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The **J**ournal of Court, Community, and Alternative Schools

A Publication of the  
Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools Administrators of California

**"A**ccountability follows responsibility. If there is no accountability, little by little, people lose their sense of responsibility and start blaming circumstances or others for their poor performance."

- Stephen Covey

## *In this issue...*

- Alternative Education in the Age of Accountability
- Effective Teaching
- Student Success Stories
- Innovative Programs



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# The **J**ournal of Court, Community, and Alternative Schools

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*The President's  
Message*



**Vic Trucco, Sonoma County**

I'm preparing this message in February 2000 and thinking about our profession in light of the current focus on accountability. I am sure each of you are equally aware of the many demands and requests to address student achievement and to provide new models of staff development. Far beyond recognition for the expertise and dedication of the many professionals within our ranks who successfully work with the state's most at-risk population, we are now asked to meet the new accountability requirements as well.

The Governor's legislative agenda is about to have an impact on alternative education programs statewide. We have already experienced the impact of the Stanford 9 assessment process. I know my fellow alternative education administrators and Sonoma County board members were concerned with the public

response when the first round of Stanford 9 scores were published in our local newspaper. We felt we needed a chance to explain the nature of the students who are referred and enrolled in our court and community school programs before we were held accountable for below average outcomes. Like many of you, I relied on a familiar defensive response.

But, was it the right response or approach for our community to hear? If you think about our well intentioned responses, we may have accepted the common image that our students cannot learn or achieve standards that are defined for most students in our state; we may in fact unconsciously reinforce the image of failure many of the students carry with them. Do most of us believe this general thought? I hope not! I believe most of us get wrapped up in local political issues and safe protective responses within our varied counties. We acquiesce, and inadvertently accept the community's general belief that "at-risk" students cannot and will not achieve.

If I am wrong about the "student failure" syndrome that may have been reinforced by statewide assessment as I have

described, I apologize and commend your individuality and strength. You are ready for the new wave of accountability criteria that alternative education, PMP (CalSAFE), court and community, district community day school and continuation programs will experience beginning July 1, 2000. Alternative education programs for districts and county offices were spared from the timeline embedded into the accountability legislation for one year while Delaine Easton, State Superintendent, focused her initial efforts to set minimal achievement standards and exit exams in place for district comprehensive elementary and secondary schools.

Now the clock is ticking and alternative education programs, JCCASAC member programs in particular, are on the cusp of major change. All 50 states will have some form of educational accountability in place for alternative education. However, from what I have been able to read and discuss, there are few states that have meaningful and realistic accountability criteria to measure alternative education. Generally, reasons given are the





*The President's Message (cont'd)*

student population is short term, itinerant, behavior referred, truant, or incarcerated, all characteristics that make it difficult to agree on accountability criteria. Texas does have a model that warrants scrutiny and discussion. They're in the initial stages of data collection. It will be interesting to see what outcomes they have been able to meet.

Texas' focus is on graduation, GED, attendance, and dropout data along with local alternative program criteria that report positive gains in learning by students. Because the court school is under a different jurisdiction in Texas, the court schools are not included in the state's accountability model. There is something to say about exclusion of the court school population for short term incarcerated students; but in some court school programs, the length of stay may

be longer than in a community school and may provide a truer measure of accountability. Another important distinction in the Texas model is that no student is included in the accountability data for alternative education if the student is in attendance for fewer than 85 days. The results for any short-term student who is tested are reported with the referring district's data.

As our state moves toward the July 1, 2000 deadline, I, along with selected JCCASAC administrators, am meeting to develop similar criteria for consideration by the California committee on accountability. It will be a challenge to meet the short timeline given to devise and submit general acceptable accountability criteria, and it is important that whatever model is selected for alternative education, the accountability criteria in

California meets the application test for all county alternative education programs: small, medium and large. We could probably agree on major criteria like attendance or dropout data almost immediately, but gaining consensus about how and what will measure accountability for specific learning areas is much more challenging given our programs' emphasis on addressing the behavioral issues that often prevent academic achievement.

I hope this introduction helps you prepare yourself and your programs for the accountability we will experience in the near future. If you have comments or suggestions, please e-mail [vtrucco@scoe.org](mailto:vtrucco@scoe.org). I welcome your input. Please enjoy reading the latest and best practices included with this issue of the Journal.

**Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools  
Administrators of California**

*What is JCCASAC?*

Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools' education is an alternative program that serves the educational needs of students who are under the protection or authority of the juvenile court or local school district.

The Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools' mission is to empower students to become productive members of the community by providing quality learning opportunities in:

- academic skills
- independent life skills
- positive self-concepts
- effective relationships with others





## Janet Addo, Los Angeles County

**W**e need to be heard, to be counted, and to be accountable. These words encapsulate the posture of the Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools Administrators of California (JCCASAC) in our state's political and educational milieus in the beginning of this 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the incoming president of JCCASAC, my vision and my focus will center upon a strategic plan which will incorporate legislative issues, program accountability, and organizational communication in the specific areas of:

- Alternative Accountability Systems
- Program Quality
- A Standards Handbook
- Better Utilization of Information Technology
- A Marketing Plan

**T**he Governor and the Legislatures' recognition of the need to develop a statewide Alternative Accountability System acknowledges that not all students and not all schools are the same. All students are expected to meet high standards, and all schools are accountable for helping them do

so. The statewide design may consist of at least three main subsystems or components: a student assessment system, a statewide student data system, and the school analysis and reporting system. We, JCCASAC, participated and contributed to a statewide (CDE) discussion and pilot, documenting and making recommendations to be included in the final accountability document. We hope that our voices have been heard and that the document will reflect the hard, honest data shared by the alternative and court school programs, throughout the state, that participated in the pilot. We will continue to participate in the dialog and influence the language contained in the Alternative Accountability System.

**P**rogram quality and the revision of our Administrative (Standards) Handbook will continue to be high priorities. Our mission focuses on student progress toward meeting the Standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and personal growth. It is essential that we provide opportunities for our students to sharpen their skills so they can compete in this century's global economy.

**S**uccessfully implementing school reform in California requires a different way of perceiving, exchanging, collecting, and managing information--*electronically*. A plan for a statewide data collection system will link technology as the vital underpinning





necessary to change the way we do business. We, as global citizens, are compelled to utilize technology to enhance and enrich our lives, to prepare ourselves, our students and their families, to function and succeed in this global community. We are embracing technology as a tool, beginning in the year 2000, to better communicate with each other, and to broaden the avenues available to effectively communicate to those who influence our work.

Your JCCASAC Board of Directors will lead an organization whose membership must embrace their roles as active participants and creative problem solvers. Together, we must share the responsibility of advocacy for our positions, promoting those systems that will more effectively serve our constituency of students, families, and dedicated staff members.

## Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools Administrators of California

### *The Role of JCCASAC*

It is important that the Juvenile Court and Community Schools provide:

1. Opportunities for students to complete a course of study leading to a high school diploma, General Education Development (GED) Certificate, or State High School Proficiency Certificate;
2. Opportunities for students to develop their individual potential and an appreciation of self and others, while learning to become productive citizens; and,
3. Opportunities to develop individual talents, critical thinking and problem solving skills, and the knowledge to succeed.

Students are placed in juvenile court and community schools when referred by the juvenile court or a deputy probation officer, expelled from school, or referred by a Student Attendance Review Board (SARB). Community Schools may also serve homeless students and students referred by their local school district with parental consent. Since each juvenile court and community school student was previously placed in a local school district education program, the juvenile court and community schools programs seek to transition the students from the back of an appropriate educational, training, and/or employment setting upon release or after the court terminates jurisdiction.

Juvenile Court and Community Schools education is characteristically very student centered and adapted to meet individual needs. The needs of the community and receiving districts are also evidenced through their involvement in program planning and transition services.



# J

## Message from the Editorial Board

The theme of accountability, which has emerged as a predominant focus in education, is now occupying considerable significance in the conversation of alternative school administrators and teachers. Vic Trucco's message addresses the definitive response to Stanford 9 scores that many of us resort to when we are questioned by parents and community members about our poor results.

