

Niebull School

Pre-visit Classroom Activities

1. Dress up 1900's style
To enhance your student's experience, ask them to visit the Niebull School dressed in clothing appropriate for rural school children in the 1900's. Use the descriptions provided along with the historical images on attached pages to get ideas.
2. Pack a 1900's lunch
Student brought their lunches to school, often in metal lard or syrup pails with holes punched in them for ventilation. Your students can make their own lunch pails using coffee, shortening or unused pain cans and then pack a lunch typical of the 1900's time period.
3. There and Back
The walk to school and back was part of the rural educational process—walking being the primary means of transportation for most farm children. If you are arriving by bus, have the bus drop you off so that students will have to walk the last half mile or so (from the north, drop the students off in front of the bowling alley or Friendship Café, from the south, drop them off in the County Market parking lot).
4. Upon your arrival, students will be introduced to their "teacher" and receive their role cards. Please make sure the cards are returned after students have had a chance to read them. They will also receive a button with their grade level on it. Help the teacher collect these after the school day ends.
5. School begins
Your class will spend the morning/afternoon doing lesson typical in the 1900's . Rural schools at this time placed a strong emphasis on reading and writing (including spelling, handwriting and proper use of English in speaking and writing) and arithmetic. Morning lessons were often centered on these subjects.
6. After morning classes, students will eat their lunches. After lunch, they will have a recess with an opportunity to play games from the 1900's.
7. Please bring a list of students' names to write on graduation certificates.

Some resources you may find helpful

Wisconsin Historical Society has many images on-line, searchable by subject headings.

www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi

Library of Congress Prints and Reading Room has a collection of photographs on-line.

www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalong.html

Blackwell History of Education Museum at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois offers a 1930's school program and ahs additional activity and lesson plans.

www.cedu.niu.ude/blackwell

Wessels Living History Farm offers detailed information about farming in the early 1900's. It was recognized as "one of the best online resources for education in the humanities" by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

www.livinghistoryfarm.org

Clothing

Few farm families had enough money to purchase new clothes at a store. Mothers sewed patches over holes in clothes, mended socks, and “recycled” and reused clothing whenever possible. Farm women utilized the large flour or livestock feed sacks as material to sew everything from girls’ dresses to boys’ shirts.

Typically, the boys wore long-sleeve button shirts with collars and overalls or blue jeans (sometimes with suspenders) to school. During warmer weather, they could roll up their shirt sleeves or remove their shirts entirely. They wore socks and tie shoes, sometimes that covered the ankle, and in the warmer months, went without socks and shoes entirely. The girls wore dresses to school typically with collars. The dresses had short sleeves in warmer weather and long sleeves in colder. Girls wore socks and lace-up or buckle shoes that did not cover the ankle, or like the boys, did not wear shoes and socks in the warmer months.

Images of children from the 1900’s are attached or may be found at the Wisconsin Historical Society. www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi

Lunch

Students brought their lunches to school, often in metal lard or syrup pails with holes punched in it for ventilation. In general, farm families ate what they themselves produced or what was produced in the region in which they lived. Their food tended to be homemade rather than store bought. Items such as peanut butter, oranges and bananas were rare.

A typical lunch might include a few jelly sandwiches or soup in the winter months (which would be warmed in a pan of water on top of the wood-burning stove), an apple if it was fall time, a sugar cookie, and fresh milk.

Your students can make their own lunch pail using a three-pound shortening can or a large coffee can. Cover the sides with butcher paper. Punch holes for the handle and for ventilation by using a hammer and nail. Fasten a piece of wire or heavy twine through the top two holes for the handle and cover the top with scrap material. School cafeterias can be a good source for cans or contact a local hardware store to see if it has unused paint cans available.

When preparing lunch, here are a few suggestions of what to include:

- Jelly sandwiches*
- Hard-boiled eggs*
- Cheese or meats*
- Homemade bread*
- Locally-grown fruits and vegetables (fresh if in season, or dried or canned)*

Food should be wrapped in brown paper or butcher paper since plastic food wrap, sandwich bags and aluminum foil were not yet available.