

[People to People International](#)

## **Reading Education Delegation To Russia and the Czech Republic**

**March 8–20, 1998**

**Dr. Bertram "Chip" Bruce, Delegation Leader**

### **JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Moscow, Russia

#### **TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 1998**

Our Reading Education Delegation to Russia and the Czech Republic began with a briefing from Jack Hols, the travel manager, in Newark, New Jersey, on March 8, 1998. Afterwards, we flew a beautiful Czech Airbus to Prague where we changed our beast of burden and arrived in Moscow a few hours later, onto a snowy runway beneath gray skies.

Mila, a Russian guide, met us at the airport and took us to our large, imposing, Stalinesque hotel, the Ukraine. Our first dinner in Moscow was beef stroganoff and rice, as well as wine and dessert.

**Institute of General Education.** The first professional visit began after breakfast on Tuesday, March 10. Our delegation visited the Institute of General Education where we were received by the charming director, Mr. Vladimir F. Krivosheyev. This facility was formerly the Science Research Institute for Education. It is the oldest system in Russia, having originated in 1967. Mr. Krivosheyev has been the director for 15 years.

The institute considers any problems in education, including elementary students as well as disabled children. There are three laboratories at the elementary level. The institute develops many different types of books for the teachers and students to use, and will have written 300 to 350 school books before the year is over.

There are two variants of elementary school. One includes three years of schooling and the other has children begin at six to seven years of age. Both models go to fifth grade. One teacher teaches all the subjects and keeps the same class for grades one to four. This teacher tutors students at fifth grade. The school week is only 24 working hours. There are five lessons each day, with an optional Saturday class.

Mr. V. G. Goretskii, the renowned author of many Russian children's books, including the ABC books, spoke about his philosophy. He thinks education should apply to the soul of a child as well as his/her brain. He is concerned about the outside influence of TV and video, since people are reading less. He feels that when a person stops reading, his soul is affected. Thus he is interested in how to bring the book to the child and he wants to

develop instruction to attract children to books.

We also heard from another researcher, deputy director L. F. Klimanova, and a woman colleague. We were impressed to see how everyone cared deeply about children and were eager to experiment with various methods of instruction and materials in order to improve teaching effectiveness. As we left, Mr. Krivosheyev gave us several copies of a twelve-year-school plan they are developing and may be implementing. It was a very informative visit.

**Moscow Pedagogical College #1.** After lunch, we visited the Moscow Pedagogical College #1 named after Ushinskiy. Mr. Andrei I. Sarelyev, director, led us to a classroom where we observed a phonics lesson being explained and "taught" to us. The teacher used a concrete symbol to link the initial consonant as a memory aid, as we do in the United States. Afterwards, we saw samples of their children's instructional books and visited a computer lab.

Following dinner at our hotel, we spent an entertaining evening at the circus. Flying acrobats, walking brown bears, jumping goats, and amusing clowns were all part of the engaging entertainment. Desserts available during intermission included delicious custard-filled bismarks and swirly, pink cotton candy.

We returned to our hotel amidst huge falling snowflakes and snow crunching beneath our feet, knowing that our first professional day in Moscow had been a wonderfully fulfilling day.

*Reporter: Mrs. Bobbi Garrop*

### **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 1998**

The ubiquitous gray skies, our constant companions since Newark, were still with us. Today, however, the drizzle had given way to snow—several inches (a record snow in feet) had dusted the city. Traffic was snarled, snow removal crews were busy. Despite the icy wind and blowing snow, everyone's mood seemed lighter as we boarded the bus for the Kremlin. We enjoyed an information-filled tour of the Armory Museum, Cathedral Square with its domed churches and Ivan's Bell Tower, and the grounds of the Kremlin. The new Parliament building, all glass and marble, was quite impressive when viewed against the backdrop of 16th-century splendor.

We had our lunch at the Yellow Submarine, a restaurant devoted to Beatlemania. All five delegations enjoyed a convivial lunch before setting off for our afternoon professional meetings.

**School of Music—Esthetic Education #1633.** The reading delegation visited a state-sponsored educational complex kindergarten—School of Music—Esthetic Education #1633.

The founder and director, Ms. Mariya Tsapenko (an educational psychologist), described her program as experimental and very child-oriented. She has developed a program for

multi-age children that stresses musical as well as academic development. The school is open to any children in the micro-district (local neighborhood); musical talent is not a prerequisite. About 400 students, aged two to ten, attend the school. Ms. Tsapenko's program is unique in that it serves nursery/pre-school, pre-kindergarten, and elementary school-aged children within the same complex; the strong emphasis on aesthetic development is also unique.