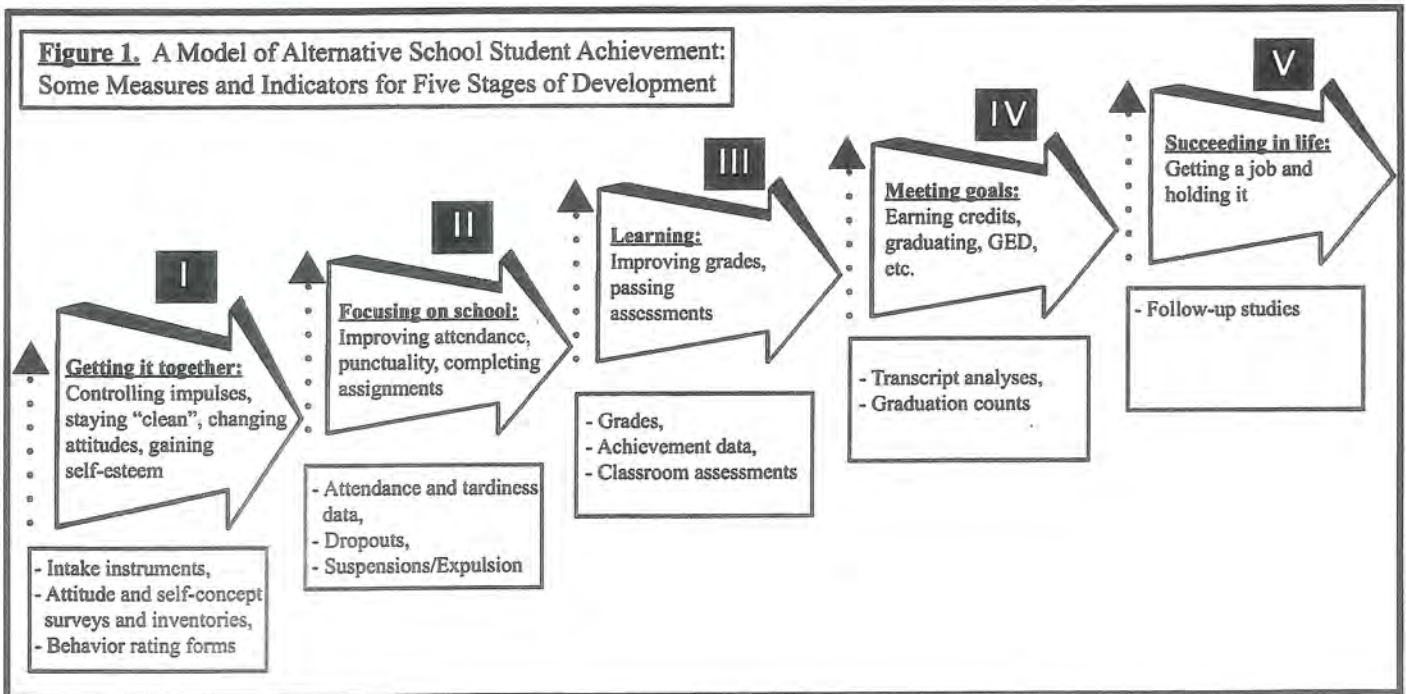
At the Southern Section fall conference, two presentations focused on the use of data to show growth in student achievement. Conference

by Jeannie Griffith, Jeanne Dukes, Hedy Kirsh, Cathie Poochigian, and Mary Lou Vachet

participants then discussed how a statewide accountability system would impact various court, community, and alternative school programs, and began to consider what kind of accountability system would validly and reliably assess the effectiveness of such programs.

Again at the Northern Section spring conference, accountability was on the agenda. A member of the advisory committee that will develop the design of the state's alternative accountability system updated conference attendees on the committee's progress. She assured JCCASAC members that the committee understands the challenges that court, community, and alternative schools face, and presented a developmental model of alternative school student achievement (figure 1).

The editorial board feels strongly that the JCCASAC organization needs to be proactive in its approach to accountability. In the coming years, as in the past, new mandates will demand changes in our programs. It is likely that some of these required measures will not be directly helpful to our students; however, it is important that we remain







*Message from the Editorial Board (cont'd)*

focused on meaningful ways to show our students' achievement and improve our programs. We must resist the temptation to dodge accountability or complacently accept the community's observations of test scores that suggest our students do not achieve in our alternative

programs.

Finally, it is our feeling that our programs have addressed the social-emotional needs of our students effectively. We must now strengthen curriculum and instruction, while still meeting the affective needs of the population we serve. A strong focus on

student achievement will illustrate to our students, parents, and communities that alternative education is a valid alternative, not a dumbing--down of "regular" school.

**Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools  
Administrators of California**

*Belief Statements*

*We believe in our students...*

*We believe in ourselves...*

*We believe in our program...*

Our educational belief system, philosophy, and mission guide the school program, learning environment, and educational community.

*We believe...*

- Our students are important and worthwhile.
- Our students can learn, achieve, and succeed.
- Our students, with appropriate support/guidance, need to build their own academic plans.
- We possess the skills and commitment to be effective with our students.
- Our student population requires a responsive, supportive, dedicated, and highly capable staff.
- It is critical to create and maintain a school program and environment which enables students to be self-directed, motivated, and responsible.
- Success of Juvenile Court and Community Schools depends on interagency cooperation.
- Juvenile Court and Community Schools are extremely cost effective high-risk youth intervention programs.
- Juvenile Court and Community Schools are essential public school options.



# JOIN IN!

## *An Invitation for Membership*

Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools Administrators of California (JCCASAC) is an organization that provides leadership, inservice, direction, and information to administrative personnel involved in juvenile court and community school education programs. JCCASAC functions as a support system to those professionals by providing activities, projects, and services in the following areas: instructional programs, staff development, evaluation, legislation, special funding, personnel procedures, communications, networking, intra-agency coordination, pupil personnel service research, and management development.

As a member, you will receive:

- Directory of JCCASAC Members
- Newsletter
- Journal of Court, Community, and Alternative Schools
- Material exchange
- Northern and southern section meeting notices
- Information regarding state conference
- Professional growth and support activities
- Networking
- Administrative Resource Manual (available for a small printing fee)

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

North/South Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person (if different then above): \_\_\_\_\_

I am applying for membership in the Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools Administrators of California as an: *(Please check one)*

ACTIVE MEMBER:

Active membership shall be restricted to certificated personnel who are County Office of Education Superintendent of Schools employees and who supervise or administer programs within the Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools of the various counties, or who exercise supervisory or administrative authority over the Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools of various counties.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER:

Associate (non-voting) membership shall be open to all others who wish to assist the Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative Schools Administrators of California reach its goals.

HONORARY MEMBER:

Honorary (non-voting) membership shall be open to retired personnel who previously held active memberships.

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## *Alternative Education in the Age of Accountability*

### **Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner**

by Dr. Ted Price, Machele Kilgore,  
Robert Windham and Lynne Robertson

The alternative education programs in Orange County, California, have developed classroom options and accompanying in-class methodologies that are designed to provide for and reach *every* learner. With today's focus on test scores, school rankings, standards and accountability, and in view of research findings across the country defining "success," alternative forms of organizing and instructing students have much to offer. The options and methodologies of alternative education, when implemented and integrated with traditional forms of education, fit well into our overall approach to school reform. Alternative educators can be helpful in the discussion and actions of the school reform movement because of our following beliefs:

1. Each student is unique, thereby necessitating a personalized system of learning, as his or her learning needs are ever changing. Alternative education adjusts the school program, the curriculum, to the needs of each student.
2. Multiculturalism in America has created innumerable individual student needs. No two students are at the same place in terms of where they come from, what they know or what they need to know. Alternative education by design works to include and accommodate all learners.
3. Metacognitive instructional strategies facilitate the accommodation of customized learning (i.e., how students learn, and how they learn differently, is now regarded as a scientific process). Alternative Education is successful because instruction is tailored to meet the learning strategies of each learner.
4. Successful education requires variable teaching approaches (i.e., how to teach so that students learn effectively and efficiently has been demonstrated to be more than an art). Alternative education teachers adjust instructional styles to better meet the needs of each learner.

5. Relevance and applicability are essential for meaningful learning (i.e., what students need to know and what they must be able to do after they learn is now part of each student's learning plan). Alternative education is focused on teaching skills and attitudes that will afford each student the opportunity to move from school to work and community productivity successfully.

#### *Each Student Is Unique*

Every learner is unique, due in part to many factors. One factor we know about is neurological difference. We know senses and basic emotions are integrated differently in every brain because neural connections are physically determined and affected by environment and experiences (Restak, 1995). And we know that children's neurological development occurs at different rates and times. And we also know that emotions





*Alternative Education in  
the Age of Accountability*

**Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner (cont'd)**

are critical to memory (Healy, 1994); indeed, feelings and attitudes determine learning. In 1971, Rappaport concluded emotion is not only involved in memory, but is the basis on which memory is organized. We must adjust our curriculum to meet unique needs if we are to serve our students effectively. And if we don't, according to Brendtro, gangs, cults and promiscuous relationships will flourish (Brendtro, 1996).

Therefore, we must first adjust our educational environments and programs to meet the needs and interests of students.

We also know that cognitive development is related to neurological development. There can be as much as a five-year difference in the maturation level of normal healthy brains (Caine and Caine, 1994). We must acknowledge the same to be true of the development of intellectual abilities. Expecting all students to perform at specified levels on the basis of grade placement or chronological age is analogous to expecting all children to run at the same speed (Windham and Kilgore, 1995).

