as there are wide differences in height and physical maturity.

Four Areas of Study

So far, he said, the program has seemed to work successfully. A full study of the advantages and disadvantages of the program will be made at the end of the current school year, with emphasis on four areas:

1. The achievement of the individual as compared with his peers in single-graded classes.
2. His growth in maturity as compared with other classes.
3. His self adjustment as compared with others.
4. His social development on a comparative basis.

What the results of this evaluation will be, Rehwoidt declines to predict, but says that he is sure that it will show improvement in many areas.

Like Rural Schools

The multi-graded classes were and still are common in rural schools, Rehwoidt said. Rural schools often are hampered by a lack of competent teachers, adequate materials, good facilities, and a "team spirit." These, he says, are not lacking in the "little red schoolhouse" project.

"If we are alike, we have not much to learn from each other," he declared. "If we are different, there is much more to learn. The immature child, for instance, becomes mature through associating with mature children, not with other immature children."

In individual subjects, such as arithmetic, the children who are more adept are able to teach the younger children who may be less talented with figures, he pointed out. Children



WHICH IS WHICH? . . . Students in Walteria School's "Little Red Schoolhouse" project help decorate the Christmas tree in Rod Dolin's combined fourth, fifth, and sixth grade class. The idea is based upon the claim that children's mental capacity varies as much as their physical size. It is hard to tell which children are in what grade in viewing the class at work. Hard at work are Barbara Middlestead, fourth grader; George Dumeshausen, sixth grader, and Dennis Whitely, fifth grader.

will often accept help from older children more readily than from their own age group or from the teacher. The older children learn too, he said, because "we never learn something so well as when we teach it."

Rehwoidt Makes Study

Rehwoidt has been considering such a program for several years and is making it the basis of a doctoral study for the University of Southern California, entitled, "Inter-Age Groupings." Local educators studied the plan for more than a year before recommending it to the board of education last spring.

Rehwoidt's ideas germinated in part from Dr. Howard A. Lane, of New York University, who has made similar proposals for a number of years. Dr. Lane this week visited Walteria School to talk with teachers and students about the progress of the plan and to deliver several lectures to local teachers.

The name of the project, the "Little Red Schoolhouse" project was originated by HERALD Staff Writer Tom Rische, reporting on the approval of the plan by the Board of Education last spring.

Teachers Approve

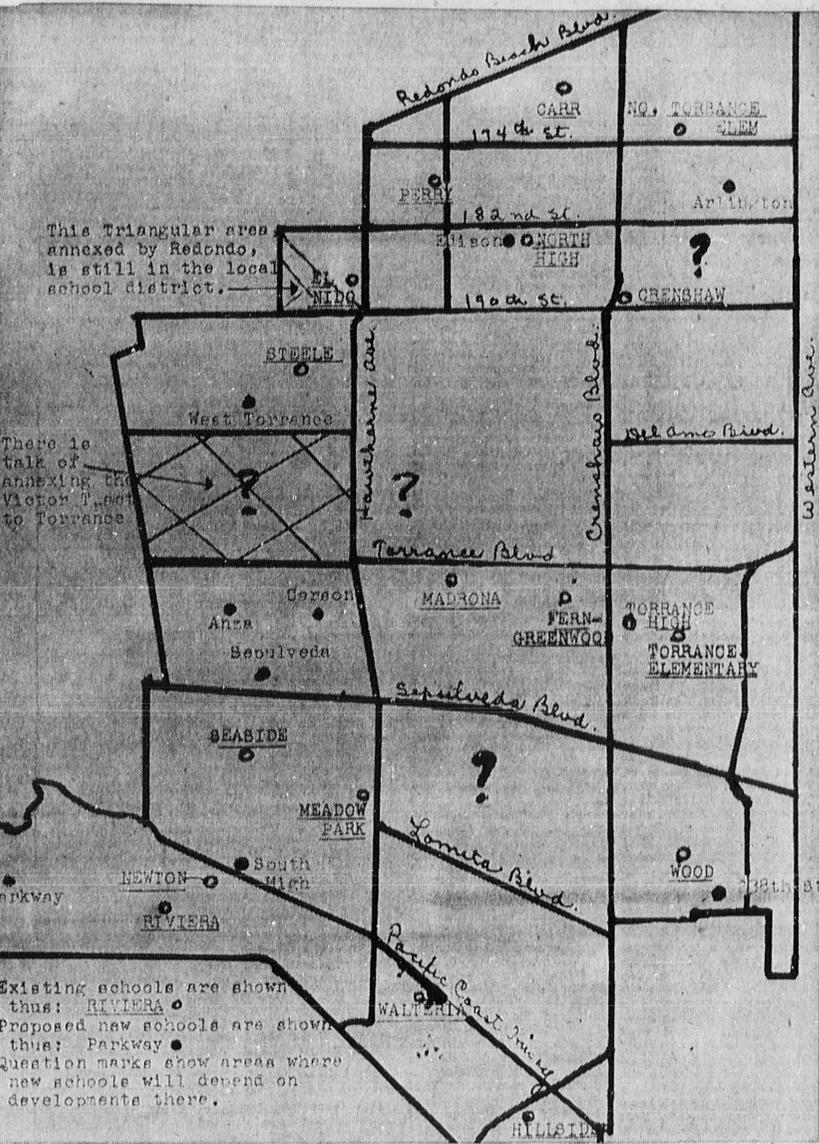
Teachers, Rehwoidt said, seem to find that the plan is working with considerable success, although they disagree as to whether it involves more or less work for them.

