

about programs have been inventive and enthusiastic.

An Array of Formats. Programs take different forms. Centers such as the Maine Principals' Academy focus on a summer institute while networking among principals during the school year; Texas A & M Principals' Center offers an ongoing hot line; the North Carolina Leadership Institute for Principals offers full-day topical workshops; the C. W. Post Principals' Center has organized "collegial circles" of three to five principals who meet on a monthly basis to discuss approaches and techniques to common problems.

Principals, like other learners, have preferred learning styles, different at-

tention spans, interests, and needs. Consequently, activities in different centers vary, such as those led by principals, faculty members, outside consultants; long-term and short-term; small-group, large-group, and individual participation; low-risk, modest-risk, and high-risk activities. Principals can match their styles to different formats, learning about themselves as learners as well as new content and skills.

For further information about principals' centers, free of charge, write Harvard Principals' Center, 336 Gutman Library, Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138. Ask for:

The Principals' Centers Exchange, a periodic newsletter of the Principals' Center Network.

National Directory of Principal Centers, a brief description of 40 different activities in 25 states.

Chronicle of the Principals' Center, an account of the beginning of the Harvard Principals' Center.

Newsletter of the Harvard Principals' Center.

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Curriculum Abstracts

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Mainstreaming Urban Students Through Environmental Education

School District 19 in Brooklyn, New York, has developed the Nature's Niche program in which emotionally handicapped and nonhandicapped 6th graders learn side-by-side. The program, which works in the "least restrictive environment" of Brooklyn's Gateway National Park, was designed for underachieving children from low socioeconomic backgrounds who lacked motivation to learn. Nature's Niche provides hands-on experience in mathematics and science, and integrates its many projects with the regular school curriculum as it introduces students to animal, plant, and fish environments. It is staffed by a program director, two

science staff developers, a resident teacher, and student teachers from area universities.

Teachers and classes are accommodated in ten classes per 20-week term, with each class coming to the center once a week for a two-hour program. Teachers take part in a series of off-site sessions to learn about the program, their roles in it, and to study materials

and participate in demonstrations of how they can use the program's instructional modules. Nature's Niche is housed in special rooms and learning centers to facilitate the study of the living world in the most natural way. Students study horticulture by growing plants in planting rooms, learn animal characteristics by raising small mammals and reptiles, and are introduced to varieties of fresh and saltwater life. Students reconstruct the local marshland environment to learn about bird and sea life in the area.

The pairing of emotionally and non-emotionally handicapped youngsters facilitates enthusiastic, collaborative learning and couples the students' achievement with impressive gains in confidence and self-esteem. Nature's

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Niche has greatly improved student motivation, which has carried over to their regular school work.

Source: Bob Nathanson, Ira Kanis, Mark Mindes, and Stephen Rappaport, "Nature's Niche," *Science and Children* 21 (April 1984): 26-27.

Middle School Involves the Elderly in Academic Programs

The last few decades have seen a tremendous growth in the number of older, retired persons in our society. Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Madison, Wisconsin, has developed an inter-generational curriculum project designed to tap the resources of its older citizens.

The program consists of study units in both academics and unified arts involving elders in the surrounding county. Elders tutor, participate in oral history panels, and give seminars on aging; activities include guest speakers, craft instructors, and gifted program mentors. Elders are also learners in specific instructional units.

In one class, for example, young and old worked together to research the past and present—as well as to assess the future—of energy through study groups and field trips. The culminating activity was a public presentation of their findings. In another class, 7th grade students interviewed older persons and published a collection of biographies, stories, and poems portraying their impressions. A third unit involved elders in teaching crafts through an apprentice program. This also provided an opportunity for students to experience oral history lessons.

This inter-generational program offers an excellent way to extend school-community programs to older citizens. It works to provide both the

young and elderly a personalized bridge to overcome so-called generation gaps or lack of experience with each other.

Source: John H. Daly, "Utilizing an Untapped Resource," *The Middle School Journal* 15 (May 1984): 10-11.

School Sells Computer Services to the Community

The Joseph C. Wilson Magnet High School in Rochester, New York, is selling computer education services to its community to raise funds to maintain and expand the school's student computer program. Three years ago, principal Henry Williams saw how financial problems would limit the school's highly extensive computer education program, so instead of simply asking local business for support, he decided to market the talents and resources of the school to the community.

With advice from individual business and industrial leaders, the school formed an advisory committee. Mutual concerns were that education was not addressing the needs of the business-industrial community and industry was not dealing with problems of education. The result has satisfied both constituencies.

