

The newspaper is a learning tool

By **DEENA MANSOUR**
Record-Eagle

Summer school classes of the Northwestern Michigan Migrant Education Program (NMMEP) started each morning off with the newspaper.

"We read the Record-Eagle every single morning," said teacher Jennifer Hart, who had her students begin by reading the Traverse City paper independently. Then they read the Record-Eagle as a group, discussing articles of interest, from the World Cup to cherry production. While activities differed each day, one constant is that the students identified the "5Ws and H" — who, what, when, where, why, and how — in every article read aloud.

The students were participating in the Grand Traverse Area Newspapers in Education (NIE) program. NIE is a cooperative effort between the Record-Eagle, area schools and area businesses to use the newspaper as a tool of instruction. Under this program, schools receive copies of the daily paper, teacher education programs and curriculum materials.

Teachers find that the newspaper is an economical, effective and current text that can be used to teach a variety of subjects such as English, economics, science, geography and history. For students, learning from the real world has magnetic appeal. And because the material is compelling and authentic, both students and teachers find it more interesting.

NMMEP Director Jean Franco has made the program available to her teachers for the past four

years. "I find that for the students, the large-print headlines, recognizable symbols and numbers, and the many photographs help to convey information that help them more easily understand meaning," Franco said.

English as a Second Language specialist Virginia French Allen agrees that adapting the newspaper to classroom instruction is "a natural way to introduce students to cultural and linguistic concepts."

Each time students open the Record-Eagle, they are exposed to new places, new people and new ideas. Far more than a source of information for what is going on in our area and the world, the newspaper can play an important part in the development of new interests, as well as in students' intellectual stimulation and cultural growth.

Studies show that newspapers make a difference in children's skills. In a study conducted by the University of Stockholm, newspaper-reading students surpassed non-newspaper-reading students by one-half to a full school year in reading development. Students who used newspapers seemed more inclined to read than students who used textbooks alone. Finally, students who used newspapers could write better essays.

A study conducted in the U.S. demonstrates that children who use newspapers in school have greater knowledge of current events, are more politically aware and are more apt to take an active role in community affairs. Researchers also believe that reading vocabulary, comprehension and writing performance of at-risk students improves with access to and instruction in news-



Record-Eagle/John L. Russell

Lizabeth Ibarra and Joe Murietta, students of the Northwestern Michigan Migrant Education Program in Sutfons Bay, start their day reading the Traverse City Record-Eagle.

paper use.

NIE is largely funded by the Record-Eagle. Papers distributed to classrooms are first discounted at a rate of 75 percent off. The Record-Eagle then donates to the program an additional one cent for each paper sold at area stores.

The success of NIE heavily depends on readers who help support the program. Through the Papers For Kids program, readers are encouraged to make a tax-deductible donation by sending a check to the Record-Eagle written out to the school system of their choice. Subscribers going on vacation may support education by donating their papers to schools rather than temporarily halting their subscriptions. Because of the 75 percent discount, each donated paper results in four papers going into the classroom.

Area businesses also sponsor classrooms in amounts ranging from \$50 to \$5,000. Tom's Food

Markets has been a key supporter of the program for four years. Marketing Director Ray Haase says that the program is an integral part of the company's commitment to community literacy.

Through these funding sources, approximately 150,000 papers were distributed last year to more than 60 classrooms, grades one through 12. Administrators like Forest Area High School principal M.J. Grajewski agree that the program is effective and helps achieve community goals of raising informed and involved citizens while fostering life skills.

Hart says that the newspaper is an integral part of her curriculum. "I feel it really helps me to teach the kids about the English language and American culture. It works and they like it. What more can I say?"

For more information about Newspapers in Education, contact Deena Mansour at 933-1402 or dmansour@record-eagle.com.

Locals react to word 'God' used in school Pledge of Allegiance

By **LORI HALL STEELE**
Special to the Record-Eagle

When Congress added God to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, it was no big deal. Except, of course, that Brenda Husband and her classmates had to relearn their morning routine.

"You were at that age where you have to think about it," said the 50-something summertime Northport resident.

Used to be, Husband and her classmates would stand up in the morning, face the flag with hand over heart and just launch in, reciting from memory. When the phrase "one nation" was changed — with little ado — to "one nation, under God," kids had to consciously relearn the sentence.

Today, with a federal appeals court mulling its ruling that the phrase is unconstitutional — a violation of the 1st Amendment's "endorsement of religion" clause — the prospect of removing God from the Pledge has created an uproar, coast to coast.

What do Traverse City residents and visitors think? A cross-section of folks asked recently at a city park were evenly divided — those who thought it was no biggie just shrugged, those against it were vehement — but they were indivisible in their fond memories of mornings at school, pledging allegiance.

Husband, a retired teacher who substituted last year, got flashbacks of her patriotic morning routine after Sept. 11, when the school's principal began reciting the Pledge over the public address system.

"It did bring back memories," she said.

Nonetheless, she's not a staunch believer in the need for "under God" — a phrase added during the '50s Red Scare, when conflict with godless Russia was escalating — in a patriotic statement.

"I think they could take it out just as easily as they put it in," she said. "We're just a small

world any more. Even in the United States, we have a lot of different cultures. Some people wouldn't like it if we said 'one nation, under Allah.'"

The United States, indeed, is the world's most religiously diverse nation, with 1,500 different religious bodies and 360,000 churches, mosques and synagogues. Does that matter? Opinions were at odds elsewhere in the park. A Traverse City woman who's entertaining grandsons from Connecticut scoffed at removal, saying, "God is a vague term, not specific and it can be about anyone's idea of God."

But another woman, drinking coffee at a picnic table, said including it "blends patriotism with religion — and hey, folks, it's not the same thing."

Sixteen-year-old Daniel Genereaux of Traverse City fondly recalls the morning pledge and says it instilled in him "a sense of security, to know that this was my land, where I was born and raised and will die."

Removing God? He curses the notion.

"This country was founded because of God," said Genereaux. "We came here for freedom of religion, and to take out the name of the creator, it's just wrong. That's taking away credit where it's due."

Alan Matlow said the Pledge religiously during the Vietnam War. The 40-year-old engineer, visiting from the Toledo area, had four relatives of different generations all working in various capacities for the military at the time and saying the pledge was a daily bond, a connection, a potent symbol.

"It was a representation of support to those people who were overseas, fighting," he said. "At that time, part of the nation was over there."

So would removing God create liberty for all? Or stifle that liberty?

"I believe it needs to be there," Matlow said. "We're so concerned about everybody's rights. That's one of your rights — religion. If you don't like it, leave. We're not forcing you to stay."

Lori Hall Steele is a local freelance writer.

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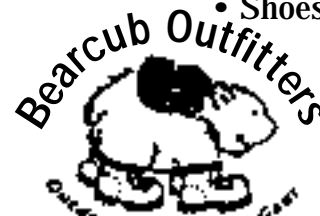
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