

How Kids See the News

By Gwendolyn Evans

"How do you feel when you wake up in the morning and look at the paper and all you can read about are murders, hijacks, cheating, and wars?" asked Patrick Navas, aged 11.

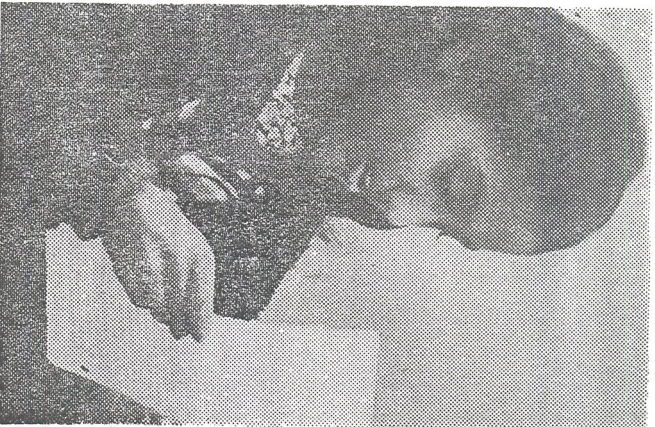
Patrick and his 25 fifth-grade friends at Fremont Elementary School, in Hunters Point addressed their anxieties and questions about present political issues in letters to the city desk of The Chronicle. "Give us something good to wake up to in the world," they said.

Carole Setzer, their teacher, said the letters to news media were one of several projects undertaken by the youngsters to "let the people who influence decisions" know how children feel about the present political happenings.

"At first when we studied current events, the children were despairingly convinced that they could never change things," Miss Setzer said.

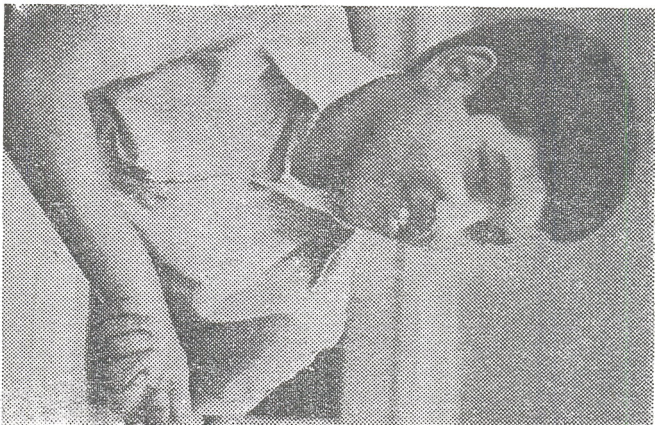
Although fifth graders can't vote, they do have feelings which she is channeling in a creative direction to "nip the bud of their political dependency."

Trained at Columbia Uni-



INDERJIT PANESAR

They want more good news . . . 'just ask us'



JAMEZ SMITH

versity in drama and in designing special education projects, Miss Setzer encouraged the class to write a skit about Watergate, unemployment and ecology which they performed before a group of lawyers in the city. They also wrote letters to congressmen about impeachment of the President — and also asking for better schools.

About President Nixon, the Fremont school children said, "I feel scared," "I don't know what will happen to us," and such things as "who will make the government good again?"

"Kids of their age look to national figures for heroes and role models," said Miss Setzer, "and that's why they are so confused and upset about Mr. Nixon."

"Something is wrong with the President," one boy shouted out in class.

"Nixon is not playing by the rules," said Stacy Exparca, aged 10 and upset.

All of them have watched Watergate hearings and/or news coverage on television, Miss Setzer said. And, she said the children respond intensely to the political ap-

prehensions of adults around them.

This same fifth grade pupils in Room 8 took action on other issues that they care about. They contributed drawings to the "Save the Whales." And last Saturday, they staged a "Walk for Mankind," raising money from family, friends, and neighbors for UNICEF.

These earnest students also wept when they read of the Israeli children killed in Maalot.

"How do you feel about all the sad news in your paper?" asked Joseph Perez, 10. "Can't you imagine seeing all those people dying?"

The children have their own idea of what is news.

"We want to see more science stuff — about space and under the ocean, and new inventions," one student said.

Inderjit Panesar, 10, urged, "Put more funny and good news in the big black type, so even children will enjoy reading the paper. Children live in this country, too."

And Jamez Smith added, "I'm getting pretty tired of bad news. If you want, I'll write some good news. Just ask us."