

A Commitment to Serve

We wanted a program that would provide ongoing participation. Eight years ago we chose Martha's Table, a non-profit soup kitchen that feeds homeless families in Washington, D.C. On every Wednesday each Lower School child trudges off to school with a vegetable in his or her backpack, sure that the carrot or potato will wind up in the soup at Martha's Table. Working together, the Lower School classes make 50 gallons of soup, the teachers and older students helping the younger ones peel the potatoes and slice the carrots.

In addition to our Wednesday "soup days," we've organized Saturday "family days." On scheduled Saturdays, 20 or 30 of our school families—fathers, mothers, children, and grandparents—meet

at Martha's Table to prepare food—about 3,000 sandwiches. Parents coordinate these days, and teachers participate in all the activities. Family members also assist with the children's program begun by Pamela Selden, one of our teachers on sabbatical, which provides supervised learning activities for homeless children seven days a week.

Parents help in other ways at Martha's Table, too. For example, the toys, furniture, books, and supplies used by the children's program have been donated by our school's families and teachers. During the holiday season families are paired, gifts are collected, and food is prepared for holiday dinners.

After All Is Said and Done

Perhaps, after all is said and done, after all the workbook pages are filled in,

after all the book reports are written, after all the math facts are memorized, after all the spelling lists are copied, we are left with our original question: "What do you want for the world? What do you want for yourself?"

"For the world, I want enough food and shelter for everyone. For me, I want to help others to have food and shelter." If we receive this answer from our children and if they mean it, understand it, and act on it, then the lesson of service learned in youth *will* last a lifetime. □

Richard Lodish is Lower School Principal and Assistant Headmaster, The Sidwell Friends School, 3825 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20016.

— ANITA PAGE —

Raising Students' Social Consciousness in South Hadley, Massachusetts

Mosier Elementary School is committed to increasing students' awareness of environmental issues early on so that they have time to do something about them.

The Mosier Elementary School—with 450 students in grades 3-5—in South Hadley, Massachusetts, has moved from scattered efforts toward a consistent and still-evolving series of programs to raise students' awareness of their responsibility toward the environment and humanity. It all began in January 1989, when we invited a young man working in a New York City shelter for the homeless to speak to our 5th graders. Afterward, when students asked what they could do, they were surprised to learn there are homeless shelters and soup kitchens in nearby Holyoke. By

spring, our six 5th grades had begun to make sandwiches with food donated from home every Friday at a center called Kate's Kitchen. And by the fall of 1989, *all* classes were participating. It's been over a year now—no parents have complained their child missed lunch in the cafeteria or time in class—and we haven't missed a Friday lunch yet.

More Than a Slogan

This student-initiated program gave the faculty cabinet some ideas when we met to select our annual school-wide theme. We felt the students

needed a coherent philosophy—not just a slogan—to focus our efforts. Feeling strongly that environmental issues must become part of daily life, we developed this statement, sent it to all parents, and posted it throughout the building.

The Mosier School students and staff value the Earth and understand the need to protect its environment. Our aim is to live in harmony with the earth and its many kinds of human, plant and animal inhabitants.

Statements of philosophy are, of course, not enough. We needed knowledge for our students and for

the staff as well. With a small grant from a local firm, we employed a part-time high school environmental education teacher to provide resources for the teachers and conduct two after-school clubs for interested students. In addition, the teachers adopted as one of their yearly goals "furthering environmental awareness," pursuing it by assigning novels with relevant themes, examining the oil spill in Alaska, and investigating the role of people in hastening the natural erosion of Cape Cod.

In midyear, one teacher (a former GreenPeace worker) helped her students make daily informational announcements over the public address system about energy use and waste, the effects of the Amazon forests on our climate, and the like. About the same time, we included home audit forms in our newsletter for parents, and each class completed an audit of their use of resources. Recycling receptacles appeared in all classrooms, in offices, and in the cafeteria. And, as part of their fundraising efforts, the PTO conducted several successful bottle drives.

From kindergarten on, students must begin the process of internalizing good environmental practices.

In late May we celebrated with a spring gala, including performances of students' original plays, a chorus program featuring songs about Mother Earth, and displays throughout the school. The most dramatic event occurred when all the students, accompanied by the band, marched to the center of town with each class representing—through costumes, hats, masks, or floats created in art class—concerns such as acid rain, endangered species, or the rain forest.

More Work to Do

Now we realize that some of our efforts can't be accomplished at the building

level alone: we need districtwide commitment. From kindergarten on, students must begin the process of internalizing good environmental practices. To get the ball rolling, our cabinet has met with their counterparts from other schools to establish a district committee.

We have taken the first steps, and our awareness levels are high. Now students are beginning to ask uncomfortable questions: *Why are the cafeteria hamburgers wrapped in aluminum foil? Why do we need plastic bags in every wastebasket? Why are there unoccupied expensive condominiums when families of fellow students must move out of town for lack of low-cost housing?* They are beginning to realize their generation has a major responsibility ahead. However, changing habits of waste will be difficult in a society that encourages that waste. Now we need to confront our bad habits, sharpen our critical thinking, and resolve the conflicts between human needs and shrinking resources. □

Anita Page is Principal, Mosier Elementary School, 101 Mosier St., South Hadley, MA 01075.

K. LYNNE MAINZER, PATRICIA BALTZLEY, AND KATHLEEN HESLIN

Everybody Can Be Great Because Everybody Can Serve

With the help of cooperative learning and the Maryland Student Service Alliance, teachers at Francis Scott Key High School in Union Bridge, Maryland, helped at-risk teenagers transform themselves into school leaders.

Imagine the 150 lowest-achieving students in a large rural high school—every special education student, students who have been retained one or more times, students who are in trouble with the school system or with the law, and students who are waiting to be 16 so they can drop out. We might describe these

students as "at-risk," in need of special programs or special help. In short, we might think of them as victims, and many of them might agree they are.

Yet, at Francis Scott Key High School in Union Bridge, Maryland, at-risk students are not victims; they are valued resources for the school and the community. They live and work according

to Martin Luther King's statement "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve."

Last year, these 150 at-risk students produced 600 lunches, each consisting of a sandwich, an apple, and a note of greeting for homeless people in Baltimore. They designed and produced 100 holiday placemats for nursing home res-

Copyright © 1990 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.