Individualism is also a

function of modality (Barbe and Swassing, 1979; Markova, 1992), temperament type or style (Myers, 1962; Keirsey and Bates, 1984), and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993; Armstrong, 1987).

Considering component interaction and the layering effect of these three theoretical frameworks alone, over ten thousand separate learning patterns can be generated. All possible combinations have

**"We must adjust our curriculum to meet unique needs if we are to serve our students effectively."**

instructional implications concerning individual strengths, weaknesses, talents, and interests more easily accommodated in many alternative settings. It should not be a surprise that as much as 95-99 percent of all learning takes place *outside* of the traditional classroom (Perelman, 1992). In order to capture the interest of all learners, alternative education by design offers multiple courses and multiple paths to the students who attend our schools. The multiple options

and multiple course offerings are ways in which, by altering the curriculum to meet the needs of our alternative education population, students succeed.

***Multiculturalism in America Has Created New Student Population Needs***

America's "new" immigrants, changing social mores, increasing transience, poverty, homelessness, and cultural blending have all directly affected our student population and made it different from what it was a century ago. In light of such changes, traditional education is no longer able to take the full weight of educating *every* student.

Statistics indicate how different life is today compared to several decades ago. Kornbluth (1997) reports that the average working mother spends 50 minutes a day with her children, the average working father only 17 minutes a day. Fifty-eight percent of children under 6 grow up in working, single-parent households. Change is not always good, however, especially for children.





*Alternative Education in  
the Age of Accountability*

**Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner (cont'd)**

Children living in poverty is up 43 percent from 1970. Dr. March Miringoff of Fordham University developed an Index of Social Health of American's Children and Youth. His research indicates the social health of children has dropped from a score of 71 out of 100 to 37 since 1970.

The National Education Goals Panel states rising student drug abuse and violence are major obstacles in reaching national education goals (Daily Report Card, 1996). According to a survey by *Who's Who Among American High School Students*, 41 percent of students reported teen peers have drinking problems. Among the developed nations of the world, America leads the list in teenage pregnancies and underweight babies (Kornbluth, 1997). Over 6,000 students were expelled for bringing a weapon to school in 1996 (Portner, 1997). And although down in recent history, juvenile crime is up 600 percent since the 1960s (Kornbluth, 1997).

Twenty-seven percent of all high school students do not graduate (Kornbluth, 1997). Clinical depression among

young children is growing. Twenty-nine percent of 3,100 high-achieving students surveyed said they had considered suicide, up from 17 percent in 1971 (Straton, 1995). The United States leads the world in teenage suicides, up 95 percent since 1970 (Kornbluth, 1997). As these startling statistics cover students from all races and economic backgrounds, alternative education

**"Children living in poverty is up 43 percent from 1970."**

programs in Orange County attempt to reach those who are different.

Multi-cultural factors are leading contributors of enrollment increases into alternative education programs in Orange County, California. And as a result, program options have increased in number from 37 in 1994 to over 90 today. The population served has increased from just over 3,000 daily to over 7,200 in the same time period. Students involved in individualized

programming, community schools, single-gender schools, distance learning, and home schooling represent growing segments of our alternative education community.

***Alternative Education Provides Solutions and Accommodates Customized Learning***

Alternative education can offer solutions that may be impossible to achieve in traditional educational settings, primarily because of school and class size. These solutions include individualized attention based on formative and summative assessments of skills, abilities, and interests; presentation of curriculum at an appropriate pace; reduced distractions; and multiple options which have been increasing the opportunities for student success. Students involved in alternative education can pursue other activities like working, apprenticeships, community service, and for some, parenting, while still attending a full-time program, albeit school times and hours are adjusted to meet needs. Two





**Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner (cont'd)**

primary forms of instruction are offered, classroom-based (used within institutions, county community schools, and community day schools), and non-classroom-based/contractual learning (used within adult correctional institutions, county community schools, and the Orange County Charter School).

Each year special programs are added to meet the needs of the students who come to alternative education for their education. The *World of Work (WOW)* program offers assessment, education, guidance and job placement in preparing students for the challenge of future careers. Elementary academies include schools offering programs for at-risk students in Grades K-6. The *Families First* program is designed to promote family unity while meeting the educational needs of abused and at-risk children. *Breakthrough* is a long-term co-educational drug rehabilitation program open to minors who request this treatment. Every new program is born out of the determination of the alternative education staff to

create more possibilities, propose options, and bring renewed hope of a successful school experience to all students.

Alternative education students and parents meet to determine academic needs and goals and to provide instructional delivery, assignment, and grading options for students via classroom instruction, contract learning, distance learning,

**"The goal is to improve students' understanding of their own behavior."**

off-site instruction (Regional Occupational Program [job skill development]), community colleges, and home schooling. Other options include traditional text assignments with tutor assistance, project-based assignments, student created assignments, and pass/no pass or credit only options. Student progress is monitored, thereby evaluating delivery and learning effectiveness. Assignments or grading options are adjusted as necessary. Alternative

education can customize educational services to meet academic, personal, and societal needs. The personalized system of instruction employed by alternative education teachers includes a focus on mastery learning and success at each stage of each student's learning. Learning style, development rates, skill acquisition and the teacher's delivery system are key components of the Personalized System of Instruction (PSI) model. An additional aspect of the program is one where community service is encouraged.

***Successful Education Requires Variable Approaches***

Students are offered instructional options as a way of assistance in completing their courses and assignments. These options can be teacher-designed or student-designed alternatives. The goal is to improve students' understanding of their own behaviors, skills and preferences for learning as they apply to typical traditional classroom learning.





## Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner (cont'd)

Direct instruction may be used as a strategy and as a technique to improve reading rate and comprehension, note-taking skills, memory techniques, and study skills. Group instruction based on cooperative learning strategies are also employed where effective. On-going interactive dialogues between teachers and students focus on delivery techniques that will enhance the skills of each learner and also meet their individual learning styles and preferences.

Many of the assignments and the ways in which students demonstrate mastery in alternative education programs are traditional in nature: projects, presentations, large and small group instruction, discussion groups, computer-assisted instruction, use of visual aids, etc. However, the strength of alternative education comes from the personal interaction of students and teachers and their willingness to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of classes, course delivery and learning. Success is measured in light of the unique student population and in terms of how this unique population is "learning," both

individually and, when appropriate, as a group. The beauty of alternative education is its flexibility, being flexible to adjust to learning rates and styles. And all of this begins with the relationship and interaction of students and teachers. Teachers being flexible to delivery models that are adjusted to work for each individual new student is the key to student success in alternative education.

**"...aspects of traditional educational approaches may inadvertently promote negative student perceptions toward learning."**

Student attitude is also a big factor in student success. Research indicates that aspects of traditional educational approaches may inadvertently promote negative student perceptions toward learning. John Goodlad (1984) showed that over 90 percent of student activities during a normal school day are boring and passive (Schmoker, 1996). There is ample research linking student motivation, attitude, and performance. Most recent is the work of Caine and Caine and the metaphor of the triune

brain--if a student does not feel safe, the higher functions of the brain do not function properly. A conversation with almost any student verifies this as they recount previous learning situations. Most report having done better in those classes in which they were interested and/or in which they liked the teacher. As a result of the student/teacher relationship, we have few behavioral problems, and yet the majority of our population comes to us with a history of social problems in school and in the community.

Even after attitudes are adjusted, learning is difficult for most at-risk students. The next phase in a successful alternative education program requires creating student interest in the learning process. Research continues to reveal a growing problem of student apathy. *Getting By: What American Teenagers Really Think About their Schools*, found most high school students view much of what they study as "tedious and irrelevant" (Bradley, 1997). A nationwide study of middle schools reports a "dominance of passive learning" (Lounsbury and Clark, 1990).





**Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner (cont'd)**

The sciences have a difficult time maintaining the interest of a child. Most students find high school biology "boring or irrelevant." A Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education study found 90 percent of students consider math boring (Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education, FASE, 1999). Alternative education strives to make the curriculum and instruction dynamic and interesting.

The alternative education task, therefore, is to care about students and their learning. This is accomplished through the establishment of a one-on-one teacher-to-student relationship. Instruction is then tailored based on an assessment of student skills and abilities. There is constant redesigning, modifying, adjusting, or "tweaking" of classes and instruction. The dialogues between teacher and student are about the effectiveness of instruction in increasing student success. Content relevance and the progress each student is making, with the teacher's understanding and encouragement, is the

principal focus of each student/teacher dialogue.

Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) alternative education programs help at-risk students by using an approach, based on the teacher-student dialogue, that can readily take advantage of a student's interests and strengths while also designing situations that provide interest and encouragement for each

**"Those students with the lowest threshold for boredom are the ones most likely to act up, drop out, or end up in alternative education."**

individual. Teachers who create meaningful learning experiences stimulate students. Students can be taught *how* and where to learn and sharpen their own meta-cognitive skills on how to apply learning to their world.