The Wilson school now utilizes its 56 microcomputers to offer computer training seminars for businesses, a separate training program for parents and educators, summer computer camps, and a series of continuing education courses in programming offered in conjunction with local Monroe Community College. While course fees are modest they enable the school to fund and expand its student computer program. For example, a major supermarket firm, for which the school conducted "Introduction to

Computer Literacy" seminars, wanted its middle managers to understand the "Visicalc" Spreadsheet program. They not only paid the normal seminar fee but *purchased* the "Visicalc" program for the school. The school could not have otherwise afforded the program, which is now used by Wilson students.

Students who help with the community college course receive college credit for their work. This internship dimension is another educational benefit for students that would not have been possible before. The program has also developed a new level of school-community understanding and mutual respect.

Source: Tom Spain, "A School that Markets Its Own Resources," *Electronic Learning* 3 (March 1983): 32-33.

Team Effort Improves Mathematics Remediation

The mathematics department at North Shore High School, Glen Head, New York, found teacher burnout an increasing problem in its remedial mathematics program. But over the past six years the math teachers feel they have removed the drudgery from remedial math classes and provided a more stimulating and helpful environment for students to improve mathematics deficiencies.

Two teachers work with a maximum of 38 students in a single room, which meets the contractual 19-student cut-off in all developmental classes. The two teachers can develop and monitor a broader range of group activities and be more specific to a range of remedial needs than would be possible on a one-teacher-class regimen. Supervision and security needs are also better met. New students entering the program can work with one teacher for orientation and program development

while the other teacher works with the rest of the class.

The psychological reinforcement of two colleagues planning and implementing a remedial program is a major advantage of the program. Typical teaming approaches, such as teaching alternatives to a topic or skill area, provide more options appropriate to more student needs. At times, a class can subdivide as necessary so that students can receive direct help and instruction.

The remedial classroom generally becomes a resourceful means to help students and less a place of encounter or despair. Testing and monitoring of student progress is much easier, and parent and student satisfaction with the program is very high. Teachers feel that the teaming arrangement makes the remedial program a great attraction. In fact, it is requested by many teachers as part of their regular work load.

Source: Robert Gerver and Richard Sgroi, "Remediating Math: A Team Effort," *Curriculum Review* 21 (April 1984): 59-62.

Far from the Basics

In the face of last year's national reports promoting academic basics, Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, Massachusetts, is a successful alternative. This school has no prescribed curriculum, no academic requirements, and no evaluation of students unless it is requested. The school operates on the principle that students must direct their own education with an interest-centered learning approach.

Over the past 16 years Sudbury Valley has had great success with children from age four through adulthood. Students are free to move through the

school's classrooms, laboratories, and other resources governed only by rules established through democratic procedures. Emphasis is on helping students develop behavior traits that facilitate acquiring culture, knowledge, and skills. The school allows multi-age grouping, which provides peer-mediated instruction as students learn from staff members and from each other. Staff members also facilitate student-directed learning through traditional teacher-led activities as students see the need for expert information and skills from those who know them best.

Student success in academic achievement shows great progress. Staff members at Sudbury Valley would not argue that this is a model to replace conventional schooling and that aspects of this approach can do much to enhance the learning of the majority of students. Sudbury is important for study by those who view that dimension as critical to the success of students and teachers in meeting learning and development goals. The acquisition of student skills and information at this school is paralleled by student growth in self-direction and discipline, which far surpasses that evident in the more traditional school setting.

Source: Peter Gray and David Chanoff, "When Play Is Learning: A School Designed for Self-Directed Learning," *Pbi Delta Kappan* 65 (May 1984): 608-611.

Peer Group Counseling Succeeds in Urban High School Setting

The black and latino students at Chicago's Farragut High School deal with

typical problems of inner-city culture, including the impersonality and anonymity endemic to a large school. But a peer counseling program has helped adolescents deal with the problems in their lives. The program was developed by a social worker-trainer, a psychology teacher, and cooperating teachers.

The social worker helped interested psychology students to train for the program with assistance from the psychology teacher. Student counselors attend training, counseling, and supervisory meetings twice a week during their psychology periods to minimize conflicts with their other school responsibilities. They understand that they are responsible for any classwork missed because of their counseling activities. The student counselors visit freshman classes of cooperating teachers to explain the program, show how it can be used, and to recruit potential student counselors.

The peer counseling program is providing a desirable alternative to suspension for students who do not get help with their problems through regular school channels. It has helped students having difficulty in school to make better use of remedial classes and opportunities. And students feel this program provides a needed opportunity to engage in constructive social interaction. The program has in turn helped the professional counselors to deal with more critical student problems. Students feel they have better self-direction in solving personal and school behavior problems, and all feel that the peer counseling program has had a major impact on improving school climate.

Source: Charles Kuner, "Peer Counseling: Applied Psychology in the High School," *Curriculum Review* 21 (February 1984): 59-62.

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