

for several minutes." To get up and stir about in the cool air, perhaps shaking up and making the bed, thus freshening it; to rub or bathe the skin; to lay a wet napkin on the forehead,—any of these may be serviceable on occasion, though one would not wish to establish a habit of rising for these purposes. In truth, the better way is to secure such vigor and tranquility of the nervous system that no reason shall exist for resorting to any of these expedients.—*Primary Teacher.*

### TOPICAL SPELLING.

One of the very best methods of conducting a spelling exercise is that by means of *topics*. No other method so readily puts in exercise the perceptive faculties. A word is of little or no value until associated with an idea. No person will remember a list of words from a foreign language unless he is familiar with their meaning; nor will children retain the spelling of a word unless it is something for which they find use in ordinary conversation. The violation of this rule has uneducated whole generations of scholars in our public schools. It is astonishing how young teachers, and not a few old ones, settle down on a mere abstraction in all their exercises. Children rarely fail to become correct spellers who are taught while young to spell familiar objects around them at their homes. They at once cultivate habits of observation which never leave them. In this respect, parents are the best of teachers to young children. I cannot too strongly recommend the following methods to the consideration of parents and teachers.

1. Tell the whole school to write on their slates fifteen names of objects they can see in the school-room. The first one who has the requisite number raises his hand, and is then requested to copy his list on the blackboard. As soon as this is done, the whole school rise, turn their backs to the board, and spell the words from the board, dictated by the teacher or the pupil. When this is finished the teacher calls upon the school to raise their hands if they have any words on their slates *not* on the board. The teacher points to each one who spells his additional words. In this way, in a few minutes, every object in the school-room is spelled by the whole school; difficult words are noted, and the whole school is *educated* in spelling, so far as the school-room is concerned.

2. For the next exercise, let them rise from their seats, look out of the window five minutes, by your watch, and then spell every thing they can see. Drill them on difficult words.

3. Give them for topics everything they saw on the way to school; everything they can see in a store of goods; everything they can see on a dinner table; names of all kinds of cloth; all the parts of a wagon and harness; names of quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, shells, garden vegetables, flowers, trees, fruits, metals, rocks and minerals.

4. Let them write the name of every object made of iron, or that has any iron about it; also everything made of wood. A live teacher can draw out of his pupils an immense number of words from the foregoing subjects.

5. Let them write the names of the capitals of the different states in the Union, also, of different countries on the globe.

6. Let them write the names of all the persons living in the school district.

7. Let them write the names of the days of the week, and of the months.

8. Let them write the names of the parts of an apple, a ship, or a house; different kinds of food, and names of different trades.

9. Let them write the names of all the persons necessary to make a loaf of bread, commencing with the felling of trees in the forest. It is said that one thousand different occupations are involved in making a loaf of bread. Let them see how many they can write.

10. For an occasional exercise, let the first pupil in an advanced class spell the name of some town or city, and then let the next mention the name of a town whose first letter is the same as the last letter of the name just spelled.

11. Make the whole school rise, and as soon as any scholar can mention the name of a town in the state, he raises his hand. The teacher asks him to spell it, and he is then seated. When the class are all seated they rise and repeat the exercise, with a new list of words.

12. Tell a class to spell, for their next lesson, all the words they can think of, commencing with the letter A. Go on this way through the alphabet.

13. Tell small scholars to spell, for their next lesson, as many words as they can think of which contain but one syllable. Go on through the different grades of words by syllables.

14. Give them some familiar work for a subject, and tell them to write on their slates everything they can think of about it, and then make them spell the words in the order in which they have written them. This is an excellent introduction to the writing of compositions, though the teacher should not be so unwise as to call them such.

15. Dictate to a class ten difficult words to spell, and see how many of them will write them correctly on their slates.—*N. E. Journal of Education.*

### A PROBLEM SOLVED.

In St. Louis there is no attempt to bring all classes within the same grade to *one standard* of advancement, so that, in January, all pupils within a given grade shall have arrived at just the same point in a study.

At all times there are new classes just beginning the work of a grade, or year's work, in some one of our schools.

The classes are not separated by intervals of one year in their work, but by irregular intervals varying from six weeks to twenty. It is considered desirable to have these intervals small, so that reclassification may be more easily managed.

Pupils who fall behind their class for any reason (such as absence, lack of physical strength or of mental ability) may be reclassified with the next lower class without falling back a year, and thus becoming discouraged.

Pupils who are unusually bright or mature, may be promoted to the class above, or form new classes with the slower pupils of the class above, who need to review their work.

Thus it happens that in a district school there is a continual process going on, the elements of which are as follows:

(1.) The older and more advanced pupils are leaving school for business or other causes. This depletes the classes of the most skillful and best paid teachers, who are usually placed in charge of the most advanced pupils.

Again, there is at all times of the year an influx, into the lower grades, of pupils who have just completed their sixth or seventh year, and are now anxious to commence their school career.

Thus the pupils in the primary rooms of our schools tend continually to be over-crowded. (2.) To correct this continued tendency which over-crowds the rooms of the least skillful and poorest paid teachers, and gives small quotas of pupils to the most skillful and best paid teachers, from time to time (usually once in ten weeks but oftener in some schools), each class is sifted, and its most promising pupils united with what remains of the next higher class: (i. e., with the not-promising portion of it—those who for absence, or dull intellect, or weak will, fail to keep up with the best.

(3.) To make room for this transfer a portion of the highest class is sent to the Branch High Schools.

(4.) The number changed from class to class is usually small. The disturbance in classes is very slight compared with the advantages gained by the teacher in being relieved of the necessity to drive the laggards, and drill and cram them to make them keep up with the average of the class.

The teacher was once obliged to spend most of her time upon the dull ones in the useless endeavor to force them to make up lost time, or to equal the strides of the more mature, more regular, or more brilliantly gifted pupils, and, of course, these latter pupils lost proportionately, and the net result of the process was to over-work the incompetent, and to hold back the competent ones.

The teacher, in the vain efforts to hold together the extremes of her class, separating more widely every day till the end of the year, became cross and petulant, and sank continually into the abyss of drill machine pedagogy.

Under our present system we can make room, when needed, in the lower grades, and fill up the classes of our skillful and high-priced teachers.—*W. T. Harris, City Superintendent of Schools; St. Louis.*

The attendance at the Morrisburg High School is 75, and the Public School 247. Eight teachers are employed in the two schools.