

# News Notes

BOB L. TAYLOR AND  
ROBERT C. MCKEAN

## ■ YOUTH TREK

An outdoor course for high school seniors, Youth Trek, lets students explore their abilities by simulating the lives of primitive people, Rocky Mountain trappers, arctic explorers, sailors searching for the Northwest Passage, or members of nomadic tribes.

For more than five years, students in Lacey, Washington, have participated in weekend expeditions involving travel by foot or horseback, ski or bicycle, sailboat or canoe. During preliminary classroom work, students hear guest speakers and keep journals of their activities. After each expedition, students examine their progress in their quest for adulthood.

Each Youth Trek experience culminates with a personalized "Rite of Passage" when parents and students gather for a feast, a film of the year's activities, and Rite of Passage ceremonies developed by each member of the class.

Inquiries about the program should be addressed to Youth Trek, Bruce E. Jackson or Sandy Sinclair, North Thurston High School, 600 Sleater-Kinney Rd., NE, Lacey, WA 98503.

## ■ SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS EVALUATED

A new program developed by Education Testing Service (ETS) helps school boards evaluate their own performance, that of the superintendent, and of the district as a whole. The program is also available to private school and college trustees to evaluate the administrations of these institutions.

Because the program is collaborative rather than adversarial and focuses on performance rather than personalities, it promotes cooperation among all parties who work together as a leadership team to improve administrative performance.

Under the plan, administrators know before the end of the school year what went wrong. The superintendent and the board jointly set objectives at the start of the year, and the evaluation program then aids the board in monitoring the extent to which and how the goals are met as the year progresses. Self-evaluation instruments help the board monitor its own performance as well.

Since each school district, private

school, or college is unique, ETS provides consultants who work with boards and administrators during the first year to tailor the program and instruments to their needs, as well as to train local people to conduct the program in the future.

ETS will hold conferences in various parts of the country to introduce the evaluation system to school district officials.

For further information contact: Judith Fremer, ETS, Princeton, NJ 08541.

## ■ KINDERGARTEN RAISES TEST SCORES

In Kentucky, students who attend kindergarten score significantly higher on the state basic skills tests than those who do not. The Kentucky Department of Education studied third- and fifth-graders in 13 school districts representing both urban and rural areas of the state.

Pupils at both grade levels scored higher in math, language arts, and reading than pupils who did not attend kindergarten. Kay Springate, Kentucky Department of Education, stated, "The whole purpose of this study was to show that kindergarten is making a difference in our education program."

The analysis of the data also indicated that as the number of first-graders who attended kindergarten increased, the failure rate for first-graders decreased. Since the inception in 1973 of Kentucky's state-funded kindergarten program, classroom units have increased from 100 to 947 in 1981.

## ■ LIBRARIES SERVE THE BLIND

Many visually handicapped people are unaware of the range of library materials and services available to them, according to *Inside Education*, published by the New York State Education Department. For example, John, an eight-year-old science fiction fan who was blinded in an accident at age three, discovered library cassette tapes and discs that let him enjoy a part of the world that seemed lost to him.

Special media materials including books and magazines in braille and recorded formats and equipment for playing cassettes and records are available in many libraries. In addition, libraries have publications listing new books and

other materials available in special media.

Most boys and girls look for recreational reading but a specialist in children's and teen age literature at the New York Public Library found that blind sports fans keep her busy providing braille schedules for games and leagues. Some local libraries offer special equipment for children, such as beaded clocks, wooden puzzles, large print dictionaries, relief globes, stuffed animals for story hour, large print playing cards, large-numbered dominoes, scratch-and-sniff books, and braille and large-print versions of children's books.

Educators who wish more information and suggestions may contact The New York Public Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 166 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013 or New York State Library for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, Cultural Education Center, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12201.

## ■ STUDENTS SET LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The curriculum for high school students at New Trier-East's Center for Self-Directed Learning evolves from students' need to solve intellectual and aesthetic problems.

One-hundred and fifty sophomores, juniors, and seniors who volunteer for the program and have parental approval work with teachers to develop their alternative curriculum. In seminars, independent studies, workshops, and experimental projects students cover academic subjects as well as such untraditional topics as Toynbee's study of history, court watching, Chicago neighborhoods, humanistic mathematics, blacks and whites in America, gallery visiting, marine biology, and dream analysis. Students and teachers together establish individual and group learning objectives and programs.

Many students also work in the community tutoring in local schools, assisting in hospitals, helping with emotionally-disturbed children, or teaching English as a second language. Experiential learning is encouraged; some students work in a lawyer's office, assist a veterinarian, or work and study at the

Field Museum or at the Botanic Gardens.

