

Examination Days: The New York African Free School Collection

Primary Documents for Lesson Plan 1 School Days

The first two selections in this document are excerpts from: African Free School Principal Charles C. Andrews's book *The History of the New-York African Free-Schools, from Their Establishment in 1787, to the Present Time . . .* (New York: M. Day, 1830).

The third selection is an excerpt from: "Education of Children," in *An Address to the Parents and Guardians of the Children Belonging to the New-York African Free School, by the Trustees of the Institution* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1818).

SCHOOL EXERCISES

The morning school commences with a portion of the Scriptures being read by the Teacher, and the afternoon school opens by his reading a short lesson on any moral or instructive subject, intended chiefly, for the general information of the senior boys, who are required to be present ten or fifteen minutes before the assembling of the rest of the scholars, for this express purpose.

The books from which these lessons are selected are various; viz.

A Father's Legacy to his children,
The Scientific Class Book,
Polite Learning,
Comstock's and other Natural History, Scientific Dialogues,
Travels at Home,
Cook's Travels,
Articles on Education, found often in the daily papers, &c.

As a full description of the methods employed in teaching the several branches of education, would enlarge the present brief account of this school beyond its intended size, and as such information may be obtained by consulting a "Manual of the Lancasterian System," published by the Public School Society of this city, a general outline only, of the exercises, as pursued in this school, will here be given.

The value of the Monitorial System consists in facilitating, in an eminent degree; the business of instruction in the elementary branches of knowledge. It is founded upon a principle of Order and Discipline, by which the pupils, under the direction of the master, pursue a course of mutual instruction: those who have made the greatest progress in reading, writing, arithmetic, &c. transmitting the knowledge which they possess to others less advanced than themselves.

From long experience it has been found to be no more difficult to select suitable boys for monitors among this description of children, than among whites; nor is it true that they will not obey the orders and submit to the authority of such monitors, when it is once known that they derive that authority from the master.

The evolutions, gymnastic exercises, and the business of the classes in every branch taught in the school, are, with as much readiness, and propriety, observed under a monitor chosen from among themselves, as is generally found in schools composed of children of a lighter complexion.

When the monitors have the classes ready for operation, the Monitor General of Order takes care that the business of the day be gone through, and in the following

ORDER FOR EACH DAY IN THE WEEK

MONDAY MORNING.

- 1st. Composition, from the Class of Merit, to be handed to the master.
- 2nd. Monitor General of Reading, prepare all lesson boards, and lessons for the drafts.
- 3rd. After 12 words have been dictated, and written on slates, by the whole school, the Monitor General of Arithmetic orders out the addition, subtraction, multiplication and division classes, to exercise in those rules at the black board until reading time.
- 4th. The whole school reads 10 minutes before 11 o'clock, then, 20 minutes before 12, spell till dismissal.
- 5th. Such of the senior boys as put sums into books, commence that exercise at 9 o'clock.
- 6th. At 10 o'clock, all monitors receive their pay tickets, for the past week.
- 7th. At half past 10, Astronomy class up half an hour.
- 8th. At dismissal, the Monitor General of Arithmetic hangs up signals for ciphering in the afternoon.

AFTERNOON.

- 1st. At 2 o'clock, the Monitor General of Arithmetic arrange all the ciphering classes, and set them in operation, at their seats, under suitable monitors appointed for that purpose.
- 2nd. At half past 3, the ciphering classes repeat Tables of Weights and Measures, in concert, till 4 o'clock, then ciphering and reading in draughts, till dismissal.
- 3rd. At 4, grammar class up three quarters of an hour.

LINES

On the manner of conducting a Monitorial School, spoken at a Public Examination.
(Taken from an English publication, altered.)

Before we take a pen in hand,
We learn to write upon the sand;
And when the Alphabet we know,
We write on slates—six in a row.
An easy lesson is prepar'd,
As, AB, ab—ARD, ard.
And those who spell, or read, the best,
Have some reward above the rest.

