



The Albuquerque Tribune

Home

2:30 Starts

Albuquerque, New Mexico, Wednesday, March 9, 1983

Pages in Four Sections

25 CENTS

Nap time at EHS:

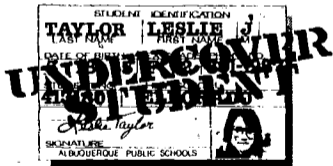
Class lectures take back seat to filmstrips — and horseplay

This is the second in a series of articles by reporter Leslie Linthicum, who spent two weeks and a day posing as a student at Albuquerque's largest high school.

By **LESLIE LINTHICUM**
Tribune Staff Writer

It is Jan. 27, a crisp Thursday morning. I've been a student at Eldorado High School for two weeks, and my senior English teacher, Oleta Saunders, has just addressed our Popular Fiction class for the first time.

We have spent six days silently reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*. We've traipsed to the media center for three days to watch the movie starring Gregory Peck on pirated videotape (complete with blips of commercials and news breaks). And another 50-minute period has been dissipated on a 25-



question true-false/multiple choice test on the plot.

But we haven't yet heard a hint from Mrs. Saunders of what the classic on race relations in the Deep South is all about. Its themes, its importance in literature, its impact — all have gone unmentioned.

Today our discussion comes.

Mrs. Saunders puts on her reading glasses and moves to the podium. For five minutes she recites the biography of author Harper Lee — when and where she was born, that she attended law school, that she lived in the South.

Students show passing interest in discovering that the novel was written by a woman. But they ask no questions, and the "discussion" dies before it begins.

This is learning at Eldorado High School.

I enrolled at the huge Northeast Heights school for 11 days in January. In all, I attended 55 class periods. During two-thirds of the classes, my teachers served as little more than attendance-takers and baby sitters. They operated film projectors and videotape players. They introduced guest speakers. They supervised in-class writing assignments and monitored test-taking.

Rarely did they lecture.

Mrs. Saunders' approach to education was not unusual. In fact, twice while she was absent, a bearded substitute read a paperback at his desk while we students continued to read to ourselves.

After stylishly dressed Independent Living teacher Pat Sutton gave a first-day rundown of what it would take to pass her class, five days elapsed before she addressed the students again. We saw filmstrips for three days and heard pitches from guest speakers affiliated with vocational schools for two more.

In a civics class required for graduation, a week went by with barely a nod from teacher Dennis Sanchez. A guest lecture, two films and two days of loosely supervised independent work took the place of teaching. One class period later was consumed distributing books to the 30 students and noting

See CLASS Page A-8

Class lectures replaced by films

Continued from Page A-1

their book numbers. Another hour was spent recording homework grades.

☆☆☆

Sophomores, juniors and seniors file into Kathryn Meloy's Human Development class and spot scissors, magazines and large bottles of glue on a front table.

Mrs. Meloy (who told us she subtitles her class: "We will all make it to graduation") explains that she has planned an exercise to help us remember our childhoods and think about child-rearing.

Each student will make two paste-up collages, one depicting memories of their upbringings and the other showing how they would raise their children.

After some moaning about being treated like children, the 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds begin snipping pictures of people baking cookies, swimming and going on picnics from copies of Better Homes and Gardens and Sunset.

Mrs. Meloy updates her grade and attendance book at her desk, rising only toward the end of the period to make sure the youths have cleared the floor of all scraps before the bell rings.

Attractive paper pastiches displayed from earlier classes indicate that many students took the assignment seriously.

☆☆☆

Frequently "self-service education" at Eldorado took the form of in-class, open-book writing assignments, during which teachers sat behind their desks engrossed in books or took telephone calls in nearby offices.

These assignments usually were exercises in book-skimming and copying. Worksheets required word-for-word parroting from textbooks or lectures.

One civics worksheet included the question: "Economics is based on ——— fact." The correct answer to put in the blank was "one simple," a phrase lifted from the textbook.

Two worksheets in Independent Living not only followed the text exactly but included answer blanks corresponding to the precise number of letters in each word of the correct answer.

☆☆☆

It is a Friday morning and once again I hear the familiar "dink" frame-change command of one of the dozen filmstrips. I am to be shown during my Eldorado experience.

Independent Living teacher Mrs. Sutton starts the projector, and the sprawling classroom dissolves in yell and catcalls as 60 students realize the sound track is unintelligible.

Mrs. Sutton agrees the dialogue is garbled but lets the filmstrip run to the end, then shows a second, equally garbled strip.

"Student" Leslie Taylor's Class Schedule

- Period 1 (7-7:50 a.m.) — Open
Period 2 (8-8:50 a.m.) — Independent Living, teacher Pat Sutton
Period 3 (9-10:20 a.m.) — Announcements/silent reading/Popular Fiction, teacher Oleta Saunders
Period 4 (10:30-11:20 a.m.) — Human Development, teacher Kathryn Meloy
Period 5a (11:30 a.m.-12:20 p.m.) Civics, teacher Dennis Sanchez
Period 5b (12:30-1 p.m.) — Lunch
Period 6 (1:10-2 p.m.) — Newspaper, teacher Jerrett Koenigsberg
Period 7 (2:10-3 p.m.) — Open

"Do your best," she advises, as the class degenerates into horseplay.

☆☆☆

Filmstrips have become the teacher's best friend and the student's anesthetic.

"I'm sick of seeing these Mickey Mouse films that don't tell us anything we don't already know," complained a freckled blonde after the second filmstrip in as many days in Independent Living class.

"Uh oh, time to go to sleep," was a comment often heard from students strolling into a classroom and noticing a projector.

But students didn't fall asleep during one film in Mr. Sanchez' civics class.

Hardly.

The cartoon attempted to explain rudimentary economics through the imaginary "Mochan Island" society. It captured the attention of the 14- and 15-year-olds through a dialogue peppered with sly sexual innuendo.

"Hi, Benny. How are the coconuts hanging?" one character inquired of another. A central figure was large-busted Raquel, who oversaw the island's melon patch and got belly laughs from the students by offering passerby her "big, ripe melons."

☆☆☆

"Well, that was another waste," remarks a frizzy-haired sophomore girl as we leave our last class of the day. She had spent the period freshening the paint on her fingernails while students were supposed to have been making a list of their in-class accomplishments during the past two weeks.

But she exhorts me to enjoy the leisurely pace: "Last semester (teachers) really piled it on: I think they were worried about getting everything done, and now they see they can take it easy."

☆☆☆

NEXT: A look at drugs and drinking at Eldorado.