The children are brought to school at 8:00 by their parents and remain until 5:00. Very young children attend preschool in the morning and child care in the afternoon. The small children were not in school when we arrived. However, we were able to observe two groups of pre-kindergarten children, four- and five-year-olds, as they participated in reading lessons.

Phonics is an important component of Russian schooling, and phonics instruction is evident at the complex. In both classrooms, teachers introduced new sounds; the children practiced the sounds as a group and individually. The four-year-olds moved to various stations in the room to play games and "read" words. The children practiced identifying sounds in different syllables of words and putting the new sound before and after vowels. The teacher did a great deal of modeling for the children. She was animated and enthusiastic, and she encouraged and praised the children. Activities changed frequently, facilitating student engagement. Interestingly, teacher and students stood for most of the lesson.

The five-year-olds were seated at tables arranged in a square with two bars connecting polar sides. Here, too, the teacher introduced the new sound and the students responded as a group. She, too, was very animated, speaking quickly and forcefully. Children read words formed with the new sound from cards. The teacher read a riddle and chose a student to select an answer from the words on the board. If the student found the correct answer, (s)he *read* the next riddle. The students used a variation of Elkon squares to form new words. The lesson was long; however, engagement was high as activities were changed frequently. It is obvious the children in this class are reading.

Ms. Tsapenko says literature is introduced in first grade as soon as the child can read and write. Children read classic Russian tales, and reader response and discussion are encouraged. Evidence of literature instruction was obvious in the short music/dance program a multi-age group of children presented. They performed Russian folk dances and music related to the works of Pushkin. In response, a member of our group, Claire Schonaerts, presented a version of *The Carrot Seed* in English and Russian. She also left a copy of the book with Ms. Tsapenko.

Children with reading difficulties are sent to another center for special help.

The day ended with a banquet at which members of the five delegations were able to continue discussions with great representatives of the sites visited.

*Reporter: Mrs. Nancy A. MacGregor*

## **THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1998**

Our cultural visit began in the midst of Moscow's most severe storm of the season. The solemnity of the two young militia guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier precluded our visit to Red Square. The eternal flame was a sharp contrast to the snow and ice that covered the area.

Red Square was once known as the *torg*, or marketplace. The present name dates from the 17th century when the word *Krasniy* meant "beautiful" or "red." Before the November Revolution, Red Square was the scene of markets, fairs, and religious festivals.

St. Basil's, the beautiful church which dominates the square, was the setting for Palm Sunday processions from long ago. Some of our group entered the church and were awed by the ancient interior markings of the grooves left behind by the footsteps of other faithful followers.

Others went on to the G.U.M., which stands for Gosudarstvenniy Universalizing Magazin (State Department Store). This building dates from 1888–1893. The stores are filled with both American and European products.

The trip to Lenin's Mausoleum was a moment of somber demeanor. After Lenin's death on January 21, 1924, his body was preserved so that the citizens could come to pay homage. The viewing lines are now much shorter, but the building is, nevertheless, impressive.

We dined on our own and chose to shop at the Arbat, an area that holds much interest for our eager-eyed bargain buyers. Others chose to venture the metro and see the magnificent icons at the Tretyakov Gallery.

Our final meal was a delicious beef stew. Leaving Moscow under a blanket of snow was a sad time for all of us as we boarded the night train for St. Petersburg.

*Reporters: Ms. Claire E. Schonaerts*

*Mrs. Patricia M. Gowing*

## **St. Petersburg**

### **FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 1998**

**Secondary School #86.** The gentle motion of the train lulled most of us to sleep in a short time. We arrived in St. Petersburg before 7 a.m. and proceeded to the lovely Hotel Pribaltiyskaya. After a few hours of rest and revitalization we left to lunch at the Nikolai Restaurant.

Our first professional meeting in St. Petersburg was held at Secondary School #86, 4 Mira Street, telephone (812) 2326301. The principal, Ms. Svetlana Ivanovna Borisova, greeted us warmly and enthusiastically. We were escorted to the second level of the school for a brief orientation.

Dr. Bruce requested that we visit classrooms first and then come together to share with our

counterparts. This suggestion was eagerly accepted. We were asked to break up into three groups so that each group could see three different presentations.

One group of the delegation was escorted to a second grade classroom of 26 students and three 6th graders. The younger students were dressed in colorful native costumes. The delegation members received a group greeting in English upon entering the room as the students rose and faced them.

