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...like it is - June 28, 1971

Shirley Harris

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...like it is



AT NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS STATE COLLEGE

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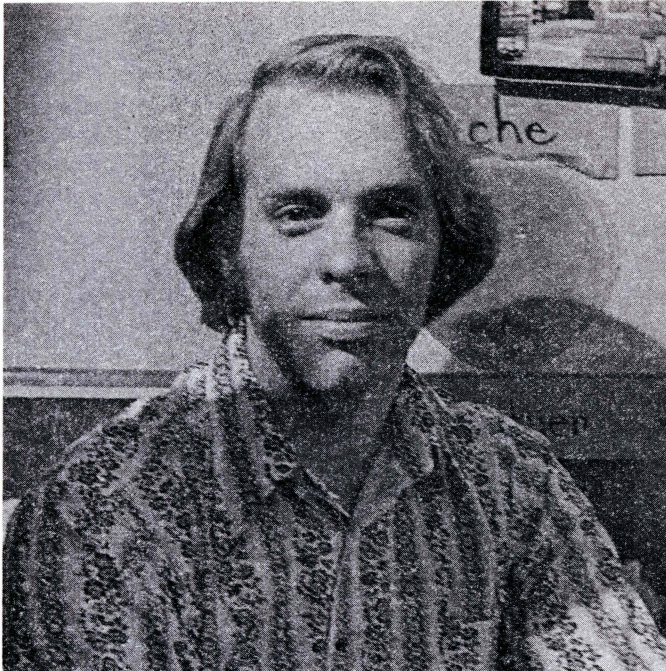


TEACHER AT WORK--Peggy Wallace and a young student discuss a lesson at Avery Coonley School. In the background are the learning spaces designed by Larry Busch who also designed the other furniture in the classroom. Story on page 2.

...like it is

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Editor	Shirley Harris
Art Editor	Gabriel Podolak
Director of Public Information	Gerald Cannon



Larry Busch

Civil Service

The register is closed for openings. All positions either are filled or candidates being interviewed.

Now would be a good time to take examinations either in your promotional line or in another class for which you meet qualifications. Contact Diane Langridge at extension 388 to discuss possible promotional opportunities.

Cubs tickets plus a bus ride for the July 20 game against the New York Mets. Two dollars for box seats and the bus with validated student ID card. \$4.25 for other persons. Bus will leave NISC parking lot, 12:30 p. m., and return after the game.

Tickets will be sold at the information booth in front of the auditorium, 9:30 a. m. - 11:30 a. m., July 12, and if necessary, July 13 and 14, same place, same time.



How chi

Children are human beings. It has been the practice, however, over the years to act as if they were a cross between wild animals and blobs of clay--at least in the school room. School children were treated as if they had to be tamed, then molded into preconceived patterns.

But times are changing. Although few persons have faulted individual instruction throughout the years, few have been able to see how individual instruction can take place in a classroom containing more than a few children. What does the teacher do with the children not being individually instructed?

We watched Dr. Ray Harper, chairman of the elementary education department, and a team of Leida Slater, Ellen Schroeder, Peggy Wallace, and Tommie Sue Schindler demonstrate a program of individual instruction at Avery Coonley School in Downers Grove on May 21. Leida is an instructor in education, Ellen and Peggy are faculty assistants in education at NISC, Tommie Sue is a former student of Ray Harper's who came from Lansing, Michigan to take part in the demonstration.

It came about this way. John Malach, headmaster of Avery Coonley School, needed to buy new furniture for a third grade room. He decided he would not buy the same kind of furniture that had been in use for decades. He ended up with the learning spaces--technically truncated polyhedrons--designed by Larry Busch, then a graduate student in design at Southern Illinois University.

The spaces, which extend from floor to ceiling, took up such a large part of the classroom however, that it was impossible to teach using the so-called total group approach, the method in which the teacher stands up in front of the classroom and talks at children seated at desks arranged in rows.

Consequently, Harper was invited to design and implement a different approach

Children learn in a modern classroom



By Shirley Harris

of instruction using only the classroom containing individual learning spaces. The basic assumption of Harper and his team was "kids are responsible." They abandoned the total group approach to instruction and substituted an individualized approach; teacher to and from child, child to and from child. They wanted to get away from the workbook approach, which they did.

