

Special Articles

FOR PRINCIPALS AND SUPERVISORS ONLY

By a Principal

This article is written for principals, supervisors, overseers and inspectors, and all others are forbidden to read it.

In a certain American city the superintendent or supervisor has directed that the study of each country be made after the following order: 1st, Location. 2nd, Size and shape. 3rd, Mountains and plains. 4th, River systems. 5th, Important cities. 6th, Climate, industries and products. 7th, Form of government and condition of people. 8th, Exports, imports and trades. In presenting this subject this order is to be followed by pupils and teachers.

One teacher, who revolted at this plan, followed a different order of her own, and placed it upon a large card. In order to satisfy her district superintendent, however, in case he should appear, she placed on the other side of the same card the outline that she knew he might want. On appearing one day he called for the "chart" and by mistake the wrong side was exposed to view without his observing the fact. When the children had begun to recite from it, however, he looked up with surprise and, seeing the unexpected substitute, he expressed his disapproval in unqualified terms. He had charge of approximately 800 teachers and it was his duty to give each one a rating that was a prominent factor in determining promotion and salary.

In this same city the method of procedure in everything is laid out for the grade instructors by those higher up. For example, there is a general plan consisting of three steps "for the appreciative reading of a masterpiece" in literature; another plan consisting of three steps in composition, "for a study of a specimen of narration, description or exposition and familiar letters selected from literature;" another plan consisting of eight steps in arithmetic "for

learning the combinations of each table." There is even a plan for the memorizing of a poem. Here is what a visitor says about it:

"A visit to one of the rooms—a third grade—in which the pupils were memorizing a poem had helped to illustrate the plan. To the visitor the young teacher had seemed to be doing reasonably well. But the principal, after perhaps two minutes of observation, appearing to be dissatisfied himself, took charge of the class and taught for ten or fifteen minutes. Afterward, when asked by the visitor why he had taken the class, he replied in substance: "Did you not observe that the teacher was standing in the back part of the room? A teacher when a class is memorizing should never stand in the back of the room except (a) (b) (c). (The writer remembers that there were three exceptions, though what they were he cannot recall.) Then did you not observe that the stanza had not been written on the blackboard? It is one of my rules that the gem to be memorized shall be placed on the board in front of the class so that all eyes can be looking in the same direction at the same time." (Each child had the poem in his hand in print in the text book at the time.) The principal on taking charge of the class had immediately placed himself in front of it, had asked the teacher to write the stanza on the board and had then proceeded through six to seven more "steps" which could be included here did they not take up too much space. A typewritten copy of the entire procedure—the same as had been furnished to the teachers—was handed to the visitor before his leaving the building.

Of course all this happened in an American city, but it might just as well have happened here. What do you think? Are our teachers not quite as