Students do not receive grades. Instead, they analyze their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the agreed upon objectives. A teacher evaluation and a personal statement written by the student are the record of performance each semester.

Because of the highly individualized nature of the student's program, students receive neither credits nor Carnegie units. Each student spends at least 25 hours a week pursuing his or her educational program and a faculty/student graduation committee assists each student to establish "graduation criteria." When the committee recognizes that the student has met these criteria, the student is awarded a diploma.

For further information, write the Center for Self-Directed Learning, New Trier High School-East, Winnetka, IL 60093.

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## Education for Pluralism

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CARL GRANT AND  
MAX ROSENBERG

### ■ FIGHTING STEREOTYPES IN LITERATURE

What can language arts teachers do about stereotypes and bias in literature? According to Robert C. Small, they should "generally avoid the biased, stereotypic work—except perhaps as an object lesson." Second, "prepare students to recognize and not be influenced by stereotypes in the books they read."

Small outlines activities teachers can use that can help students "defend themselves." Says Small, "By dealing with stereotypes in literature, students can come to grips with their own biases and thus see life more clearly."

See Robert C. Small, "Meeting Bias in Children's and Young Adults' Literature," *Phi Delta Kappan* 9 (May 1981): 664.

### ■ MEXICAN CHILDREN WRITE ABOUT THEIR LIVES

*Mexico as Seen by Her Children* offers

special insights into what it means to be Mexican. In this new book, published by the National Education Association, Mexican children teach us about their lives and history, their nation and culture.

The book is available in English or Spanish and was compiled from over 100,000 entries submitted by children aged three to 17 from all parts of Mexico. Their contributions would be a rich resource in grades four through six in such classes as Spanish, English, art, music, creative writing, history, and social studies.

An accompanying multimedia instructional kit is also available.

The book can be purchased for \$16.95. Send order to NEA, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

### ■ PENNSYLVANIA'S ETHNIC HERITAGE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Pennsylvania Ethnic Heritage Studies Dissemination Project at Bloomsburg State College has developed an annotated bibliography of nearly 3,000 multiethnic learning/teaching materials. While this bibliography deals with the ethnic experience in Pennsylvania, much can be used by teachers and researchers in other states.

The 300 scholars and teachers who reviewed the materials used a standard instrument, evaluating on the basis of format, realism, accuracy, intercultural understanding, and overall merit. Ratings include a narrative review and a brief summary of the materials which include books, monographs, articles, films, records, tapes, and newspapers.

This annotated bibliography, *The Peoples of Pennsylvania*, costs \$14.95 and is distributed by the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

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## Law in Education

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PATRICIA MARIE LINES

### ■ UNIVERSITY STUDENTS CAN HOLD RELIGIOUS SERVICES

On December 8, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the right of university students to hold student-initiated religious services on campus. Officials at the

University of Missouri had barred such practices but were ordered to change this policy by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. The Supreme Court agreed with the Eighth Circuit in *Widmar v. Vincent*.

The free speech doctrine was the linchpin of the Court's analysis. Wrote Mr. Justice Powell:

Having created a forum generally open to student groups, the university seeks to enforce a content-based exclusion of religious speech. Its exclusionary policy violates the fundamental principle that a state regulation of speech should be content-neutral, and the university is unable to justify this violation under applicable constitutional standards.

Powell suggested that the decision may not apply in an elementary and secondary setting: "University students are, of course, young adults. They are less impressionable than younger students and should be able to appreciate that the university's . . . policy is one of neutrality toward religion."

If the Supreme Court does ultimately hold that public elementary and secondary schools can become an open forum for all purposes, *Widmar* may be pertinent to other situations. For example, if a school system generally permits individuals or organizations to enter school grounds for the purpose of distributing literature, then *Widmar* would suggest that a school district could not selectively bar persons because they were distributing religious literature. This would apply both to traditional religious groups (such as the Gideons) and non-traditional groups (such as the "Moonies").

In the past some elementary and secondary schools have permitted access to the Gideons, who wished to distribute bibles, but on an *ad hoc* basis. This is clearly an unconstitutional favoritism to a particular religion.

Some school districts also make school buildings available to community organizations after school hours. *Widmar* suggests that the district should not then close the building to an organization because of its religious affiliation or because it wished to discuss and practice religious beliefs. However, availability of the building on an *ad hoc* basis would be another matter. The key is whether the official policy was to provide an open forum to the community, or to students. The school would have to be approximately as open as a public park, where the courts have permitted religious groups to gather for speeches or religious ceremonies.

Finally, the open forum doctrine may

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