



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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- g. Have a hearing pupil seated near him/her to attract the attention of the hearing impaired child and to explain instructions not understood.
- h. Seat the child at the front of the class with his/her better ear towards the teacher.
- i. He/she will not always hear answers given by other children in the class, therefore a summary may need to be given by the teacher.
- j. Encouragement is most essential - the child knows his/her weaknesses. Encourage peers to help, not to tease.
- k. Music, singing and rhythm are most helpful to the hearing-impaired. They stimulate residual hearing and add rhythm to their speech.

As educators, our role is to fulfil the needs of our pupils. Don't brush off the fact that you have hearing impaired children in your class. *Do something about it - fulfil their needs.*

With these techniques operating in our classrooms we may avoid having Jane's incident repeated.



KATHERINE AREA SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

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After reading Mr. C.F.Mounsey's article in *The Aboriginal Child at School*, Volume 2, No.5, December 1974, we were struck by the similarities of the problems of the school he mentioned with those of the Katherine Area School, except that our pupils were, shall we say, less 'resourceful', but the absenteeism and resulting fall off in performance followed the same lines.

Up to July 1974, 'Welfare Lunches', that is, lunches provided

free for disadvantaged children by the Welfare Branch, were available for those who needed them, but at the end of July this service ceased suddenly. This caused great concern in the school. Representations were made to local officers of Government Departments - Aboriginal Affairs and Social Security - but no action was taken either to continue the lunches until satisfactory alternatives were arranged, or to initiate and implement any alternative means of providing lunches. The Social Security Department claimed that 'necessitous' cases were provided with lunches. However, under their criteria, no children attending this school qualified, since the criteria are based on family income and not on the actual provision of food.

At the request of the Principal, Mr. R.G.Meredith, the officer-in-charge of disadvantaged children at that time, Mr. J.M.Godden, made a survey of the situation in the school since the cessation of the Welfare Lunch. This survey, with its acknowledged shortcomings (the time taken, and the number of children involved, would not allow accurate statistical analysis) indicated three main happenings:-

1. Certain children were never, or almost never, supplied with a midday meal or the money to purchase same.
2. Certain children frequently brought money to school to purchase lunch. However, the sum would be excessive some days and non-existent on others.
3. The great majority of the children who never brought money or lunches to school were also very poor school attenders. Virtually all of the poor attenders were Aborigines (19 out of 20).

This survey raised cause for alarm, as it showed that there were some children in the school who were *regularly without lunch*. This survey or report was considered by the Staff and by the School Board, and two copies were sent to Dr. H. Beare, then Director of Education, with the request that one copy be sent to the Minister for Education for his information and action.

In the meantime, Mr. Godden organised a group of Aboriginal mothers, as an Adult Education Class, to cut lunches once a week. These lunches (sandwiches) were deep frozen, for issue throughout the week, to children without lunches.

This was regarded only as an 'interim measure'. Mr. Meredith was glad that Mr. Godden had done this, but at the same time was disturbed and concerned that this responsibility should have ultimately fallen upon school staff, as he was of the opinion that, from inquiries

he had made, kitchen facilities could be established in Katherine to enable disadvantaged families to provide for their children, but stressed that the initiative should not lie with the school staff, although concerned members of staff could help.

Early this year it was decided to carry on with the 'interim measure' - that is, carry on with the cut lunches - but to change the method of payment and distribution. Previously the children brought their money to school and paid it to their teacher or direct to the canteen for their lunch. This did not prove satisfactory -see (2) of Mr. Godden's survey - children came with too much money and spent it all on soft drinks, leaving no money for the rest of the week.

This year, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was approached, and agreed to help us in contacting the parents concerned, explaining to them the situation and the need for the money, and collecting this money from consenting parents.

This has proved quite successful. Most parents have agreed to pay a week or fortnight in advance. The money collected is sent to the school office together with the names of the donors. Tickets, in bulk, are issued to the class teachers in individual envelopes bearing each child's name. The class teachers give these tickets daily to the children concerned. Lunch is provided to the child when he/she hands this ticket in at the canteen.

Mrs. O'Keefe runs a somewhat similar class to that of Mr. Godden, in that she has a number of Aboriginal mothers help her prepare about 250 to 300 sandwiches every Monday. These are deep frozen. The required number are taken out each day for distribution. Previously the cut lunches cost 10¢, but because of the rise in the cost of materials, the lunches now cost 15¢.

The main difficulty faced in the preparation of these lunches is the uncertainty of the number of helpers available on any particular day. This is partly due to lack of transport. Many of the interested mothers live out at Rockhole, about ten miles out of Katherine.

During the preparation of lunches, Mrs. O'Keefe converses with her helpers and brings the conversation round to food - what they like to eat, how often they eat etc. - and discusses with them the food value of the materials they are using in the sandwiches, their cost, the need for clean handling of food, safe storage of foods, how to keep flies off food and why, the preservation of food, the need for

budgetting, how many children they have, how the babies are fed, etc.

Sandwiches prepared are of egg, fritz, silver-side, peanut butter etc. We realize that this is not the ideal lunch - more greens and fruit would help, but we are faced here with the extra cost and also the problem of bulk storage of these articles, and feel that these could best be got by the parents from stores in town.

With the help of Mrs. Rita Scott, a teacher aide, we have kept a check on absenteeism and are pleased to note a marked decrease in recent weeks. Also performance has picked up - which goes to prove that sandwiches for lunch are better than no lunch at all.

POSTSCRIPT - TERM 2

With the departure of Mrs. O'Keefe, at the end of Term 1, we were left without a supervisor of lunch preparation. It is very pleasing to report that our Aboriginal Teaching Assistant, Mrs. Rita Scott, mentioned above, has assumed responsibility for this work, and appears to be handling the organization most capably.

*R. G. Meredith, Principal
29/5/75*

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Editorial Comment

Many teachers have commented on the usefulness of the "From Teacher to Teacher" section. Please do keep your contributions coming in so that the journal can achieve its major purpose, that is, spreading good ideas.

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