

# Salary Leaves Little Room For Any Professional Pride

Staff writer George N. Allen spent two months as a teacher in one of the city's "difficult" schools—John Marshall Junior High in Brooklyn. Mr. Allen was assigned to obtain a teacher's job at the school, JHS #10, to learn first-hand the experience of a teacher there, the attitudes and aptitudes of the students, the day-by-day problems of classroom instruction. He obtained a substitute teacher's license after having met all the necessary requirements. In this article, the thirteenth of a series, he describes some of the teachers he encountered.

By **GEORGE N. ALLEN,**

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Fortunately for me, I didn't have to live on my teacher's salary during the two months I taught at John Marshall Junior High School in Brooklyn.

My take-home pay was approximately \$60 a week.

As was reported at the start of this series, I spent not one penny of my salary. It's safely banked in a savings account and will be turned over to a teachers' fund or spent in some manner in the interests of city school children.

I found at John Marshall that many teachers needed outside jobs to supplement their salaries. Most of these teachers spent no extra time in the school building, so pressed were they to get off to their second jobs in community centers or in stores. Many of them shunned homework and just tried to "keep the pupils quiet."

Their attitude, I found, was pretty much that of an assembly line worker, embracing little of the professional pride which the public associates with teaching. But when I remembered that \$60 take-home pay, I could understand why a teacher had to hustle an extra job or two to make ends meet.

The schedule of salary increments is something less than inspiring. The full-time substitute, who has minimum academic qualifications, starts at \$4000 a year and rises to \$4888 after six years of service. If he has more than the minimum qualifications he can get another \$400 or \$800 a year.

#### Pay's the Same:

A regular teacher starts at \$4000 and rises to \$7600—but it takes 14 years. With additional academic qualifications, he can rise to \$8400—the top for any classroom teacher.

Good teachers and poor are paid the same. But even the best teachers at John Marshall opposed the idea of merit

raises proposed by Superintendent of Schools John J. Theobald. They told me they considered the plan a device to give a "cheap raise" to a few teachers instead of a much-needed raise to all teachers.

I got to know a lot of teachers at John Marshall. Most of them were fine, dedicated persons. But a few were calloused in their approach to their pupils; others appeared psychologically unsuited to be teachers.

One day I had a question in planning a lesson for my adjustment class and I went to a fellow teacher for advice. "Ah, don't bother with them," he said disgustedly. "They are the dregs. That's all, just the dregs."

There was another teacher at John Marshall who jarred me the first time he spoke.

#### Don't Try,

"You can't teach your adjustment classes a thing," he said. "Don't try. You'll just waste your time. And don't assign any homework. It will just mean more work for you."

I asked him what he did about examinations and he laughed.

"Exams?!" he said with surprise. "I don't give exams except at the quarter, the half and the three-quarter mark. I don't have time to correct the papers. I have two outside jobs. So I never give exams. And I never check homework."

#### System's 'Blind Spot'

Teachers who lack the ability to control children or who can't help children to learn can—in time—be weeded out.

But the identification of the relatively few teachers who are psychologically unfit to be in a classroom with children is one of the blind spots of our educational system.

At JHS 210 I once tried to intercede with another teacher who I believed was treating one of my better students unfairly. My words called forth an unreasoning outburst that lasted five minutes.

"Don't you believe a word that kid says!" the teacher shouted at me. "Don't you believe him. They're all liars, every last one of them! They'll lie every chance they get! Don't believe a thing any of them tells you!"



George N. Allen

## What It All Means!

George N. Allen will offer Monday a set of conclusions based on his two months' experience as a teacher in one of the city's "difficult" schools.

Mr. Allen will conclude his series of 15 articles with a program of constructive measures to benefit the children in the classrooms, the teachers who work with them and the taxpayers who foot the bill for their education.

In tomorrow's installment, reporter-teacher Allen will discuss administration practices at John Marshall Junior High School.