

LEARN FROM HOME ABOUT: EARLY SETTLER SCHOOL

Was school for early settlers in the mid-late 1800s different?

To define *early settler* with your child, try: *the early settlers are people who came from Europe (Britain, Scotland, Germany, France, etc.) or up from the United States and settled here in Canada a long time ago. They came before us, but much after the Indigenous peoples. Early settlers in Canada lived in log cabins and were farmers, even the children! They lived and worked here on this land about 200 years ago!*

Activity One: Rules for Students

Can you imagine what the experience at school was like for an early settler child your age? Let's look at some rules that students many years ago had to follow in their classroom, and you tell me if you have to follow these rules at your school too.

Rules for Students (1872)

1. Respect your school master and obey and accept their punishments;
2. Do not call your classmates names or fight with them. Love and help each other;
3. Never make noises or disturb your neighbours as they work;
4. Be silent during class. Do not talk unless it is necessary;
5. Do not leave your seat without permission;
6. Not more than one student at a time may go to the washroom;
7. At the end of class, wash your hands and face. Wash your feet if they are bare;
8. Bring firewood into the classroom for the stove whenever the teacher tells you to;
9. Go quietly in and out of the classroom;
10. If the school master calls your name after class, straighten up the benches and tables. Sweep the room, dust and leave everything tidy.

Good early settler boys and girls followed these rules whenever they were in school. Grades 1 through 8 would have met in the same room and shared one teacher! Do you think that would have been difficult for the teacher to balance all of those different grades and subjects? Why or why not?

Teachers had rules, too! (1872)

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps and clean chimneys (oil lamps);
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's lesson;
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils (there were two types of pens being used at the turn of the Twentieth Century – quill pens, which were made typically of turkey feathers, and nib pens made of metal, which had to be purchased at the General Store and were less commonly used);
4. Men teachers may take one evening a week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church regularly;
5. After ten hours in school, the teacher may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books;
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed;
7. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for this benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society;

8. Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber-shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity, and honesty
9. Note: The teacher who performs his labour faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.

Since the teacher taught several grades at once, all the community's young people shared this experience and grew up together. Often the townspeople were the ones who raised the money and built the building. They planted the flowers and trees around the building and made any necessary repairs as well.

Activity Two: Math (varied levels)

1. Jacob is finding it hard to fall asleep, so his mother has told him to try and count sheep! If Jacob counts 2 sheep every 5 minutes for 1 hour, how many sheep can Jacob count? Try drawing a clock and drawing the sheep on every five minute mark.
2. Your village has acquired a blacksmith just in time – you need horseshoes for your horses! If each of your horse's hooves need 8 nails to attach a horseshoe, how many nails will you need to ask the blacksmith to make for your entire horse?
3. While collecting eggs from the chicken coop, Isaac collects 2 eggs in the first week. By the second week, he has collected 6 eggs, 18 eggs by the third week, 54 eggs by the fourth week, and 162 eggs by the fifth week. If this pattern continues, how many eggs will Isaac have collected by the sixth week?

Activity Three: Elocution

Good early settler boys and girls were expected to master the art of elocution. Elocution is the skill of speaking clearly, including articulated pronunciation and expression. To practice the skill of elocution, try your hand at reciting the following lesson. Remember to pronounce every syllable – and don't forget to try and say it faster to challenge yourself! Try reading the phrase one line at a time for your child to repeat, and then challenge yourselves to read it all at once.

Wilfred Wideman whittled while we went out walking.
Did Wilfred Wideman whittle while he went out walking?
If Wilfred Wideman whittled while he went out walking,
What's the whittled woodwork Wilfred whittled while he walked?

That was an elocution for the letter W. Can you think of a lesson for some of the other letters in the alphabet?

For other early settler schoolroom activities, try practicing your cursive writing, writing as many words you can think of for each letter of the alphabet, and practicing your skills of elocution!