***Relevance is Essential for Meaningful Learning***

**F**ocus on acquisition rather than application of facts and skills results in school becoming unconnected and meaningless to students

(Plucker and Omdal, 1997). The most common example would be the many students for whom report card grades have little correlation with actual intelligence. For many, if not most, low grades and low test scores have more to do with interest and motivation than with ability. Too many students opt out of the traditional pattern of memorizing isolated bits of data to be used only for a test, with little attention paid to how the information is relevant to their lives. Those students with the lowest threshold for boredom are the ones most likely to act up, drop out, or end up in alternative education.

According to the U.S. Justice Department (Daily Report Card, 1997), truancy rates are as high as 30 percent in some districts. Boredom can mark a complete end to formal academic careers. Data shows dropouts as a group have "higher cognitive capabilities than high school graduates who did not enroll in college" (CDOE, 1997). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has stated, "for a growing number of youth, truancy may be a





*Alternative Education in  
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**Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner (cont'd)**

first step to a lifetime of unemployment, crime and incarceration" (OJJDP Bulletin, 1995). Therefore, proven methodology and techniques, coupled with a focus on interests and encouragement, must be integrated into alternative education classrooms in order to prevent further failure and to "rescue" these learners. When success in the classroom is linked to success in a student's "real" world, the whole puzzle begins to become clear.

This can only happen if the students see relevance in what they are learning. A focus on the individual and on offering options has helped to serve alternative education students successfully. Attendance rates are up, graduation rates are up, and reading and mathematics test scores are up for most students in the program.

In summary, alternative education in Orange County currently serves at-risk youth, dropouts, incarcerated youth and adults, and academically struggling students, as well as students whose parents home school and question the methods of traditional education. In alternative education, we have found

mounting evidence that traditional school methods are inadequate for some. Because the 'nontraditional' student population is growing nationwide, we need to ask and answer the question: What can we do for these students to ensure their success? The question is no longer why provide alternative education, but more importantly, how can we integrate proven alternatives effectively in our larger educational system?

Alternative education offers an approach which ensures learning for *all* students. We believe alternative education, when partnered with traditional education, offers many more opportunities for all to succeed because (1) alternative education serves the uniqueness of each student; (2) the specific cultural and educational background of each student is accommodated; (3) instruction is tailored to meet the individual learning strategy and style of each student; (4) alternative education teachers adjust their teaching methodologies to each learner; and (5) alternative education focuses on teaching skills and attitudes that will foster future success in education and in

life.

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**Alternative Education in  
the Age of Accountability**

**Alternative Education: Providing for Every Learner (cont'd)**

**About the Authors: (cont'd)**

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The Journal of Court, Community, and Alternative Schools

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**About the JCCASAC Scholarship:**

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Vickie Moody, *Assistant Superintendent*  
Colusa County Office of Education, 146 Seventh Street, Colusa, CA 95932  
For questions call (530) 458-0330

**Student Data**

*Please PRINT in ink or TYPE*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**School Data**

Juvenile Court/Community School Attended: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Program Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street

Name of College/Trade School Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Address/City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Credits: 3 6 9 12 15 18  
Circle one

**Financial Data**

Has student ever received an award from JCCASAC?		Yes No	Amount Received/Date:
		Circle one	
Tuition	\$ _____		<b>Attach letter from the student to this Scholarship Application</b>
Books	\$ _____		
Other	\$ _____		
TOTAL	\$ _____		

\_\_\_\_\_  
 JCCASAC Program Administrator Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Approved JCCASAC Treasurer Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 JCCASAC Section Representative Date





## *Alternative Education in the Age of Accountability*

### Measuring the Intangibles

by Kristen Nelson

There can hardly be anything as frustrating for a teacher as knowing that a student is growing and improving yet is unable to show how that growth on standardized tests and other traditional assessment measures. You scratch your head, baffled, and worry because you know this precious child has grown in ways these assessment measures cannot show.

Yet, if you take a moment to reflect on the months that have passed, you can see how far such a student has come. Molly, for instance, is more attentive than she ever has been. Where once dull eyes stared at the walls, there are now baby blues tracking you as you walk in front of the class explaining a concept. Where she once missed a day of school each week or routinely showed up late, there she is most every morning sitting at her desk. She seems to work better with her peers, and other students don't sigh quite as loudly when you place her in their group. Most important to you, she seems to be present not only physically but also mentally--asking questions,

participating more in discussions, and periodically even asking for help.

Then one day, the principal remarks on how well your class performed on the recent standardized testing--except for Molly. "Too bad," he comments,

"Sometimes students who aren't ready to show growth in the traditional measures can be "caught" showing growth in other areas--areas that often go unnoticed and unmeasured."

"she just doesn't get it." It is this moment that you wish you had an arsenal of data and facts to back you up when you say, "Oh, but she's doing so much better."

What if you could say instead, "I do hope we will begin to see more academic growth in Molly. Yet I am pleased with how far she has come this year. Her attendance rates are up 32 percent from last year and from the first week of school; her participation in class has almost tripled. She's asking an average of five

questions per week--up from one in the beginning of the year, which was always, 'Is it time to go home?'" Her behavior is steadily improving, and she has had a 45 percent decrease in the number of complaints from peers and office referrals."

#### Teachers as Keen Observers

Sometimes students who are not ready to show improvement and growth in the traditional assessment measures can be "caught" showing growth in other areas--areas that are many times taken

for granted and go unnoticed and unmeasured. To uncover these growth areas, teachers need to become keen observers and data collectors.

Teachers can observe a student like Molly in five target areas that can quickly provide valuable information about a student's progress (see sample chart). Even if teachers don't have time to keep a count or tally for data purposes, simply becoming observes can give them insight and information into a student's progress.





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**Measuring the Intangibles (cont'd)**

The five target areas are as follows:

- 1. Attendance and tardy rates.** Because a student needs to be in school to learn and grow, attendance is a good starting point. Has there been a change in how many absences that student has had compared with last year? With the beginning of the year? If last year a child missed one out of every 22 days of school, she would have a 22:1 present-absent ratio or a 5 percent rate of absenteeism. If this year she had a 44:1 ratio, then she has a 2 percent rate of absenteeism and is going in the right direction.
- 2. Class participation.** Active participation in class can be a huge signal that a student cares and is curious about learning. Pay close attention and keep a count or anecdotal records of when the student asks a question, makes a comment, or shows active participation in other ways such as trying to transfer learning to other situations.
- 3. Attentiveness.** This is a key area because having the student pay attention to you and his work is a foundation of learning. Have a clipboard nearby and keep a count of the number of times you need to remind the student to stay on task or ask the student to be quiet. Is there a decrease in these numbers? Also, I recommend that you set up a sampling schedule that allows you to track a students' attentiveness on the same two days every week. Don't try to track a student for the entire week. Other students may not get the attention they need if you try to follow such a schedule.
- 4. Social interactions.** Negative social interactions can hinder school success. Use the sampling method and select two days each week to keep count of how many times the student is positively interacting with peers or other adults. After a few weeks, a pattern should emerge that you can share with parents and the student.
- 5. Behavior.** Students who are not engaged in school will expand their energy in negative and attention-grabbing behavior. Keep a tally of how many times the student participates in these types of behaviors or experiences problems in class or at recess and look for a decrease.

Name: Molly					Month: November				
Attendance and Tardies for the Month:					Absences _____		Tardies _____		
<i>Days Observed</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>
Participation									
Attentiveness									
Social Interaction									
Behavior									





**Measuring the Intangibles (cont'd)**

These five target areas can be precursors to academic growth and success. They can shine a light onto a student's journey toward active participation in his own learning and academic success. By documenting growth in these key areas and using the data to let a student and his parents know that these efforts are being noticed, you will give the child a huge push toward continued growth and school success.

*About the author:* Kristen Nelson is the director of Grants and Special Projects in the Capistrano Unified School District in Orange, California. Nelson taught elementary and middle school grades for eight years. She is the author of *Strengthening Students' Multiple Intelligences: Hundreds of Practical Ideas Easily Integrated Into Your Curriculum*, (New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1998)

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*Alternative Education in  
the Age of Accountability*

## Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice

by Sam Halstead

- *We want them to be responsible, so we take away all responsibilities*
- *We want them to be positive and constructive, so we degrade them and make them useless*
- *We want them to be non-violent, so we put them where there is violence all around them*
- *We want them to be kind and loving people, so we subject them to hatred and cruelty*
- *We want them to quit being the tough guy, so we put them where the tough guy is respected*
- *We want them to quit hanging around losers, so we put all the "losers" under one roof*
- *We want them to quit exploiting us, so we put them where they exploit each other*
- *We want them to take control of their lives, so we make them totally dependent*

*Dennis A. Challeen*

Restorative Justice fits perfectly with the rehabilitative ideal because it concentrates on the harms of crime rather than the rules that have been broken and seeks reparation and balance by involving victims and offenders in the process of justice. Victims are involved in negotiating balance and offenders are encouraged to understand, accept, and carry out their obligations. They get to "learn their lesson."