The teacher began the class period of 45 minutes with an animated storytelling time. Following this, the students proceeded to the front of the classroom where each group had an opportunity to retell the story in sequential order led by the student leader. There was an additional performance in pairs which included lighthearted "teasing."

The students also read in unison as a class from a teacher handout. At the close of the session, the three 6th graders addressed the delegation members in a well-rehearsed English presentation. As the members left the students were lively engaged in a musical movement exercise and stood as they bade "good-bye" in English.

A second group of delegates attended a classroom of seven- and eight-year-olds. Greetings and salutations, focused listening, and active participation also marked this visit. The teacher read to the students, asked pertinent questions, introduced vocabulary, and asked students to show their painted illustrations in the front of the room. The subject matter was in the arena of both science and language arts. Students were told about the author Gorky, read about him in class, discussed his notes on spring, shown a tree branch that was budding, listened to a song about spring, and asked to give some "signs of spring" in contrast to the falling snow visible from the classroom windows.

As a final activity, the children were told to follow the virtues spoken of by Gorky: to love each other and the world around us and to be kind. Each student marked the grade they received for the class period as the teacher assessed them individually before we left.

At our professional exchange we learned that this is a public school, now 60 years old. Classes are divided by ability designated by test results. By the age of nine or ten the students are asked to select an area of specialization in chemistry and biology, literature and language, mathematics and sports.

Bobbi Garrop gave an excellent presentation on open-ended creative thinking using a mandala approach. This led to a lively discussion with our Russian counterparts.

*Reporter: Ms. Claire E. Schonaerts  
Mrs. Patricia M. Gowing*

### **SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1998**

After breakfast, we boarded the bus to enjoy a day of cultural enrichment and sightseeing in St. Petersburg. As we approached the palace square, the enchantment made us feel like we were entering one gigantic palace surrounded by canals and rivers. We soon learned that despite gray skies, St. Petersburg is still beautiful. This city of five million people is

the second largest city of Russia, "built upon the blood and bones of the people." St. Petersburg changed its name four times and was the cradle of three revolutions. But somehow its beauty prevailed. The five green buildings of Baroque splendor known as the Hermitage Museum and Winter Palace overlooking the embankment caught our attention. The fort-like character of the buildings couldn't help but evoke our curiosity as we all felt connected to the chamber of curiosity downriver. Through the bus windows, the pastel colors of blue, green, and yellow hues felt like a soothing massage against the gray skies. The onion domes of cathedrals etched shapes of angels and crosses making signatures in the sky. Images of statues, sphinx, bridges, canals, and cathedrals came into view. We stopped to take pictures of the Cathedral (Savior) "on the spilt blood" built as a memorial on the spot where Alexander II was mortally wounded by a free-will terrorist. Its elaborate outline and unique colorful domes painted designs of blue, green, and gold against the sky. Each pattern on the domes was different. We looked for the face of the building glazed with brick and ceramic tiles.

After lunch we waded through lines to visit the Hermitage Museum and Winter Palace, which we learned meant place of exclusion, second in size only to the Louvre in Paris. Upon entering the museum, it didn't take long to realize that it was second to none with its ornate gold-plated grandeur on the high cathedral ceilings and walls. Precious green malachite pillars and vases added a sense of awe to the surroundings. We stopped at the picture of Catherine the Great as we uttered a quick thanks. Then we went on to marvel at a sculpture of Michaelangelo and paintings of the masters such as Monet, Picasso, Rousseau, Rembrandt, and Van Gogh, to highlight only a few familiar ones. We topped off the evening with a wonderful performance of a ballet called Corsairs. Dinner was served late and we fell off to sleep satisfied with memories of rich cultural experiences.

*Reporter: Mrs. Jean M. Landis*

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 1998

This was our third day in St. Petersburg, Russia. After mounds of snow, high winds, cold temperatures, and a sun that had remained in the shadows, we thanked God for a bright sunny day.

Breakfast was served from 7:00 to 9:00 to accommodate the early risers, as well as those who wanted to enjoy every minute of sleep possible. Dr. Bruce ("Chip"), our delegation leader, had a brief meeting after breakfast. We discussed the itinerary for the day and shared journal entries.

We boarded the bus at 10:00 a.m. for the Saints Peter and Paul Fortress. Upon arrival, Sergei, our translator/tour guide led us to the entrance of the Saint Peter's Gate. He gave us the historical background before entering. The Peter and Paul Fortress is the city's first building, once a political prison in czarist Russia. Sergei emphasized that Saint Petersburg was built on the blood and bones of the people. Once inside the fortress it appeared we had stepped back in time.