When we in spelling, well succeed
We do appointed lessons read.
The Holy Bible is the source
Of each gradationary course.
A semicircle draught of six,
Whose eyes must on the lesson fix;
With hands behind, attentive stand,
Read—till they hear a fresh command:

Our places, then, at desks, we take,
(For standing long, our legs would ache;)
Rehearse the Tables, Grammar too,
And many more things have to do.
Our monitor demands a "Look,"
"Clean slates," "Prepare," then takes his book,
Gives out a word, when all in class
Write, one each other to surpass.

Six words are written,—then "Show slates,"
(Which must be rang'd like rows of plates
On dresser shelves,)--the slates are clean,
That words may be distinctly seen:
The pencils must be held like pens,
And be well pointed at the ends;
Six inches long,—or a small piece
We with a tube the length increase.

All letters to the right must lean,
With equal distances between.
Down strokes made bold, up strokes made fine,
And t's are cross'd upon the line.
Letters with stems, as h, l, b,
Are made as high again as v;
Both i, and j, though oft forgot,
Must have, as high as they, a dot.

Loop 's upon the topmost line,
With it the following letter join.
The p, the q, the g, and y,
Have stems as low as I has high.
Our master does the slates inspect,
And here and there finds some defect:
Bad spelling makes him shake his head,
So we're reprov'd, if nothing's said.

When we can shape the letters well,
And do the rest in class excel,
With pen and ink in books we write,
And think we're almost men—or quite,
At times, through carelessness we blot,
A fine in tickets, then's our lot;
But if the book throughout is fair,
Reward in tickets then's our share.

When through these courses we have run,
Our work, like dame's, is never done;
We must make figures on the slate,
And, as we do them, numerate.
The first class in arithmetic,
That they may reckon true and quick,
Write Combination on the slate,
As, one, and two, and five, are eight;

Take five from eight, three will remain,
Then write twice four, there's eight again.
We add, subtract, and multiply,
And learn the Tables by the bye.
Fingers we're not allow'd to count;
But tell, at once, the sum's amount,
As twice two's four, and three are seven,
And two are nine, and two, eleven;

Two's in six, three; two's in eight, four;
Five's in ten, two; five four's a score.
And thus you see we do divide,
Subtract, add, multiply, beside.
The next class has a sum to do,
To practise what it has gone through,
And all exhibit it at once,
Except it be an idle dunce.

Mental arithmetic displays
Any amount in shorter ways:
By 'nlarged tables which we learn,
At once the answer we discern;
As, fifteen pounds of beef or pork,
At ten cents by the head we work;
Without a pencil or a pen,
We ascertain fifteen times ten.

And, now the age is so polite,
We, must grammatically write;
So, when that exercise commences,
We chant the parts of speech, and tenses
Or, in a slow, responsive air,
As monks and nuns would say a prayer;
Thus, by a frequent repetition,
We gain this needful acquisition.

The parts of English speech are nine,
By which each word we can define;
Their derivation we can trace,
And write, and speak, with ease and grace.
An article is A, An, The;
A noun—a person, place, or tree;
An adjective Good, or Bad,
Swift, Slow, Strong, Weak, Expert, or sad,

Pronouns, I, Thou, He, We, You, They;
As John's gone out, He's gone to play.
A Verb is Passive, Active too,
Passive, I am—Active, I do.
An Adverb, to a Verb's allied,
To Adjectives is also tied;
As, he reads *well*, that's *truly* good,
Mince pie is *very pleasant* food.

A preposition serves to join
Words, which without, would not combine
As, William went *from* Rye *to* Hudson,
With Jane to see their uncle Judson.
Conjunctions, sentences connect,
As, these and those books are correct.
An interjection you may know,
When any say, Alas! or, Oh!

Then, syntax some of us practise,
Writing an Essay for a prize;
Some of us think, we write a letter
Well as a lawyer, if not better.
To fill the long, expensive sheet,
They use words almost obsolete;
We mind our stops in every clause,
They stop not till they end their cause.

We also may with those compare,
Who say "This here," and then "That there;
"More better," "Most delightfulest:"
"I knows they was the larnedest."
We learn by Lindley Murray's rules,
Such words would make us look like fools.