The restorative approach is not based on punishment, retribution or "just desserts"; it can be looked on as an

experiential method for helping offenders to learn social skills, positive values, empathy, and anticipation of consequences. Offenses are treated as teachable moments rather than actions requiring punishment and retribution.

The practice is not new, of course. Many of us were raised by parents who believed in the restorative principle--when a wayward rock broke a neighbor's window we would be steered next door to apologize, and the cost of repair would be deducted from our pocket-money for as long as it took. We were shamed but not made to feel we were "bad." The simple lesson learned was "If you break something--you fix it" but, on a deeper level, it reinforced concepts of respect, responsibility, consequences, honesty, and neighborliness. This restorative process and its outcomes were always better than the more prevalent approach which incorporated variations of physical and verbal abuse, solitary confinement, missed meals, curfews, and loss of privileges.





**Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice (cont'd)**

Unfortunately the myth is still alive that we can somehow "teach someone a lesson" by treating them badly; by abusing the abusers and victimizing the victimizers.

It is good news that the principles of "Restorative Justice" are increasingly being absorbed and applied by jurisdictions around the world. An early example was in New Zealand where the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act was introduced in 1989. The Act grew out of the dissatisfaction of indigenous Maori people with the punishment orientation of the country's justice system. The Act allows youthful offenders to be diverted away from the courts and into "family group conferences" which engage them in discussions with their own family, the victim(s), the victim's family or supporters, and a social worker or probation officer. The conferences focus on outcomes and allow victims and offenders to be involved in the judicial process. The success of Family Group Conferences has resulted in the reduction of New Zealand's Juvenile Court institutions from 18 to 2 and a 75% decrease in court cases (from over 10,000 to 2587) in

only four years. (Maxwell and Morris, 1993).

More than fifteen American states have now introduced juvenile justice legislation based on the tenets of restorative justice, and organizations such as the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) have offices in most states. There is no question that there is a Restorative Justice movement which is picking up momentum around the world.

Of course, offending does not just happen in the streets and educators must make sure that restorative justice is not seen as a juvenile diversion technique only. There are implications, and applications, for all educators but particularly those working in

**"There are implications, and applications, for all educators but particularly those working in jails, prisons, community schools and court schools."**

jails, prisons, community schools and court schools. The re-offending nature of our clientele and their common experiences of retributive "justice" provide us with many chances to solve individual and group behavioral problems in the classroom and education center. Too often, when students misbehave, correctional educators resort to the prevailing retributive measures (banning, segregating, laying of charges and loss of privileges) favored by the custodial staff of their institutions--ineffective measures that, through mindless repetition, have contributed to the increasing resentment and alienation of "problem students."

The moral development theories of Piaget and Kohlberg teach that young children comprehend good and bad in terms of the punishment consequences. As children age and develop through the conventional stages of maturity they, hopefully,





**Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice (cont'd)**

learn fairness, moral decision making, law and order, and begin to show more tolerance, empathy and respect for others. The punishment/obedience orientation is the very lowest level of this continuum—the least mature. It is unsophisticated and pre-conventional and, sadly, it is also the way that most correctional institutions operate. Offense matched by retribution. Staff toughness met with inmate resilience.

It is apparent that many of our students reside in pre-conventional levels of moral maturity and are well used to their misdemeanors being treated by punishment. How could we possibly expect them to raise their moral awareness to conventional and, preferably, to post-conventional levels, while we continue to apply discipline in the immature, pre-conventional, punishment/obedience mode? What hope is there that offenders will emerge from our retribution centers more responsible and ethically fit? If offenders do not “learn their lesson” while incarcerated, should we really be puzzled by high re-offending rates?

Against the prevailing macho scenario, the principles of Restorative Justice may look weak and tainted with a faint aroma of “new age” liberalism—an unpopular fad in the time of “three strikes” and “truth in sentencing” initiatives. Some correctional educators and program staff are hesitant to even suggest the process to prison management for fear of being ridiculed. Restorative justice is not a soft option, though. Facing up to the hard truth about oneself can be a harrowing experience and it is difficult to “tough it out” in a forum where toughness has no place and a disgruntled victim is staring you down.

The following actual incidents illustrate different ways in which the principles of Restorative Justice can be applied in institutional settings:

*The affectionate sexist*

A male maximum-security inmate, with a long history of sexist behavior, gave a female teacher a hug. The teacher was upset and wanted no further contact with the inmate. A conference was called with the offender, his unit manager, the victim, a female colleague and the (male) education center manager.

- The facts of the incident were described to the offender.
- The victim related how she was affected.
- The offender claimed that a hug is innocent and that another female staff member (a sister in the prison chapel) hugs inmates “all the time.”
- The education manager and unit manager empathized with him and said they had found that it is best to err on the side of caution when dealing with the opposite sex. It is likely, they advised, that a woman would be offended by physical attention unless she is a good friend.
- Both women commented on types of unwanted attention that women are sometimes subjected to and how it makes them feel.
- Sexual harassment was described to him as being unwanted or unwelcome contact or comments of a sexual nature. A brochure about sexual harassment was given to him.
- The offender then said he understood and that he had meant





**Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice** (cont'd)

no harm. He thought he was being courteous and complimentary. He apologized to the victim and said he now saw why she was so upset and promised not to do it again.

- He continued to attend education classes and apologized at least three more times in the following week. From that day on he behaved appropriately and was more friendly to all jail staff.

*The disgruntled gang-leader*

A male education staff member was manhandled by an inmate gang-leader in a prison cellblock. The inmate picked the staff member up from behind in a bear hug and pulled him, struggling, down a landing. The staff member was released, annoyed but unharmed, and attempted to downplay the incident. When the staff member turned his back, the offender repeated the action two more times with increasing vigor. The staff member made a complaint, the incident was treated by custodial staff as an assault, and the inmate was sent to the "hole." There was talk of banning him from education for six months and a discussion on whether to bring in an outside court judge to lay formal charges. Within two hours the staff member, having cooled down, talked the custody manager into convening a meeting with the inmate. He explained that the offense had been against him

personally and said he would like to participate in any resultant action. At the very least he wanted to talk face to face with the gang-leader. When the wary offender was delivered to the office:

- The staff member described his reaction to being repeatedly being thrown around in an undignified manner.
- The offender maintained that he meant no harm and was just being playful. He claimed it was typical inmate "horseplay."
- The staff member pointed out he is a professional civilian member of staff, not an inmate, and did not come to work each day expecting to be assaulted. He then suggested the incident was related to his refusal to comply with an earlier request from the gang-leader.
- During this discussion the inmate gradually lost his aggressiveness and said that he understood the staff member's point of view. He then apologized a number of times.
- The educator requested that the inmate be allowed to go back to his cellblock without further censure because balance had been restored by mutual understanding and an apology. No good could come from further punishment.
- The custody manager, still incredulous at hearing an apology from this particular inmate, cautiously agreed.
- The inmate collected his belongings from the "hole" and proceeded back to his cellblock and his gang.
- The next day he offered to work voluntarily in the education center.
- Fellow gang members thanked staff for the way the incident was handled and, from that day on, acted more courteously and responsibly in the education center and in the prison at large.





**Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice (cont'd)**

Custody staff were, at first, critical of the "weak" way in which the incident was handled but were soon silenced by the permanent change in the inmate's demeanor.

**R**estorative Justice practices demonstrate that change can be provoked by treating offenders responsibly. That is to say, invite them to accept responsibility for their actions and then engage them in contributing towards a responsible resolution. And don't let up. The process is not really disciplinary at all but teaches self-discipline and self-monitoring through the clarification of rules, taking the perspective of others, and understanding the effects and consequences of actions.

Of dozens of cases where these restorative techniques were used, I am only aware of one (a serious incident of stalking and indecent exposure by a "textbook" psychopath) where there was no resolution because there was no acceptance by the offender that he had done anything wrong. He claimed his victim should be grateful for what he had done.

Restorative justice can also be applied to groups of inmates. This is illustrated in a final anecdote which takes a new look at the common prison situation of a large group being unfairly punished for the crimes of one or two of their number.

**"Restorative Justice practices demonstrate that change can be provoked by treating offenders responsibly."**

*The shut-door policy*

**C**omputer-literate inmates had been able to use a prison computer laboratory while computer classes were not in operation. When a hard-drive was stolen from a computer, the room was closed to all inmates until the return of the hard-drive. The hard-drive did not appear and the innocent inmates complained that they were being unfairly punished. The education staff, unable to afford a supervisor for the room, said they could not open the laboratory if it was going to be slowly stripped of equipment. There was insufficient proof to isolate the two known offenders for individual "remediation."