First, we visited the Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral that had served as a burial place for all

the Russian emperors and empresses except Peter II, Ivan VI, and Nicholas II. The weather vane of the spire of the cathedral is an angel with a cross. It appears the angel is watching over the city.

Next, we visited a facsimile of one of Saint Petersburg's most treasured possessions, Peter the Great's boat. He used the boat to train himself in the art of navigation. The boat is known as the "Grandfather of the Russian Navy." The building that housed the boat was also a souvenir shop. We purchased a few souvenirs and continued the tour.

Before leaving the fortress we witnessed the firing of the cannon, a Saint Petersburg tradition. We left the fortress, had lunch at the Imperial Restaurant and shopped, and the tour continued to Saint Isaac's Cathedral.

Once in front of Saint Isaac's Cathedral, everyone automatically began to look up. The large columns forced you to look up. The building towering above the whole city is remarkable for its painstaking, intricate details evident throughout its interior. The architect Auguste de Montferrand designed this classical style monument. The cathedral interior is decorated with unique art. It took forty years to build Saint Isaac's Cathedral, 1818 to 1858.

The evening continued with a beautiful Russian folk show followed by a later dinner at our hotel.

The day which had begun sunny ended with sunny thoughts of the weathervane of the spire—the angel watching over the city.

*Reporter: Ms. Christeen Boone Owens*

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 1998

**Center for Intellectual and Creative Development in Nursery Schoolchildren.** On Monday, March 16, the -10° Celsius weather was still winter. On the drive to the suburb on the Gulf of Finland, we passed fields of white snow and tall, bare-branched trees. We could be driving past these wood or brick houses in this landscape in a horse-drawn droszky. However, today many houses or mansions belong to the affluent "new Russians." Teachers are among the underpaid professions, along with doctors. With changes in the economy have come rising rents, fee-for-service health care, devalued pensions, bank failures, inflation, unemployment, and loss of economic security, especially for older people.

Our destination was the Center for Intellectual and Creative Development in Nursery Schoolchildren, with pupils age two months to seven years, when they enter first grade. Each of the 180 pupils is individually evaluated, and the intensive health care, speech therapy, sports, as well as intellectual programs, are adapted to his or her needs. Emphasis is placed on memory development; for example, through cognitive games and exercises. Creativity is fostered through music, dance, art, drama, folklore, and folk singing.

We were fortunate to observe a lesson by a teacher who has the highest credentials, a specially-honored designated teacher, Tatiana Alexeiavna. The lesson began with very

expressive poetry recitations, continued with reading word cards on the board and providing associations with the words, word puzzles involving spelling and stressed word parts, missing letter fill-ins, riddles requiring a change of middle vowel, and finding small words in a big word. The teacher called on students who had raised their hands, praised lavishly, and gave the class a "key of knowledge" after each successful activity. Implementing a metacognitive approach, she asked them what they had learned, and they offered such responses as increase of knowledge and reading ability, success after struggling to achieve a goal, and other valuable achievements.

A brief dictation exercise using earphones followed, and then teams of volunteers went to the board to make sentences with word cards. Finally the students posed riddles to us, and awarded prizes to the solvers.

Such 30-minute lessons are given three times a day, in different subjects, to six- to seven-year olds, shorter lessons to younger students. Subjects covered are math, nature study, speech development, and various art media. After Claire regaled the class with *The Carrot Seed* in Russian and English, we were shown the health improvement room, with massage machines and other equipment, and the gym. Particularly impressive was the drawing or art room, with plants, reproductions of masterpieces of art and folk art, and much student work on display. We also saw a room with small beds for nap time.

Next we were treated to a musical and dramatic presentation of *Once in a Forest*, a variant of the seven little goats and the wolf story, with piano accompaniment by the music teacher.

We also visited the nursery group of two-year-olds.

Finally, we were the audience for a big production by staff and children of a song and dance show, including participation by an adult prize-winning folk singing and dancing group. There was even a dancing "bear."

Unfortunately, we had to rush through the delicious lunch in order to make our next meeting. We thanked profusely our gracious hostess and explicator, Valentina I. Babushkina, director of the center.

**Russian State Pedagogical University.** At the Russian State Pedagogical University, a 200-year-old institution whose elementary school was begun in 1945, we were greeted by Chair Larissa Savelieva. Also contributing were Marina Voushina and Galina Shegoleva. English interpretation was provided by a professor of English. Their emphasis is on text analysis and meaning, rather than on the Ushinskiy emphasis on decoding and recall favored in Moscow. The pedagogical approach here seems to be on the higher-order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy. Emotional and intellectual feedback are stressed, and writing is integrated into the course of study. Grammar and spelling are pre-taught as writing needs dictate, and students check and edit their own work. The university department also serves as a resource for teacher in-service training and problem solving.

