

SAFETY AND
the
BROOKFIELD FIFTH-GRADE CHILD

AN ABSTRACT OF
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by
Robert David Wood
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Ten years ago Brookfield was a quiet rural town with one wooden frame school building and a population of 2,864. In the period of one decade the population has grown two and one half times and the school population has more than tripled. The town has increased its facilities for the residents and grown physically in many ways. These factors represent progress and the development of a more complex environment.

The Brookfield fifth-grade child lives in this environment, but the school system has done little in the actual teaching of safety during this decade to meet the needs of today. Conditions in the environment involve children in accidents and one of the only protections they receive is the occasional incidental safety lesson from their teacher.

A study of the national, and Brookfield, fifth-grade child's characteristics was made to identify the physical and social skills important to know for a proper determination of the apparent potential and limitations of each group. A comparison of both groups established just where the Brookfield child stood in relation to the national child.

A similar undertaking included the research of accident records which again required establishing the necessary data regarding the national child. The accumulation of facts regarding the Brookfield child was severely hindered because

of the method used in the school system to report accidents. A comparison of both groups was, however, made possible with the aid of a questionnaire that had been given to the Brookfield faculty directly involved with the students.

The combination of environment, physical and social skills, and accident record described how the fifth grade child of Brookfield was reacting to his environment. This information revealed certain areas in which the children were deficient and established a means of comparison between local and national statistics.

A way to correct a situation is to suggest proposals that might improve it and then act upon the suggestions. This can be accomplished by establishing the necessary guidelines to fit the present school system's philosophy. Safety instruction for Brookfield cannot be restricted to one grade level but should encompass every grade level to prepare the child for his adult life.

The anticipated population growth in the next decade will almost double the existing population of today. School needs and population will also grow proportionately. The environment will again become even more demanding and complex. Can the Town of Brookfield afford to wait another ten years before realizing the importance of safety education? Or, can it learn from the past, to teach the safety needs of today and prepare for tomorrow?