Education staff handled it by sharing the dilemma with the inmates:

- Three of the education team visited cellblocks during lunchtimes and explained their predicament to the inmates, inviting them to suggest a solution.
- For every inmate suggestion, the team explained how the problem would still not be solved and that theft or abuse was still possible, if not probable. Having reached the same stalemate in each cellblock, the team promised to return in a few days.
- On the second tour there were more inmate suggestions but all could be countered. By this time, everyone knew all sides of the dilemma and





**Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice** (cont'd)

that there was no obvious or easy solution.

- After three weeks without resolution, the education team toured the blocks a final time with a unique proposal. They said they had noted, over the years, that most inmates were proud that "their word was their bond." They then suggested that individual inmates could use the computers if they had; 1) been through a computer course, and 2) were willing to give their word that they would not steal or damage the equipment.
- Inmates were incredulous that anyone would be naive enough to trust their fellow cell-mates but were quite prepared to live up to their own individual promises.
- Only the two original thieves refused to give their word and they were not allowed near the computers again. They reacted like they had been banned, but it was explained to them that it was their choice to not attend.
- Every inmate who gave his word and "shook on the deal" honored it. In four years since the incident there has been no theft or other abuse of computer equipment.

The following guidelines may form a useful basis for educators looking to change to a restorative approach to misdemeanors:

1. **Include students in democratic decision-making.** The reason for the rules, and the consequences for breaking them, should be clear and reasonable. A rule that is not understood is more likely to be flouted. Students will commit to necessary rules if they have been involved in discussing the issues around the rules. (At a nearby alternative school, students have negotiated a consequence for swearing. The teacher does not need to say anything--offending students stand up, walk to the side of the room, and quietly do ten press-ups. It is more self-punishing than restorative, but it is their rule and they are now monitoring themselves and exercising self-discipline.)
2. **Use a "family group conference" response to misdemeanors.** As soon as is practical, convene a conference to problem-solve with the offender, victim, colleagues and custodial and other professional staff. In some cases it might be useful to include a psychologist or counselor who can follow up with the offender. It can be a good idea to casually offer everyone a cup of coffee before beginning and to have informal seating arrangements. This will signal to the offender that it is a meeting rather than a trial.
3. **Include institution staff in the process.** Explain to them that the incident or offense is being

**"Students will commit to necessary rules if they have been involved in discussing the issues around the rules."**





**Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice (cont'd)**

treated "educationally" and that their role is to represent custodial staff and to be a guide and adviser. If you have trouble convincing them to join the process you could remind them that punishment can always be resorted to if this approach fails.

4. **Create an environment where change can happen.** For some offenders, apologizing and making reparation will be a new and difficult experience. They may have to fight ingrained defensive habits and will not want to lose face with their peers. It has to be possible for them to walk away feeling they acted responsibly, were treated fairly, and can maintain their new stance.
5. **Avoid threats of punishment.** Very often there is a second level of defense that reinforces the need for offenders to reach agreement in family group conferences. In two of the examples above there would have been a punishment consequence if accord had not been reached--the gang-leader would go back to the "hole" and the computer laboratory would have remained closed. While it is wise to keep these underlying consequences in mind, it is counterproductive to use them as leverage during the meeting. A decision reached for fear of consequences is a reversion to the punishment model.
6. **Use the least amount of authority possible.** Taking a "parental" stance is fine as long as you are being the type of parent that discusses and enlightens rather than abuses or punishes. Any authoritarianism will be met with a resistance reflex.
7. **Not all offenses will suit this approach.** Minor and moderately serious offenses can be dealt with this way, but serious attacks or indecencies will generally need to be handled by the institution and sometimes by the local judicial

system. Refer offenders to psychologists or psychiatrists if there are signs of deeper problems.

8. **Reinforce all attitude changes.** Remember to thank the offender for being reasonable and for apologizing. Tell them that you knew it was difficult, that you will not hold the offense against them and that you have a new respect for them after the way they handled the conference. Let other staff know what has happened so that they can reinforce it and make a point of following up with the offender a few days later. It is an old truism that treating people as if they are responsible often results in them becoming responsible.

The somewhat pessimistic opening quote from Judge Dennis Challeen is a sobering description of the situation in most correctional institutions. It spells out a paradigm that can be shifted. If every second line of his narrative is replaced with a positive, restorative statement, a challenging mission for correctional education can be created:

- *We want them to be responsible, so we show how they are responsible for the consequences of their choices*
- *We want them to be positive and constructive, so we model, reinforce and reward positive and constructive attitudes*





**Educational Discipline Using the Principles of Restorative Justice (cont'd)**

- *We want them to be non-violent,  
so we help them use practical,  
non-violent options to solve their  
problems*
- *We want them to be kind and loving  
people,  
so we encourage their kindness and  
reinforce the love they already have  
for family and friends*
- *We want them to quit being the  
tough guy,  
so we show how respect and  
tolerance are fundamental to  
society*
- *We want them to quit hanging  
around losers,  
so we help them become winners*
- *We want them to quit exploiting us,  
so we remain beyond exploitation*
- *We want them to take control of  
their lives,  
so we show them how they can*

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## A Simple Writing Exercise to Promote Expository Writing and Critical Thinking Skills *by Dr. Judy Coffey and Toni. L. Horde*

### **Introduction**

This article describes a simple writing exercise which is used in a mixed age and ability group in a juvenile hall classroom to teach critical thinking and expository writing skills. This exercise basically consists of assigning students a short quotation or common saying, having them copy it, then write a paraphrase of it, and finally write a paraphrase applying the quotation or saying to an appropriate situation. A copy of the assignment sheet which has instructions (figure 1) and a completed example (figure 2) follow. Many of our students report that they have learned to paraphrase and/or compose paragraphs in our class. We consider this "consumer satisfaction" to be a direct result of this exercise, and it causes us to analyze what distinguishes this assignment from similar--but often less appreciated or successful--writing exercises.

### **Background of the Exercise**

This exercise--which students immediately dubbed "The Saying of the Day"--was first developed for high school special education language arts classes in a large urban school in the Southwest. The majority of these students were English-Spanish bilingual and had been assessed as learning disabled in elementary school. Most of these students had never been placed in mainstream high school language arts classes and had little practice in writing essays or even complete, well-structured paragraphs. The idea of having students begin by copying common sayings served two purposes. It allowed every student in the class to participate in the writing exercise. At least initially, some students were only able to copy the saying; they benefited from the discipline of making an absolutely exact copy and practicing eye hand coordination and handwriting. The requirement that the copies always be completely accurate and every student's printing or cursive be neat and legible was always strictly enforced and resulted in rapid and noticeable

improvement in students' handwriting and attention to detail. The second purpose for using sayings was to familiarize students with the meaning of proverbs such as "All that glitters is not gold" and "A stitch in time saves nine." Many students were aware that they had heard these sayings, but they were very often unable to interpret them correctly. As time went on, short questions were incorporated into the exercise in addition to the sayings and proverbs. The second part of the exercise addressed the issue of comprehension of the sayings. Students were required to put the sayings in their own words and write down their paraphrases. This task was designed to help students practice their writing skills without simultaneously having to generate new ideas. This lifted the "writing block" that is a familiar and obstructive feature of many writing classes.

The third part of the exercise required that students write three sentences which described an example of the saying or quotation. The application could come from the students' own experience or they could invent





## **A Simple Writing Exercise to Promote Expository Writing and Critical Thinking Skills (cont'd)**

suitable examples. However, students were not permitted to express disagreement with or dislike for the saying in these sentences. The intent of this part of the exercise was that students learn the discipline of following directions without expressing personal opinions or preferences. When this exercise was adapted for court school use, the three sentences were eventually expanded to a complete paragraph since many of our students are preparing to take the GED and other examinations which include paragraph and essay writing components. However, the entire exercise can still usually be completed within 25 to 30 minutes.

### *Important Contextual Parameters of the Exercise*

**W**e have adapted this exercise for use in a suburban juvenile hall intake unit classroom of 30 male students ranging in age from 12 to 18 years. There is one teacher and one instructional assistant in the classroom. We have always exercised great care in selecting the sayings or quotations for this assignment. For example, under no circumstance would we use a saying such as "Only the good die

young" because it would evoke statements about young men dying to defend their gangs or their girlfriends' or their mothers' honor. Once some students begin on that track, they lock into that position, influence the rest of the class in that direction, and are no longer amenable to reasoned discussion. For that reason, we choose only more content neutral, general or abstract sayings or quotations as writing prompts such as "All that glitters is not gold." All the instructional benefits of the exercise can be extracted from these less potentially inflammatory sayings. We, in fact, endeavor to ensure that we only use prompts which will not evoke strong emotions because for the majority of our students, emotions interfere with the critical thinking and writing process.