Our Regulations, wise and good,
Teach us to fear and serve our God;
T' attend the worship of the Lord,
And reverence his Holy Word.
At all times we must speak the truth;
Falsehood should be shunn'd by youth.
Ah! Annanias and his wife,
Telling a lie, both lost their life.

If such as these the school infest,
They are disgrac'd beyond the rest:
A label on their breasts is hung,
Descriptive of a lying tongue.
If any do the truant play,
They suffer, the ensuing day:
Their coats are turn'd, and they are made
All round the school room to parade

As he is thought the greatest fool,
Who wrongs himself by slighting school.
A boy, with dirty hands and face,
Is sure to meet with some disgrace;
A little girl is sent for in,
To scrub him till she makes him clean.
As soldiers under discipline,
We end our work as we begin,

With regularity pursue
Each exercise we have to do.
Orderly perseverance gains
A good reward for all our pains.
If after this short explanation,
Your pleasure or your inclination,
Should move you once to see the school,
Your presence won't infringe a rule.

Charles C. Andrews, "Lines on the Manner of Conducting a Monitorial School, Spoken at a Public Examination," in *The History of the New-York African Free-Schools, from Their Establishment in 1787, to the Present Time . . .* (New York: M. Day, 1830), 139–43.

GLOSSARY

The following is a glossary of some of the less familiar terms in the poem "Lines on the Manner of Conducting a Monitorial School, Spoken at a Public Examination."

Slates: Tablets made of stone, wood, or other materials that can be written upon and later erased

Gradationary Course: A grade in instruction

Draught: A group or selection

Monitor: A student teacher

Dame: A woman, as in "a woman's work is never done"

Tickets: Tickets are given as a reward for a job well done and can be taken in response to poor work or conduct.

Lindley Murray's rules: The English-born grammarian Lindley Murray edited *The English Reader*, a very popular school book in the early years of the American Republic. Abraham Lincoln called it "the best schoolbook ever put into the hands of American youth."

Ananias: In the New Testament story (Acts 1:1-10), Ananias and his wife Sapphira die suddenly after tell a lie to the apostle Peter.

Education of Children

All well organized schools are governed by regular system, and this is strictly to be observed by the scholars: but a close conformity to such regulations as the system embraces, depends greatly upon the parents who must feel a sufficient interest in them, or the pupil will be prevented from fulfilling their requirements.

But, as it would be unreasonable to expect the parents of the children composing the school under our care, to feel an interest in the rules adopted for its government, unless they become acquainted with them, we have considered it proper herewith to furnish some of the most prominent of them, which are as follows:

1st. The school commences at nine o'clock in the morning, and at two in the afternoon, when every scholar is required to be present. Every monitor is required to be present ten minutes before the above-mentioned hours. At half past nine, and at half past two o'clock, a monitor is placed at the door, to take down the names of the scholars who then enter, and these are, at the conclusion of the school, dealt with according to the lateness of the hour at which they may have come in.

2nd. Every scholar who comes to school after the regular hours of nine and two, is required to bring a note, signifying the reason of his or her detention, and every one that is once or twice absent at school hours, is required in like manner to bring a written excuse, or one of the family to call and give verbal reason.

3rd. Every scholar is expected to come to school with his or her hands and face clean, hair combed, and their clothes clean and in good order; those who come dirty, will be washed and combed in school, before all the scholars.

4th. No scholar is allowed to talk, or make any unnecessary noise, during school tune, and if any one wants to ask a question, he will be attended to by his holding up his hand.

5th. The school being conducted on the Lancasterian system, every scholar is required to be obedient to the orders of the monitors, who have their appointments from the master.

6th. Such scholars as are appointed as monitors are required to perform their respective duties with promptness and fidelity.

7th. The master will hear any complaints which any child has against a monitor, by the scholar's holding up his hand.

8th. Every scholar, at the dismissal of school, is required to go immediately, and quietly home, and parents are requested to correct every violation of this rule themselves.