Bobbi presented her rubric for creative thinking and it provoked some stimulating ideas.

This very full and busy day ended with a banquet at the Nicholas Palace, where good music and delicious food and the celebration of Pat Gowing's birthday in that beautiful setting were enjoyed by all.

*Reporters: Ms. Vita Rosenberg  
Ms. Marcy W. Childre*

## **St. Petersburg to Prague, Czech Republic**

### **TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 1998**

Tuesday was a travel day, but first we were able to preview the excellent video of our St. Petersburg sightseeing and some professional visits prepared by Basil. After spending the rest of the morning packing and doing last-minute shopping, we boarded the plane for Prague (Praha). The two and a half hour flight was short, partly consumed by a nice lunch, and we disembarked quickly and efficiently. A ride through the city to the hotel oriented us to many of the landmarks and the geography of the city. A generous and very tasty and varied buffet dinner at our hotel ended the day. We also added two hours to our clocks. And there was no snow in Prague.

*Reporters: Ms. Vita Rosenberg  
Ms. Marcy W. Childre*

## **Prague**

### **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1998**

**Charles University.** The day began under an overcast sky, not nearly as cold as Russia's, as we boarded the bus for our first professional meeting in this city. We arrived at Charles University, one of the oldest universities in the world, founded in 1348. It is situated in "Old Town," one of the four quarters that this city is divided into. It was founded in the tenth century. "New Town," on the other hand, is a mere 650 years old.

After passing the monument of Jan Polchek, a young student who burned himself in protest of the 1969 Russian invasion, we entered this very old building adorned with marble door frames. The classroom consisted of rows of theater seats with a narrow shelf for writing. This theater-type arrangement clearly established the centrality of the teacher's role.

Introduction was made by the head of the department of philosophy, Dr. J. Palacha. The head of the department of Czech language, Dr. Housenblaus, presided over the discussion. He requested that questions be directed to the secondary and college level of instruction because there were no elementary educators present. Before receiving questions he gave us a brief overview of Czech secondary school and teacher education programs. In this country secondary school includes grades six to nine. Since the 1960s sixth and seventh grades have studied literature according to genre and eighth and ninth grades have been chronological/historical based. In the 1970s an effort was made to change this program without success. Today the focus is more on reading skill than literature. The purpose is to move students from being naive readers to scientific readers.

The education of teachers is based on two components at this university: content and pedagogy. All students get a broad basis of studies in all disciplines of language followed by course work in didactics, the language of children, and teaching skills. Students learn through formal lectures and seminars.

Questions were asked and responded to regarding the canon wars, pre-graduation testing, vocational instruction, whole language, bilingual education, and writing in the content areas. Since the overthrow of Communism, schools are less rigid, but what is left is chaos, the hangover of the new freedom. Issues now include how to teach children reading comprehension, and teaching students to write effectively. Peter Bilek, one of the university's professors, told us that most exams are taken orally so until now there has been little emphasis on writing instruction.

After the mandatory nine years of education, students have several options: language schools, schools of other disciplines, vocational schools, and apprenticeships.

At the end of the program one of the delegates, Bobbi Garrop, offered a demonstration of a mandala, a strategy used to increase critical thinking skills.

After our meeting we began a walking tour of Old Town, Old Town Square, and the Charles Bridge. We shopped in the open markets on the square purchasing such items as Bohemian crystal, garnet jewelry, puppets, and Easter eggs. Crossing the Charles Bridge, we continued our walk back through time to the days of knights, dragons, and castles. We strolled along cobblestone streets under the arches of the 12th-century tower and across this graceful bridge, which was constructed in 1357 and crosses the Moldau River.

En route to dinner we took a short detour into the Jewish Quarter, a ghetto from the tenth century, where we saw the synagogues and the old cemetery, whose oldest stone dates back to the 15th century.

Following dinner we attended a showing of "Miss Sony," a blacklight theater presentation which we all found highly amusing.

*Reporters: Mrs. Loretta M. Stevens  
Ms. Betty J. Stewart*

Thursday, March 19, 1998

### **Prague**

After a morning meeting at which two informative journal entries were shared, we started off in high spirits for our last professional visit. Patches of blue sky promised a fine day. On the bus, Eva explained her view of the differences between Czech and American systems of education. She deplored the passivity of Czech students and their unwillingness to ask questions for fear of seeming stupid or being ridiculed by their teachers. She also said that tests may be given on any day in any subject without warning. This creates a very stressful situation. A lively discussion of the efficacy of testing ensued and before we knew

it, we had arrived at our destination.