We are not teaching just grammar, mechanics and paragraph structure with this assignment. We are also targeting critical thinking skills, and we want as clear a "mental field of operation" as possible. This is in direct contrast to the previous writing instruction many of our students tell us about. In other classes the topics assigned such as "your most embarrassing moment" or "your thoughts on the

immigration problem in the USA today" have often invited them to express their feelings and opinions. These assignments are designed to ensure that every student will find something to write about the topic, and they may be fine for students whose critical thinking and expository writing skills are already developed. However, our court school students have not yet acquired and/or honed these skills. They still need to be explicitly taught to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). They also need to be taught not to withhold their opinions entirely but rather to know how to distinguish fact from opinion and when it is appropriate to express their opinions. Educators often talk about pre-writing activities to refer to cognitive mapping, making notes and writing rough drafts. However, the real pre-writing activity is thinking about the topic. For this reason, we talk about the saying or quotation even before we ask students to begin writing, and we usually let them talk to each other during the exercise. We have found that this exercise, presented and carried out within the parameters we describe, helps students develop



**A Simple Writing Exercise to Promote Expository Writing and Critical Thinking Skills (cont'd)**

their critical thinking and expository writing skills.

***When a Good Saying Goes Bad***

Sometimes we select a saying or quotation thinking it will make a marvelous writing prompt only to discover that our students insist on interpreting it--or misinterpreting it--in a negative way. For example, on one occasion we quote Mohammed Ali: "He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life." To our surprise and dismay, almost every student read this quotation as a justification for everything from gang fights to bank robbery. We vainly--and in retrospect, foolishly--tried to salvage the exercise by asking students to consider whether Mohammed Ali probably had gangs or criminal acts in mind when he spoke. Realizing that we often have students who in the past have gleaned both peer and adult attention by taking a negative position on assignments, we now discuss the prompts orally before students begin writing. This discussion is intended to ensure that the class

takes a positive perspective on the prompt before beginning the exercise. We also circulate through the class while students are writing to give individual feedback, encouragement and assistance. However, we have realized that whenever the majority of the class attaches a negative interpretation to a saying, it is best to cut the discussion short and to have the

see deliberately perseverating in a negative mindset as a learned behavior, and by terminating further discussion, we are withdrawing the reinforcement of adult and peer attention. This is far more effective than the rambling and often unresolved debates we might otherwise become involved in when students insist on taking a negative view of a saying.

**"...we have realized that whenever the majority of the class attaches a negative interpretation to a saying, it is best to cut the discussion short and to have the last word ourselves."**

***A Supportive Learning Environment***

Our authoritative position in those cases where students are, in our professional opinion, willfully negative is balanced by the supportive environment (Bandura, 1986) and positive feedback we provide all

last word ourselves. Since we have carefully selected each prompt for its positive content, we do not leave the exercise without expressing the positive interpretation to the class. We do not allow students to impose their more negative interpretations if we feel they are not appropriate and well-founded. Based on the principles of behavior modification (Skinner, 1957), we

students who make a sincere attempt at this exercise. After discussing the prompt orally, both the teacher and the instructional assistant move around the class, assisting students individually with their paraphrases and paragraphs applying the saying to real or invented situations. If we discover that a student has "missed the point" but has already written a good deal, we discuss



**A Simple Writing Exercise to Promote Expository Writing and Critical Thinking Skills** (cont'd)

that with him orally, but we do not insist that he go back and rewrite extensively. We do not want students to associate the negative experience of being found wrong and then having to do extra work with the writing process. However, we are untiring and absolutely consistent in requiring that students not use rude words or inappropriate examples. Every morning students are verbally reminded of the class rules and new students are given a written copy of them. We do not permit students to discuss or write about drugs, violence, police, crimes or court sentences. We insist that students erase anything they have been warned is unacceptable such as script or block lettering rather than normal printing or cursive, four letter words, or unacceptable examples. Appeals such as "I was just quoting what he said" or "I can't think of anything else" are not even discussed and students are aware of this consistent position on our part. After the first day or two in our class, students do not attempt to negotiate on these issues; they quickly adapt to the simple but clear parameters of the

assignment.

When we observe that the majority of the students appear to have finished writing, we tell the students to stop writing--even if they are not done. By removing the pressure to turn in a completed writing assignment every day, we help students become comfortable starting a writing assignment and we put the emphasis where it always initially needs to be, on

**"By removing the pressure to turn in a completed assignment everyday, we help students become comfortable starting a writing assignment and we put the emphasis where it always needs to be, on thinking clearly about the topic."**

thinking clearly about the topic. We invite students to share their paraphrases with the class. Having already had the benefit of group discussion and individual feedback on their writing, students are confident at this point and do volunteer to share their work; rarely is it necessary at this point to provide substantial corrections. We usually invite several students to read to the

class what they have written, and we often point out that a variety of paraphrases can be completely acceptable as long as they follow the guideline of neither adding nor subtracting from the author's original idea. However, we strictly hold students to that standard, and we do not hesitate to point out--even in front of the class--areas where they have included their own ideas or

opinions in their paraphrases or where they have omitted the author's original ideas.

After discussing the paraphrase, we ask students to volunteer to read their application paragraphs to the class. Since students may not have had enough time to finish writing, we encourage them to tell the class what they would have written if

they had had the time to finish. Once again, our emphasis is on the thought process rather than the finished paragraph, and from time to time, we point out that they are actually reading their rough drafts anyway. We tell them that if we had a more conventional classroom, we would at least occasionally ask them to choose one draft to revise and polish to give them practice in those final



## A Simple Writing Exercise to Promote Expository Writing and Critical Thinking Skills (cont'd)

steps of the writing process.

We have designed a weekly goal-setting exercise to help students build metacognition and appreciate their own academic achievements (Coffey & Horde, 1999). When asked to describe what they have learned during the previous week, many students write that they have learned to paraphrase or “tell what a saying means” and to write a paragraph. Students also often report that they have learned what an opinion is. These self-reports indicate to us that not only do we notice improvement in our students’ thinking and writing skills, but the students themselves have become aware and confident of their new abilities in these areas.

### Conclusion

Critical thinking and oral and written communication skills are problem areas for most students in the court school system. The short, simple writing exercise described in this paper helps students develop and improve their critical thinking and expository writing skills. We have used this exercise successfully in mixed age and ability groups of 30 male students in a juvenile hall intake unit classroom. We rigorously monitor and guide students

through this exercise to ensure that students take an appropriately positive point of view when interpreting the writing prompts we choose for this exercise. By selecting sayings and quotations from specific disciplines or historical periods, this exercise could be incorporated into virtually any content area.

Figure 1.

### SAYING/QUOTATION OF THE DAY

1. Copy the saying accurately in your best handwriting; your cursive or printing must be legible.
2. Paraphrase the saying or quotation. That means put the saying in your own words without adding or leaving out any ideas. (Make sure every sentence you write begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, a question mark or an exclamation point. Every sentence must contain (at least) a subject and a verb.)
3. Apply the saying. Write a paragraph of at least eight sentences giving one example of this saying in your life or the life of someone you know, or invent a believable example. Do not write about more than one example.

In your topic sentence, state the main idea of your paragraph in general terms. Then state the example and describe it in several sentences. Explain who is involved, what they did and how their reactions illustrate today’s saying or quotation. Finally, restate the general idea of the paragraph in your closing sentence, connecting your example to the saying (again). (Do not put any new information into the closing sentence; you want to create a feeling of completion and closure at the end of your paragraph.)



**A Simple Writing Exercise to Promote Expository Writing and Critical Thinking Skills (cont'd)**

*Figure 2.*

**EXAMPLE**

Quotation: "The only disability in life is a bad attitude."  
 --Scott Hamilton

1. Copy: (Handwritten copy of the saying appears here.)
2. Paraphrase: *The only thing that brings you down is your attitude.*
3. Application:  

*There is an example of a bad attitude being a problem in my own life. Sometimes when I get up in the morning, I just start the day with a negative attitude. When I have this bad attitude, it seems that a lot of other bad things come along with it. For example, last week I came to class in a bad mood because breakfast had been oatmeal which I hate. That put me in a bad mood. Then the staff seemed to be in a terrible hurry to get us out of the dayroom. I hate to be rushed, so I ignored them and got yelled at. By the time school started, I had already lost points and was feeling down. I wasn't even very hungry that morning; I shouldn't have let a dish of oatmeal ruin my morning by letting it affect my attitude like I did.*

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**Judy Coffey** has a doctorate in Clinical Hypnotherapy and is currently investigating the positive implications of guiding students in formulating and regularly reexamining their long and short term goals.

