

Going to School in New Hampshire

Activities for Study of Schooling in the 1800s

- Try to find out if your town has an old one-room schoolhouse. Ask long-time residents or look at old maps to find out. If you find one, is it still used as a school? Is it plain or fancy? Does it – or did it – have a playground?
- The two games below appear in the diary of a fourteen-year-old boy, John Perry, who was a student at Appleton Academy in New Ipswich in 1884.

Buzz

Arrange students in such an order that one begins and the others follow in some logical sequence. The first begins to count 1, the next person 2, and so on up to 7. But for every number that has a seven in it (27, 37, etc.) or any multiple of seven (7, 14, 21, etc.) say “buzz” instead of the number.

For example, the count ought to go 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, buzz, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, buzz, 15, 16, buzz, 18, 19, 20, buzz, etc.

Those who say the number instead of “buzz” are excluded from the rest of the game.

Brother [Sister] _____, this is a very solemn occasion.

Players sit in a circle. One starts by placing a handkerchief on his head and saying to his neighbor, “Brother [boy’s name], this is a very solemn occasion. The neighbor must not laugh or he will be out. Each person addresses his or her neighbor in turn by name, e.g., Sister Amy, Brother Frank. No touching or tickling is permissible; the object is to make the other laugh, but not let oneself laugh.

- As a spelling exercise, take a page from Henry Shute’s *Brite and Fair* or *The Real Diary of a Real Boy* and rewrite it with correct spelling. [See Suggested Reading.]
- Also enclosed are two old recipes for cakes, which children may have brought to school as part of their lunches. The students may wish to take the recipes home and bring cakes for their own lunches.
- During a recess, play only with appropriate objects and games. Tag, hopscotch, jumping rope, snowball fights, sliding, a tug-of-war, and such activities are ones that school children of the nineteenth century would have enjoyed.
- Learn a poem and recite it for everyone.
- Role-play a session. Have boys and girls sit separately, stand up in front of the teacher to recite, listen to moral instruction, and have boys and girls in charge of such responsibilities as sweeping the classroom and feeding the (imaginary) woodstove.

- Make a list of your classroom's contents. What would or would not have been there a hundred years ago or more? How are things different?
- Have a spelling bee.
- Talk to parents, grandparents, and other older people to find out about what school was like when they were young. Do they remember funny stories? Ask them what they learned, how they liked their teachers, what games they played during recess, and other questions.
- Draw a floor plan of your classroom. Where are the lights? Where does the heat come from? How are the desks placed? How are these things different from a one-room schoolhouse?
- Make a bookmark using canvas or even cloth material and make cross-stitch designs.
- Bring a lunch without using plastic or tin foil. (This can be a challenge since even disposable lunch bags were unheard of.)
- Make a copybook. [See instructions.]
- Make a prediction of your classmates and their future occupations. A lady at the Elmwood Institute in Boscawen kept track of the school's students and teachers and recorded their hometowns, their occupations, children, and other information. Imagine what your classmates might be doing in 20 years!