### **Zakladni Skola Vodickova #22**

Zakladni Skola Vodickova #22 occupies a lavishly decorated building in the heart of downtown Prague. It has a very impressive entry with a double staircase and elaborate chandelier. Very high ceilings contribute to the air of formality.

We were welcomed by the manager or headmistress, Marta Kocova, who informed us that the school is 130 years old. It has 360 students from ages six to 15. The faculty consists of 30 teachers, some of whom are part-time. It is one of 30 schools under contract to the university to allow student teachers to observe and do research in the classroom as well as to study and participate in the teaching process.

The school occupies a complex of buildings with courtyards. The headmistress led us outside the building and into the elementary school. As soon as we entered the corridor we knew we were in a child-centered environment. Children's work adorned the walls and window sills, and we were greeted by the welcome sound of happy children's voices and laughter. The warmly carpeted corridor is used as a place to relax and play or read during breaks. It can also serve as a quiet spot for one-on-one or small group instruction.

We left our coats in a well-equipped ceramics workroom with a kiln and potter's wheel. We divided into two groups—one to observe reading and the other math. We entered a second-grade classroom where a reading lesson was in progress. The atmosphere was orderly but relaxed and there was a warm and pleasant feeling between the teachers and students. In short, we felt much more at home in this classroom. When called upon, the children read fluently and accurately. They were eager to participate and hands were enthusiastically raised when the teacher asked a question.

The reading selection being used was *The Enormous Turnip*, a story familiar to all. A variety of activities were used to solidify vocabulary and assess understanding. During a cutting activity (using big, sharp scissors) the children chatted and even moved around, but were immediately ready to focus on the next part of the lesson. When the children read, they used natural voices and not the dramatic, declamatory style of the Russians.

The second group observed a first-grade math class. Students practiced basic math facts using a recall-response technique. They also applied the concepts of greater than (>), less than (<), and equal to (=). Responses were spontaneous and students seemed to really get involved at a level strongly reminiscent of home.

We met in the headmistress' office to talk about the school, which is considered to be outstanding. Although the district Prague 1 has specialized schools for which children must pass exams, this school is open to all children of the neighborhood. In addition, parents from other districts may apply and if the headmistress has an opening, she will accept their children.

The headmistress appoints all teachers and they are responsible only to her. All have

graduated with master's degrees and are fully qualified.

A question was asked about children with reading difficulties. Each district has a psychological center where children are tested and remedies are formulated. As soon as possible, they are reabsorbed into regular classes. In addition, the school's full-time psychologist will observe the child twice a week and advise the teacher on methods for helping the child. This psychologist also serves as a guidance counselor for children who are about to graduate, to help them plan their future course. For any children who cannot be integrated in the regular classroom there are special classes for the dyslexic and the emotionally disturbed.

This school fosters a high degree of creativity thanks in part to an outstanding art teacher. There are two types of after-school activities: artistic and aesthetic, and sports and games. Children from this school win many prizes in city-wide competitions in art and gymnastics.

Although the school day starts at 8:00, the activity room is opened at 6:30 a.m. to accommodate working parents. A hot lunch is served and children may stay until called for. There is a nominal charge of 50 crowns (about \$1.70) per month plus 14 crowns for lunch each day.

Lessons are 45 minutes long. By the end of the first grade all children are expected to read fluently and write simple sentences with no grammatical mistakes. Creative writing starts in the second grade.

The headmistress feels that TV has influenced the behavior of children by increasing aggressiveness and causing decreased interest in reading. In addition, it has caused a deterioration in communication skills in younger children. A special program has been developed to counteract this as well as to test for speech defects.

As far as parental involvement is concerned, they publish an annual information bulletin for new parents. Open houses are held periodically and parents are invited to visit classrooms and observe instruction. Conferences with teachers may be scheduled at any time.

Mme. Kocova was interested in learning about the status of teachers in America as well as salary, hours of work, holidays, etc. We were very much impressed by the school and its headmistress.

After a lunch and/or shopping break, we gathered together for a tour of the Castle of Prague, reportedly the largest castle in the world. It is a combination of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque elements, which allowed us a peek into the history, culture, and artistry known throughout the world.

The evening concluded with dinner at the elegant Nebozizek Restaurant with the entire delegations and invited guests. The display of fireworks honoring St. Joseph appeared to have been ordered for us and capped our final evening as this beautiful city said: Until

Next Time!

