

Greg Carter, PCC
National Patriotic Instructor

Monthly Patriotic Instruction
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The month of August is one of few in the United States with no holidays. It is, as they say, a quiet month. Or is it? National encampments are held for the Allied Orders of the G.A.R., so it is not a quiet month for us.

Nationally, August is National Back to School Month and National Get Ready for Kindergarten Month. Although not officially recognized “bank holidays” with days off work marking their celebration, these are two important events for us. One of the key notes about the Garrett L. Nevius Post No. 1, G.A.R., the post in my hometown of Rockford, Illinois, was that under the leadership of Thomas Lawler, who became commander-in-chief of the G.A.R. in 1894, G.A.R. members raised flags at every school building in the surrounding region. The final ones were raised at Rockford West and Rockford East high schools when they were opened in 1940. By that time, only two Civil War veterans were still living, but they raised the flags all the same.

This action, although not historically significant on a national scale, demonstrates the direct connection the G.A.R. had to instilling patriotism in American youth. In teacher education, patriotism and “American pride” are called “implied curriculum.” There is no official doctrine for teaching it, but teachers are expected to teach it anyway, part of the process of instilling American values in their charges.

In this ever more politically correct world, it falls on us to act and assist teachers in this work. Has your camp made plans for visiting any of your local schools this coming year? The time to plan is now. In smaller communities and even many larger ones, I would be willing to bet that at least one local school would love to have Civil War soldiers raise the flag in the morning in front of everyone.

Young people are the key to preserving patriotism. We must work as closely and as often as we can with them to keep the flame of patriotism from burning out, which it is dangerously close to doing. American children have the opportunity to do anything with their future they choose, to rise to any heights they wish, if they only give their best efforts. In America, this is possible. In many, many other places in the world, it isn't. Let's all make sure they remember this.