Reports from parents have been thus far almost uniformly in support of the program, he said. Begun on an entirely voluntary basis, both on the part of teachers and parents, only one child out of 245 has been removed from a multi-graded

room, he said. Walteria School was selected because it is located in an area in which there is relatively less influx of new students than in many other districts, insuring that children in the program would be in school the whole year.



'FATHERS' DISCUSS PLAN . . . Assistant Superintendent Albert N. Posner and Director of Instruction Walter Rehwoidt talk over the "Little Red Schoolhouse" project with Dr. Howard A. Lane, of New York University. Rehwoidt got the idea for the plan from Dr. Lane and developed it to fit local conditions at Walteria School. The New York educator was here this week, giving several lectures to local teachers and visiting the classes where the plan is being tried.



Educators Study Proposal Which Would Offer More School Funds

THIS IS THE PROBLEM

The Torrance Unified School District is in the same position as the worker who left his billfold inside a locked time capsule. The local authorities have available \$7,610,000 in bonds voted by local citizens and these funds could go far toward easing the critical classroom shortage here. But there's a catch to it. Under terms of the laws of California, the money cannot be spent, nor bonds issued. The law states that a school district cannot issue in any one year bonds in an amount larger than 10 per cent of the total assessed valuation of the school district.

Bonds Unsold
This year, the schools' bonding capacity is \$10,022,000. Torrance schools now have \$7,825,000 in outstanding bonds and plan to sell another \$2,190,000 worth in January. This leaves, however, an additional \$7,810,000 bonds which have been authorized by voters, but which cannot legally be sold.

Meanwhile, 4768 children in Torrance schools are on double sessions. And if school officials have to wait to get bond money at an expected rate of about \$2,000,000 per year for the next three years, Superintendent J. H. Hull estimates that 5000 children in local schools will be on double sessions for at least the next five years. To put these children on full-day sessions would require another 75 classrooms. At the present time, 134 classrooms are either under construction or on planning boards, but the rapidly growing school population of Torrance is expected to fill these in a relatively short time.

Population Grows
During the past year, the school population has grown by about 3000 children. Experts foresee a school population of about 30,000 children by 1965.

This figure is almost exactly double the 15,377 school children who now attend classes here.

Even in the next school year, the problem is critical, since the planners estimate that nearly 19,000 children—3,180 high school and 15,775 elementary students—will enroll in classes in September, 1956.

Officials hope that eight new schools will be open next September, although the rock and gravel strike has slowed construction work on existing projects. Bids have been let on Arlington and Sepulveda School, but workers are idle. Likewise, work on additional classrooms at Madrona and Wood Schools has ground to a halt as a result of the strike.

Eight Schools Planned
In various stages of planning are Edison, Anza, Carson, West Torrance, Parkway, Meadow Park, and 238th St. Schools. Officials hope that all of these will be ready next year. A South High School is planned for opening in September, 1957. Thirteen new schools and one new high school have been built at a total cost of \$4,670,235. The eight new elementary schools to be completed next year will cost an estimated \$3,700,000, due to rising construction costs.

In 1950, construction of an entirely new school plant for Greenwood School cost \$203,945. The latest bid received for Arlington School, went for \$352,366.

According to Assistant Superintendent S. E. Waldrip, school costs are up about 10 per cent this year over 1954, and land values are rapidly increasing.

Sites Growing Scarce
To date, the school district has had a great deal of unimproved property from which to choose its school sites. That situation is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, however,

IS THIS A SOLUTION?

Torrance school officials have come up with a plan which could make an additional \$6,000,000 available for classroom construction soon.

The plan, which will be presented to legislators and other interested officials, proposes that the state make short-term loans to school districts where classrooms are urgently needed. Officials hope that it might be made the basis of an emergency legislative bill next year.

If it were passed, the Torrance Unified School District would have an additional \$6,006,174 with which to build new schools.

Loans Available

The short term loans would be made on the basis of bond funds which would become available each year, amounting to about \$2,000,000 annually.

It would make it possible to start new buildings sooner than is now possible, since schools must presently wait for the assessed valuation figures to catch up with the increased population. It would also allow the board to get school sites while desirable sites are available and before land values increase to a prohibitive point.

To meet the needs of the expected 30,000 students who will be attending classes here in 1965, officials estimate that at least nine or 10 new elementary schools and a fourth high school will be needed.

Future developments will of course depend on the residential development in certain areas—northeast of 190th and Arlington Ave., below Sepulveda Blvd., in south Torrance, the area west of the new Civic Center, and the Victor Tract, which is currently under discussion for annexation to Torrance.

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"The short term nature of the use of these funds will make the fund rapidly re-available for additional state aid loans or for additional state aid emergency short term school building loans," Superintendent J. H. Hull declared.

To determine the amount of the loan which could be made, a formula would take into account the increase in assessed valuation over a five-year period and the bond retirement payoff schedule over a like period.

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SEPUVEDA SCHOOL . . . One of the eight new schools which officials hope will be ready for use by next fall in Sepulveda School, which will serve the southwestern third of the huge new Southwood tract. Contracts for the school have already been let for \$334,000, but construction has been delayed by the rock and gravel strike. The tentative completion date was July 15, 1956. The school itself will be located at the corner of Reynolds Dr. and Merrill St.