*Reporters: Ms. Jean B. Timbrell  
Mrs. Pat Watson*

### **Delegates' Biographical Information**

#### **DR. BETRAM "CHIP" BRUCE, DELEGATION LEADER**

Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois

Since its founding in 1867, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has earned a reputation of international stature; academic resources on the campus are among the finest in the world, its library being the third-largest academic collection in the U.S., housing more than 14 million items; alongside its prominent research mission is the university's fundamental commitment to undergraduate education, with nearly 26,000 undergraduate students enrolled in ten undergraduate divisions, which together offer some 4,000 courses in more than 150 fields of study; an additional 10,000 students are enrolled in graduate programs; the university's College of Education was ranked the nation's second best in a study published in 1995 in *Contemporary Educational Psychology*; the college serves undergraduate students in a variety of teacher education programs and offers a full range of graduate programs for master's and doctoral degree candidates

Member of the faculty at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign since 1990; currently teaches in the Year Long Program for elementary teacher education and works with graduate programs in the areas of technologies for learning, writing studies, and science education

Current research focuses on communication and information technologies in education, with a special emphasis on supporting inquiry teaching and learning; one aspect of this research is critical analysis of information age changes in curriculum and instruction, a second aspect is situated studies examining the evolving material and social relations in educational practices, and a third aspect is to develop and implement new technologies to support inquiry-based learning

#### **MS. MARCY W. CHILDRE**

Literacy Specialist, T.G. Harris Elementary School, Austin Independent School District, Austin, Texas

**MRS. BARBARA A. (BOBBI) GARROP**

Reading Specialist and Reading Recovery Teacher, Mary Farmer Elementary School, Benicia Unified School District, Benicia, California

School is comprised of grades kindergarten through five

Responsibilities include remedial reading specialist for grades one through five; serves four children daily as a reading recovery teacher and oversees an award-winning program of volunteers who tutor at-risk first grade children in reading center; and acts as a consultant

Holds a M.S. in education with a reading option

Memberships include Reading Recovery Council of North American, International Reading Association, California Reading Association, and local Contra Costa Reading Association (serves on the board); and has been a California Literature Project teacher leader

**MRS. PATRICIA M. GOWING**

Title I Reading Teacher, Parker Attendance Center, Parker, Kansas

An elementary school, grades preschool through sixth, Parker Attendance serves 190 students

Currently responsible for assisting at-risk students with reading in all academic areas (remedial reading)

Memberships include American Association of Women, Alpha Delta Kappa, Pi Lambda Theta, Prairie View Teachers' Association, National Education Association, International Reading Association, and Kansas National Education Association

**MRS. JEAN M. LANDIS**

Reading Consultant/Facilitator, Penn Literacy Network, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Penn Literacy Network is associated with the graduate school of education at the University of Pennsylvania, and provides literacy courses to teachers on site in their school districts

Serves as a facilitator teaching a literacy course with another facilitator to twenty teachers for Penn credit at their school districts; and serves a board member and program consultant to Ayuda Community Center, located in a low-income

neighborhood of Philadelphia

Past experience with public schools include Title I reading teacher, reading consultant, preschool director and home visitor, and classroom teacher

Memberships include International Reading Association, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

### **MRS. NANCY A. MACGREGOR**

Fifth Grade Teacher and Doctoral Student, Prairie Elementary School, Urbana School District 116, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois

Urbana Public School is a unit district comprised of six elementary, one middle, and one high school; serves 4,700 students, 63 percent white, 26 percent black, 3 percent Hispanic, and 8 percent Asian, with 37 percent of student population classified as low income and 6 percent classified as limited-English proficient; the majority of ESL students are children of students at the University of Illinois

Prairie School is a kindergarten through fifth grade Title I school serving 470 students, the majority of whom are low income, with approximately one-third African-American and less than 2 percent Asian; classes are self-contained and single-grade, and although the majority of students are included in regular education classrooms, the school provides special education services for at-risk and learning disabled students; in addition, Prairie houses the elementary Severe Profound Handicap program, the majority of whose students are included in regular classrooms for part of the day

Currently a half-time fifth grade teacher and a full-time doctoral student, and will complete the course work for a Ph.D. in language and literacy/reading in May, 1998; teaching responsibilities include regular education students, learning disabled students, and Title I students; teaches math and science to gifted students; is one of six mentor teachers in the Urbana school system; and has been a cooperating teacher for the Year Long Student Teacher Program at the University of Illinois, with three student teachers placed in classroom

Memberships include Phi Beta Kappa, Kappa Delta Pi, Delta Kappa Gamma, and International Reading Association

### **MS. CHRISTEEN BOONE OWENS**

High School Reading Specialist, Chicago Board of Education, Martin L. King, Jr.