9th. Any parent or other person sending a child to the school, is at liberty to call on the teacher at the school room, for explanations on any subject relative to the treatment of such child: but the teacher may use his discretion, whether to enter upon such explanation before, or after school closes.

10th. It is required that, previous to a child's leaving school, the parent or guardian of such scholar, will inform the teacher of his intention, together with the reason thereof, so that due notice of it might be taken, and a certificate prepared of the good behaviour of the scholar, if deserving it, and that the dismissal may be conducted in due form, in the presence of the trustees.

11th. Any person wishing to send a child to the school will, by calling at the school room, during school hours, be informed by the teacher how they may effect the same, observing that no child under six years of age, nor girls above the age of fourteen and boys of fifteen will be admitted.

Sewing School.

The trustees viewing it very essential for the girls to learn the use of the needle, have provided a separate apartment near, where about 60 or 70 girls are taught with great success, by a well qualified teacher, in divers branches of needle work. The business of this school is conducted according to the late new method of female instruction. Such girls as are in, or above the fourth reading class have the privilege of learning to sew.

All scholars attending the sewing school are required to be clean, orderly, obedient, and to behave in the most respectful manner to their instructress.

There are several other regulations adopted for the internal government of the school, and which are to be strictly observed by the scholars; the above, however, are all that are deemed requisite, for our present purpose.

Order and system is the characteristic of a Lancasterian school, and it is the object of the trustees of this Institution, that it continue to be distinguished in those respects: much, however, depends upon the co-operation of the parents and guardians of the pupils, for it is greatly in their power to aid or impede its salutary regulations.

Emulation and reward are observed throughout the whole; to aid which, a considerable sum is annually appropriated by the Trustees, for the express purpose of furnishing daily rewards to the scholars who merit them. The sum appropriated is subdivided into tickets, the nominal value of which is, one eighth of a cent each: every scholar who gains the head of each reading draft, of seven or eight boys each, receives one of these tickets, and for excelling in the other branches, or for being promoted to higher classes, in any of them, liberal rewards are given in tickets, and it is not uncommon to find several scholars at the time of calling in the tickets, (which is once in two weeks,) who have from forty to sixty of them: which, according to some instances of trial, they would be unwilling to part with for as many cents, before the regular day appointed for redeeming them: on that day they bring them up with evident pleasure, and receive their value in cakes, toys, &c. &c. This with suitable expressions of approbation from the teacher, or from the trustees, produces the object designed.

Another important use is made of those tickets, besides expending them as pay and rewards to the scholars who deserve them, viz. they are to be returned by way of *fine*, for various offences, which may be committed by idle and unruly boys who may read, spell or cipher well enough to earn them, but, may in other respects, behave too bad to keep them; if however the offender has no tickets, then other modes of punishment, though with regret are necessarily resorted to.

A list of offences, with their penalties annexed, is kept hung up in the school room, which has the tendency of preventing much trouble, the Law being always in full view of the whole, and is occasionally read aloud.

A copy of this list, we think, may also be useful to the parents, as it may serve to assist them, when they are advising their children as to their behaviour in school, &c.

List of Offences with their Fines annexed.

	<i>Tickets</i>
For talking, playing, being out of seats, &c.	4
For being disobedient, or saucy to a monitor,	4
For disobedience of inferior to superior monitors,	6
For snatching slates, books, &c. from each other,	4
For blotting or soiling books,	4
For moving when the signal is given for silence,	2
For stopping to play, or making a noise in the streets when going home from school,	4
For staring at persons who may come into the school,	2
For monitors reporting scholars without cause,	4
For monitors neglecting their duty,	5
For general monitors neglecting their duty,	6
For a monitor asking the master a question without having it written on a slate,	4
For making a noise in, or near the school house, before school hours,	4
For having dirty hands and face, to be washed and fined,	4
For coming to school late, for every ten minutes,	1
For eating, or exposing any fruit, &c. during school hours, to forfeit the same and be fined,	4
For throwing stones or snow balls,	10
For calling ill names,	10
For fighting,	20
For playing truant, first time,	20
For playing truant, second time,	40
For scratching or cutting the desks, &c. or defacing the walls,	40