When we arrived on Friday, the new regime had been in effect since the previous Monday. The children were coming to school early so they wouldn't miss anything. They were enjoying themselves.

First thing in the morning, each child took his journal and planned his day. Some activities were required such as a certain amount of arithmetic and language. The child could decide what he was going to do when.

One boy's journal read like this:

1. Modern wire sculpsheer
2. one sock pupett
3. flip book
4. science room
5. math page

The students also were encouraged to write their thoughts in their journals. The teacher read each journal and commented on not only what was in the journal but the child's activities for the day.

A sign-out slip was posted on the door to the room and the children came and went as they pleased, signing out with the time and their destination. Everyone was on a first name basis--teacher as well as children.

When a child wanted to study or read or merely be by himself for a while, he would retire to his learning space. If he needed help from the teacher, he would hang a number outside the learning space and the teacher would come and help him. In short, the child had the responsibility for learning.

We asked one boy if he thought he

learned more the old way or the new way. He was enthusiastic about the new way. He said he learned not only more of what he was supposed to learn but so many different things.

Our impression was that if one treats a child as if he were a responsible, intelligent human being, he will act that way. Certainly, the children at Avery Coonley School third grade acted that way.

We saw no discipline problems and the noise level was low; compatible with many children moving around going about their business, but that was all.

We asked Larry Busch about his design, what led to it, and how it happened to be what it was.

Busch said it seemed to him that no one had devoted much interest to educational ecology. He designed, he said, "What I would liked to have had."

The design, he said, grew out of the child and his activities. In the truncated polyhedran, the child can move his arms and legs around in a natural fashion. It is not confining or rigid like school desks. It also has no status connotation such as a child sitting in a front seat or a back seat; the teacher either deliberately or accidentally assigning a position in the school room society to the child.

Busch said he wanted to give the child his own space within a larger space in which he had the options to be alone, be alone with someone, turn out the light, display things that are important to him, make him feel like an individual.

He did. We climbed into one of the learning spaces and found it not at all confining, as we had suspected it would be. There is a sling seat which drops flat against the side of the space if one does not care to use it. There is a lap board which also folds back with an expandable storage space underneath. There is a high

see page 4

HAPPENINGS

Tuesday, June 29

Griff Pitts' coffee hour, 10 a. m.,
E 219

Ecology club, 1 p. m., A 110

Anthropology department meeting,
1 p. m., P2

French club meeting, 1 p. m.,
A 121 - 123

Computer club meeting, 1 p. m., A 114

Foreign language department orientation
committee meeting, 1 p. m., B 118

Film Series: "M" with Peter Lorre,
7:30 p. m., auditorium

Wednesday, June 30

Art department meeting with President
Sachs, 1 p. m. - 3 p. m., Dr. Sachs'
office

Thursday, July 1

Griff Pitts' coffee hour, 10 a. m.,
E 219

Buildings and grounds committee meeting,
noon, C 605

Speech department meeting, 1 p. m.,
A 126

Biology club meeting, 1 p. m., B 117

Anthropos meeting, 1 p. m., P2

Sociology club meeting, 1 p. m.,
B 114 - 116

Friday, July 2

Civil service assembly, 2 p. m. -
4 p. m., auditorium

intensity light which can be turned on and off. The floor of the space is carpeted. Several sides are not paneled so the child can look out into the room or sometimes into another learning space on another level.

Busch mentioned many things we had not considered before about school children and their usual ecology, such as the fatigue factor of always being in a bright light whether one needs it or not, the rigid confinement of conventional seats, the lack of a "home" at school, the lack of a time and place to think-for how is one to learn if one never has time to think?

LUNCH BREAK

Monday, June 28

Spaghetti and meat sauce
Roast lamb, mint jelly
French toast

Tuesday, June 29

Liver and onions
Veal steak Parmesan
Asparagus on toast

Wednesday, June 30

Beef stew
Salisbury steak, mushroom gravy
Cheese fondue

Thursday, July 1

Meat loaf
Roast beef
Apple fritters

Friday, July 2

Breaded perch
Baked halibut
Ravioli
Baked macaroni
Egg plant supreme

NOTICE

Students in the department of guidance and counselor education are invited to attend the department's meeting with President Jerome Sachs, 3 p. m. - 5 p. m., July 7, in Dr. Sachs' office. Those students planning to attend are asked to notify Marsha Bernstein, department secretary.