High School, Chicago, Illinois

Located on the south side of Chicago, Martin L. King, Jr. High School's student population of 600 is predominantly black, with an integrated staff; its goal is to improve student achievement and it is implementing plans to improve attendance and prepare students for post-secondary experiences; principal is Dr. Carl Lawson

Serves as the school's reading specialist, working directly with the classroom teachers providing materials, in-service and staff development workshops; and serves on assessment, monitoring, and instruction teams

Memberships include National Council of Teachers of English, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, International Reading Association, Illinois Reading Council, South Suburban Reading Council, Chicago Area Reading Association, and Secondary Reading League

### **MS. VITA ROSENBERG**

Chair, English Language Arts Council, New York City, New York

A professional association of teachers of English language arts, and an affiliate of National Council of Teachers of English and of United Federation of Teachers, the council serves all teachers of first to twelfth grade in the New York City public schools; council presents monthly workshops and cultural trips such as theatre visits

Responsible for arranging with executive board the planning and presentations for workshops and events; attends local and national teacher conferences to present new information and techniques to the council's membership

Former teacher and administrator of English and American literature, reading, and English as a second language in a New York City high school

### **MS. CLAIRE E. SCHONAERTS**

Teacher, St. Jerome School, Phoenix, Arizona

One of 23 Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Phoenix, St. Jerome School's education program includes 300 students from kindergarten through eighth grade, with a faculty of 15 and support staff of 14

Serves as fourth grade teacher, part of steering committee for school improvement, and member of curriculum and instruction committee; moderates the Math Olympiad Team, Chess Club, and Stamp Club, and facilitates self-improvement classes in first and second grades; and as a reading specialist, advises and consults

with other teachers and parents

Memberships include Alpha Delta Kappa, Xi Chapter; local, state, and national chapters of reading associations; holds an endorsement in reading; serves as charter board member of the religious education school board for local church; and serves as Cursillo Secretariat

### **MRS. LORETTA M. STEVENS**

Learning Disabilities Specialist, Ressie Jeffries Elementary School, Front Royal, Virginia

A public elementary school in rural Virginia

Currently teaches 13 students in grades one through four who are developmentally delayed or have learning disabilities in reading, writing, or mathematics; and chairs child-study committee

Associations include International Reading Association, Council for Exceptional Children, Learning Disabilities Association, Association for Curriculum Development and Supervision, and Virginia Education Association

### **MS. BETTY J. STEWART**

Language Arts Teacher/Teacher Education Faculty Member, UNC Laboratory School, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado

School is a kindergarten through twelfth grade facility on the University of Northern Colorado campus, enrolling just under 600 students; provides an innovative learning environment for students from Greeley and the surrounding area; school also provides field experiences for UNC education students

Currently a full time teacher of language arts in the high school section of the Laboratory School; a member of the teacher education faculty supervising UNC education majors in field experiences; and working on revising writing and speech rubrics, and preparation of an English handbook for the school

Second year doctoral student in educational leadership at the University of Northern Colorado, with focus areas of adult learning, staff development, and planning for change; and works as a consultant with husband presenting workshops and presentations about addictions and their effects on families

## **MS. JEAN B. TIMBRELL**

Resource Teacher, Elisabeth Morrow School, Englewood, New Jersey

Elisabeth Morrow is an independent elementary school

Currently a language arts instructor working with small groups of third-grade children; class reads and discusses children's literature, and students respond in writing to material read; and works as a storyteller

## **MRS. PATRICIA P. (PAT) WATSON**

Elementary School Teacher and Reading Specialist, Chicago Board of Education, Chicago, Illinois

The Chicago Board of Education is the third-largest public school organization in the United States, educating approximately 500,000 students in grades kindergarten through twelfth; currently assigned to Countee Cullen Elementary School, a neighborhood school with a student population of approximately 400, grades kindergarten to eighth

Currently teaches a self-contained, split class of seventh/eighth graders, with a curriculum including language arts (reading, grammar, spelling, literature, writing), social studies, geography, science, music and drama; and is upper grades department chair and coordinator of the eighth grade graduation activities

Memberships include International Reading Association; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Chicago Assistant Principal's Association; Chicago Area Alliance of Black School Educators; and Delta Sigma Theta, a public service sorority; Assistant Director of Accounters Community Center, whose programs include pre- and after-school programs, foster care, crisis intervention, child advocacy, and individual, group and family counseling