

# Pre-School Screening Most Important To Grover School

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Staff Writer

Pre-schooling screening at Grover School is a new approach to detection of problem areas in the classroom and eliminates drop-outs.

And, this new expanded program initiated this school year is working.

Principal Jim Scruggs said that testing of children before they enter first grade is first step in determining their special needs by putting together an individualized plan for each boy and girl.

"I am very excited about this innovation in the elementary schools," said Scruggs, who came to Grover in 1966 and has seen many new programs in 21 years of which he is just as proud, including the beautiful open classroom addition which now houses three first grades and two kindergartens, in its third year of operation at Grover.

Longtime sixth grade teachers, Dorothy McCraw and Lowell Ellis, recalled their first teaching experience at Grover in 1942, the nostalgic closing of the high school when Grover was consolidated with KM District Schools some years ago, and new programs which they applaud.

How is Grover School meeting the needs of its 425 students?

Said Miss McCraw, "Grover School offers so many things now that wasn't offered when I first started teaching here 35 years ago. Of course, the physical appearance is changed, our special services program is quite unique and our individualized educational plan is really paying off in the classroom."

Carolyn Roark, chairman of the Exceptional child's committee at Grover, focuses as consultant with the classroom teacher.

"This program really helps us to identify a child's needs and eventually may lead to writing individualized plans for all students," said Mrs. Roark, who declared that the Learning Disability program is relatively new to Grover. Making parents aware of their child's progress or lack of progress, alleviates, she said, a lot of stigma attached to the child in special classes.

Another essential part of this program is the school-based committee, which includes Principal Scruggs, Mrs. Roark, Steve Wells, Suzanne Keeter and Becky Alexander. Following observation in the classroom by Mr. Scruggs, Mrs. Roark or Mr. Wells, a conference is held by the full committee to determine the most effective direction to go in order to meet the child's individual needs. Some alternatives are to leave the child in regular programs with consulting services, transfer to a different environment or an educational assessment which also includes conferences with the parents concerning the child's problem and means that individual achievement, intelligence and aptitude tests are given plus the child is rated on a social adaptive behaviour scale, an informal achievement test, a visual motor

assessment and a medical screening by the school nurse, plus testing by a school psychologist before placement is made.

There is a continuous progress report between the teacher and parent, said Mrs. Roark, who said that 15 students are now participating in the EMR and LD programs while 35 are in speech classes. Mrs. Roark is LD teacher and Steve Wells is EMR teacher.

A second new program which is designed to see a decline in school dropouts is also underway at Grover School. No report cards are issued for the first nine weeks of school. Instead, parents come to school for individual conferences, this program serving as a guide to whether a child is "invited to stay back" in a grade for another year. "There is too much social promotion," says Principal Scruggs.

Conferences with parents keeps the parent informed and "it's no surprise" to them what their children are doing in school, the conference idea coming from teacher workshops "Scope and Sequence" with tests developed for all children in K-5.

"The parent-teacher conference is working very well at Grover," said Scruggs. On any given day of the week, a visitor to the campus can see parents and teachers conferring

about Jane or John's progress in school.

Another "first" for Grover this year is the "Jim Hunt Reading Program," a pilot program, in the first and second grade. A "listening center", plus activity games, offer incentives to better reading in the classrooms. June Sorrells, reading teacher, gave primary reading tests at the beginning of the year and anticipates that someday the program, which features reading, listening, skills, and writing centers, will be expanded to include all primary grades. The funds provide aides plus \$156.00 in reading materials for Grover school this school term.

"The First Thanksgiving" scenes, pictures of turkey gobblers, and Indian tepee scenes featured programs in the spacious classroom complex which houses three first grades and two kindergartens, a busy place on any day of the week. Writing, reading, playing, cooking, and learning, the boys and girls study in a relaxed setting.

Principal Scruggs says the secret of effectiveness in the open classroom teaching situation at Grover is that "the teachers are congenial, willing to give and take, and we're all just one big, happy family."

Principal Scruggs says he believes

that open classroom teaching should start in the lower grades. "It is more difficult to adjust after a child reaches the junior high level," he said, replying to a question. "Where it all begins is in the elementary grades," declared the veteran schoolman who made the observation that the school building program there should also start in the elementary levels.

Grover School's auditorium is probably the oldest school facility in Cleveland County, the two-story building erected in early 1900 and the site of the former Grover High School. After school consolidation, the Grover plant began housing grades K-8 and for the past five years has housed K-5, the kindergarten program now in its fifth year.

Most teachers we talked with said that biggest problem in the fourth and fifth grades is motivation.

"Some boys," said Principal Scruggs, "get turned off by their peers. At Grover I set the climate but I allow my teachers to experiment with new techniques."

