

School Time Is Here Again!

Please remember to:

- Observe speed limits in school areas.
- Obey traffic signs and signals.
- Slow up or stop at intersections to allow children to cross streets safely.
- Obey crossing guards.
- Be careful on car-lined streets. Children can suddenly appear from behind parked cars.
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With Texas education changing today's fact may be tomorrow's fiction

Writing about issues and changes involved with the start of another school year isn't a task of relating facts. This year, as in the past couple of years, this week's fact may be meaningless next week.

Several principals were interviewed last week for stories to be written and published this week. The start of school still is nearly two weeks away, and changes still may be made that affect several students.

For instance, the state education agency ruled earlier this year that teachers must have a lunch period with no assignments, to be followed by their planning period.

At the Eagle Lake primary school, that means kindergarten students will not be released from class until 35 minutes after students in the first, second and third grades.

At Rice High School, the board of trustees carved a seventh period out of last year's six classes. They did it by reducing class time to the state minimum of 55 minutes each. Now, students in athletics and band still can pursue those courses and have the opportunity to take other electives. Had the seventh period not been added, they would not be able to take other electives because of increased state

graduation requirements. However, because of the lunch and free period ruling, cosmetology students will be at school through the new seventh period, while others (except band and athletics) will be free to go home after six periods.

That is, as of this writing, those late-hour classes are scheduled. The school district has appealed to the Texas Education Agency with the opinion the new rule was fine in certain instances, but is too broad, thus harming the kindergarten efforts and the multi-hour classes like cosmetology.

Editorially Speaking

By JOHN F. FEARING

Debate continues over the upheaval in Texas Education created through House Bill 73 adopted in the summer of 1984. For the moment, the rage has simmered, but could fire up again at any time.

When I first became aware of the many changes, I was ecstatic. To me, there is

nothing more important than a youngster's education. I am well aware of my accomplishments and shortcomings resulting from public school education; almost daily I see people with little education struggling to make a living, and hardly a day passes without some part of the conversation turning to "no pass, no play."

Being one who (with a fault) usually is not willing to compromise, I think more can be done to improve public schools. As I have said in these pages in the past, the next upheaval needs to come at the primary school level. Some school board members here agree that if a child doesn't have a good start on the basics by the time third grade ends, that child is lost.

My lone simple argument for a drastic overhaul of the kindergarten through third grade classes is one of cost. Is it more expensive to teach a child well, than it is later in life to pay welfare, the cost of our justice and prison system, etc? I'd rather pay now for the education.

I also think a larger part of the educational problem is the fault of the parent. Why should a young person concentrate on schooling, when his parent's never ask how classes are going? How can a student learn at home when there is no discipline toward completing homework vs. watching television?

Then there's no pass no play. I've been in favor of the rule from the start. It was only last week that I began to waver. Listening to former coach Bill Appel argue again at it, I almost, but not quite,

am convinced the rule may be too strict. What keeps me on the side of the rule is the belief that most things shouldn't be done half-way. Students know they must pass all courses all the time.

Then too, I am worried that students will not sign up for the important hard courses for fear of failing. At Rice High School, there's seems to be no evidence that is happening. Let's keep the rule on the books for several years; what is starting now as a eye opener, may become the norm in the future learning the basics as preparation for the rest of your life is the number one reason we go to school.

Finally, there is another aspect to all the changes that worries me. I haven't heard anyone discuss it, but sooner or later, it is bound to happen. If all these new laws and rules are needed because "Johnny isn't learning," someone, somewhere, is bound to begin blaming the teachers; nothing could be further from the truth.

A teacher's job is one of the hardest, most complicated jobs available today. They have to cope not only with how to get a lesson across, but with all the social changes of today compared with 50 years ago. Just as evening newspapers (which are going out of business with regularity) have found, the competition for one's time is stiff. The emphasis out of school has been away from learning and more toward socializing. Teachers deserve the credit for the good job they are doing, and deserve our support for accepting the House Bill 73 changes, and making the most of them.

District asks state to change rule so all ELPS classes dismiss at same time

The first day of school at Eagle Lake Primary School may be the most exciting one for its first-time students. Youngsters new to kindergarten will be introduced to public schools for the first time, and the first, second and third grade students will be back for their full-day classes.

Principal Major Bengtson indicates changes in the school's daily operations for 1985-86, and made note of some schedules.

For instance, even for the youngest students, tutoring will be available. It is scheduled for the first 20 minutes just after lunch. Teachers then can help get points across that students may have missed that morning or the previous day. Other students will be assigned independent reading to aid.

Kindergarten has been widely discussed in the community but last Friday the school board approved a bid by Almas Structures of Tyler, Texas, to install a new "portable building" at the school for kindergarten, at a cost of about \$27,000. Four weeks after the district signs the contract with Almas, the structure will be ready for the district to have the plumbing and electricity hooked up.

That will alleviate a crowding problem teachers will have to cope with the first month or so. Bengtson said approximately 38 children have been registered for kindergarten; until the new room is available, they will be in the current oversize classroom with two teachers and an aide. The new building will be built between the teachers parking lot and the current kindergarten building.

Next year, an additional portable classroom may be needed. The state has mandated a 4-year-old kindergarten class be held for disadvantaged youngsters. Earlier this year the district had parents register students that would fit that category if the classes were held this fall. About 30 registered. However, the district has asked the Texas Education Agency for permission to start that program next year, and is not planning a 4-year-old kindergarten this year.

Even as the kindergarten students cope with the large numbers, there is another state ruling that has prompted the district to seek another warrior. As explained in another story in this edition, teachers must have their lunch period and

free-class period together. Since kindergarten is a half-day, three-hour block, that means kindergarten teachers must have that time between the morning and afternoon sessions. Teachers in first, second and third grade don't have that problem.

Therefore, while the first, second and third graders will get out of the primary school about 2:45 p.m., afternoon kindergarten students will be in class until 3:15 p.m.

"We have a hint ray of hope the TEA will revoke the free-period ruling," Bengtson said, so all kindergarten students can go home the same time as all students.

The morning kindergarten classes start at 8 a.m. and are released for lunch at 11 a.m. Bengtson emphasized that all morning kindergarten students must be picked up by 11:30 a.m. since there is no supervision for them after that time.

Afternoon kindergarten students, if they are eating lunch at the school, should be dropped off by 11:45 a.m. If they are eating at home, the need to be at the school by noon.

School buses are available for kindergarten students only one-way. Morning students can ride the bus to school, and afternoon students can ride it home.

New teachers

Last year there was quite a turnover in staff, Bengtson said, with one teacher retiring and others moving to other schools and districts. Miss Ashby, long-time second grade teacher, retired, and will be replaced by Diana Brunner who was a half-day teacher most of last year.

Marie Argo moved to the Middle School, Cheryl Gorman moved to Madisonville when her husband was transferred; Jeannette Spenneth moved to Gentry and Miss Sandra Nelson moved to the Alief school district.

Other new teachers include Mrs. Cherry Johnson and Mrs. Christina Moody, both first grade teachers; Miss Paula Coffin in the second grade; Miss Sharon Blais for third grade, and Miss Denise Hopwood for special education. Also, Sharon Webb, who was an aide for a number of years, now will be a regular kindergarten teacher.

Bengtson said that he expects about the same number of students this year, compared to last year. He also said new math and science books will be available for students.



Shanna Brunner and Karl Sesholm helped out at the Eagle Lake Primary School the other day as teachers Diana Brunner (second grade) and Rhonda Kramm (kindergarten) discuss school matters.

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