"Kids today are more exposed and surprisingly we can spot these on pre-school screening tests. We can also spot those children who are three years behind in social development, as well as potential drop-outs," said Scruggs.

Grover's Head Start Program, in its first full year of operation for four-year-olds, also offers a full day of learning in social and emotional development five days a week. Approximately 18 students are now enrolled in this program at the Grover plant.

Principal Scruggs would like to see a course in art added to the Grover curriculum. "I've been

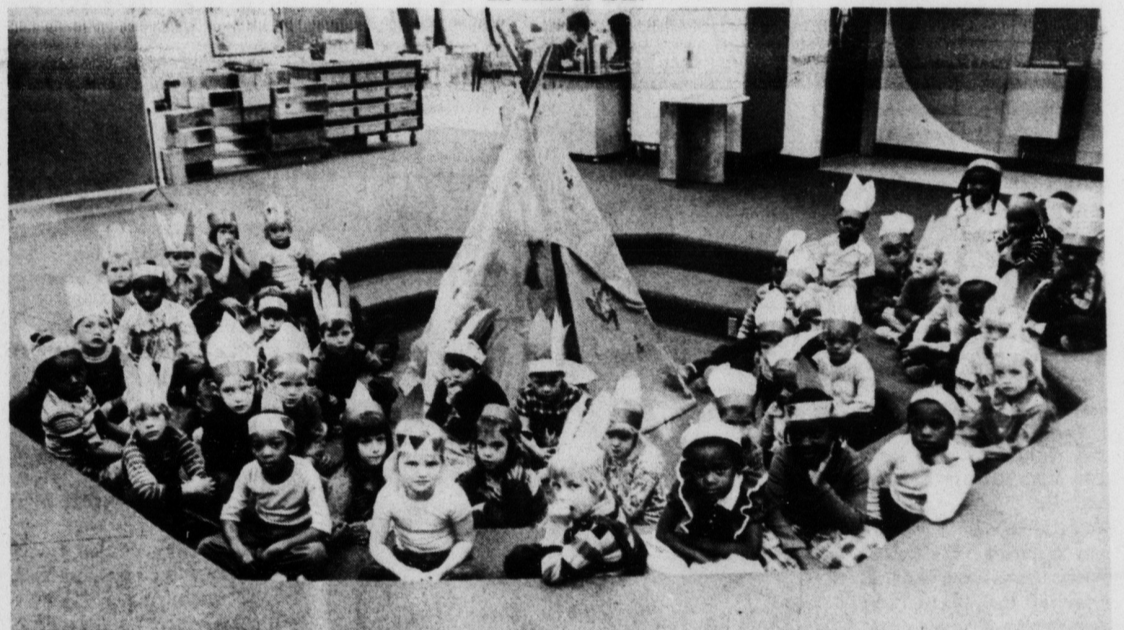
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**SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS** — Mrs. Elizabeth Allen, fourth grade teacher, instructs pupils in a social studies class featuring North Carolina history. The students point to geographical regions on a map. From left, Mrs. Allen, Donna Mayes, Carol Goforth, Sallie Costner, Beth Stevenson, David Haynes, Jeff Allen and Jeff Moore. Mrs. Allen is a veteran Grover teacher, joining the staff in 1952.



**JIM HUNT READING PROGRAM** — Pictured in a "Listening Center" during a reading class are left to right, June Sorrells, teacher, Jennifer Boheler, Chris Scruggs, Mrs. Norma Cissells, teacher, Tracy Morrison, Tiffany Rhea and Krista Byers.



**THANKSGIVING SCENE** — The kindergarten students at Grover are all decked out in their Indian headdresses around a tent in "The Pit" in the spacious open classroom facility they share with Grover first

graders. The group gave a class dramatization of the first pilgrims, assisted by their instructors, Mrs. Rebecca Alexander and Mrs. Barbara Lall and teacher aides Mrs. Linda Bolyon and Mrs. Mildred Pennington.



**SCHOOL BASED COMMITTEE** — Members of the School-Base Committee are pictured around the table discussing pupil reports. Principal Jim Scruggs, at head of table, and from left, Steve Wells, Suzanne Keeter, Carolyn Roark and Becky Alexander. Pre-

school screening, the Jim Hunt reading program and programs for children with special needs are a major emphasis of the school which houses 425 children from K-5 with 22 teachers.



**PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE** — Mrs. Corrine Tindall, left, confers with Mrs. Ann Byers, third grade reading teacher, during a parent-teacher conference, also a new program at Grover for K-5 students.

No report cards are issued for the first nine weeks of school as parents visit the campus for individual conferences on their child's progress.