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## Cognitive Factors to Student Success *by Lori A. Guzman*

Cognitive psychologists have identified at least five factors that have a tremendous impact on student success. For teachers of alternative education students, an awareness of these factors and a willingness to make modifications concerning them is critical to practice. The first factor is personality and its correlation with general well being. The second is emotion and the growing role it has in a well-rounded curriculum. The third is motivation, which has caused some controversy in the educational realm, but which remains a principal influence over how well students do in school. And while some consider them one in the same, the distinct factors of intelligence and knowledge and their importance to student success should also be considered.

**Personality.** Personality, or rather the way in which individuals consistently respond to their environment, has an effect on cognitive processes. Laboratory studies seem to confirm what common sense might tell us. Individuals' differences in personality result in differences in health, rates of aging, cognitive ability, happiness and general satisfaction with life. The more flexible and out-going the individual, the better the results in all areas. In education, when we say a student does not come ready to learn, what we may be recognizing is that the student possesses a personality that is less apt to be flexible or to accept learning opportunities. Regardless of the personality that students arrive with, students can open up and turn on to learning.

With students in our classrooms who will, no doubt, possess a range of personality types, it is important for the educator to create a classroom environment, curriculum and instructional style that provides opportunities for all students to find success. Build into each day, chances for students to reach objectives that are meaningful to them. For some students, satisfaction may come from reading a novel chapter by chapter and discussing it with the teacher in a private conference. For others it might be holding a position of perceived importance such as answering the telephone or practicing public speaking by presenting their work to an audience. As much as is reasonable, design the program to meet the specific personality needs of each student. Personalizing the program in this way might optimize the cognitive abilities of individuals' learning.

It is equally important that teachers be aware of their own personalities and the effects on their teaching styles. Often educators forget that some students may be uncomfortable or have difficulty learning in the style in which the teacher is accustomed to operating. Varying teaching styles and strategies, so as to encompass as many personality types as possible, is likely to produce more beneficial results. Also, treating all students as important and valuable to the whole of the group, despite their personality characteristics, is essential.

**Emotion.** Developmental psychologists have identified the dependence of





## Cognitive Factors to Student Success (cont'd)

learning readiness on basic emotional awareness and understanding. In Sylwester's book, *A Celebration of Neurons: An Educator's Guide to the Human Brain*, he describes emotion as "very important to the educative process because it drives attention which drives learning and memory" (1995). Sylwester divides emotion into two categories—primary emotions, or innate responses and secondary emotions, or those emotions that are learned through previous experiences. Primary emotions might impact learning when, for example, the school environment is threatening or hostile. The brain, being in a flight or fight mode, may render the cognitive processes required for learning inoperable. Meeting students' needs at the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy are essential, especially ensuring that students feel safe and welcome. Similarly, secondary emotions might have powerfully positive impact on learning by activating schema that serves to facilitate the encoding of new information. Taking learning outside of the classroom is just one way in which students can have emotional experiences that will connect them to their learning.

An implication of brain research cited by Sylwester is that educators have a wonderful ally in emotion if they recognize its importance and use it to their advantage. At Nueva Learning Center in New York, the role of emotion in learning is maximized. As the school's director, Karen Stone, puts it, "Learning doesn't take place in isolation from kids' feelings. Being emotionally literate is as important for learning as instruction in math and reading" (1995). By realizing that emotion can be more powerful than logic, and by

placing emotion at the core of their curriculum, Nueva is able to make learning really stick. One of the strategies that makes the program successful is a regular morning check-in that helps students to clear their minds and make attention available for other studies. Teachable moments are taken advantage of. When a conflict arises between two parties, the teacher adopts a coaching role and assists the students in developing their own use of rational processes to help them keep their emotions under control. Student feelings are validated and even appreciated. Nueva Learning Center also posts a suggestion box so that anyone can submit requests for assistance in an anonymous fashion.

**Motivation.** There are various opinions about the role that motivational techniques should have in the classroom. Some feel that providing token rewards and prizes or imposing threats are extrinsic, unnatural and damaging to learning in the long-term scope. Still others have developed elaborate point systems or token economies that they say teach "real world" values and life skills. In either case, teachers seem to agree as do psychologists, that motivation is a necessary part of learning.

Commonly seen motivational teaching techniques are classroom reward systems and token economies. In large high schools there simply isn't enough of these types of incentives to go around. For many students at the high school level, motivation is often expected to come from threats of negative consequences such as detention, suspension or being denied access to school activities. A





## Cognitive Factors to Student Success (cont'd)

more productive manner of motivating students includes taking advantage of teachable moments or actually building them into the curriculum.

In the San Joaquin County Office of Education, Alternative Programs, there is an agricultural/environmental focus site called one.OUT. Students who attend this 205 acre riparian school do most of their learning through an integrated, thematic curriculum that includes instruction on the domestic animals and ranch management as well as the native animals, plants, insects and local history. Two days of each week during the fall and spring months are set aside for Durham Ferry Field Days in which local elementary schools are led by the alternative high school students through hands-on activity stations, hikes and petting zoo experiences. The high school students, who are sometimes disinterested in the curriculum when they arrive, are quickly motivated to become experts once they are placed before a group of young children.

An interesting aspect of motivation is that of learned helplessness or the belief that one does not have control over what happens to them. Those who learn helplessness seem to see success as unattainable. They may exhibit flat affect and/or depressed behavior. Educators have to use care about the messages, both verbal and non-verbal, they send to their students. The worst thing they can do is convince their students that they are incapable of doing well in school. Teachers would do more to identify limitations and help students to compensate for their weakness.

**A**ttention. Inarguably, one of the cognitive factors that has the most influence on student success is attention. Psychologists believe that when the sensory registers take in information there are limited cognitive resources that are able to process that information or, in other words, attend to it. One such psychologist described how students might select some parts of the information for encoding but leave the rest to basically be forgotten. A student might choose to focus his or her attention on the gossip that is being passed in the back of the room and dismiss the lecture that is being presented in the front.

Other psychologists believe that while attention may be limited, information is still being encoded from many sources simultaneously and at varying degrees of completeness. A second model of attention, called the full processing model, shows how information is collected, patterned and then attended to. Results of tests on both of these models seem to show that either and both theories can be true.

**"The high school students, who are sometimes disinterested in the curriculum when they arrive, are quickly motivated to become experts once they are placed before a group of young children."**





## Cognitive Factors to Student Success (cont'd)

The important thing for educators to remember is that they must compete with a wide variety of stimuli if they want to win their students' attention. In classrooms where students have severe ADD symptoms, it has proven helpful to reduce the number of stimuli available to provide potential distractions. For most other students, having them highlight materials that are important is one strategy that seems to work. Using almost any type of novelty like applying bright colors, using bold fonts and calling out verbal cues can also help grab a student's attention. Novelty is the key word here. The brain has the ability to habituate itself to anything, even bright colors and bold type that become too familiar or commonplace.

**I**ntelligence. Intelligence, which is considered changeable, is differentiated from IQ in that it may be harnessed into abilities in various areas that may not be discernible through standardized testing. Howard Gardner (1983), author of *Frames of Mind*, has given a lot of attention to identifying and depicting these different areas

of intelligence. In fact, Gardner has developed more than seven such intelligences that relate to such specific skills as spatial, musical and kinesthetic. Two of the intelligences identified by Gardner account for most of school-type learning, verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical. While both of the latter can be measured from an IQ test, the others cannot. It requires a knowledgeable and aware educator to identify the forms of intelligence that he or she must teach to in order to help his or her students be successful. A simple survey found on the Internet can also be administered to students and their resulting intelligences posted or recorded to assist the teacher in planning and implementing appropriate types of assignments. It is best to address a wide variety of these intelligences in each day. Provide periods within the schedule for group activities or team builders as well as personal quiet time for reading and reflection. Balance hands-on, project type, activities with direct instruction. And offer time for large motor movement, such as role plays and set-design, as well as small motor detail work like that involved in drawing and writing at the computer.

**"The important thing for educators to remember is that they must compete with a wide variety of stimuli if they want to win their students' attention."**

**K**nowledge. Knowledge is the basic body of information possessed by an individual. It is that stimulus which has successfully traversed the information processing system: been perceived by the sensory registers, moved through working memory and become encoded in long-term memory as either declarative or procedural information and made available for later recall. Depending upon an individual's repertoire of mnemonic strategies, cognitive





## Cognitive Factors to Student Success (cont'd)

processes can store huge amounts of learned materials.

Acquiring knowledge is probably seen as the number one function of schools. As educators, it is important to realize that maximizing learning requires the activation of previously encoded information or schemata. Teachers can promote learning by providing such materials as advanced organizers that help students to relate new information to that which is already understood. Using questioning techniques that require learners to make difficult decisions during the encoding process that will also improve the accuracy and completeness of the information encoded.

A classroom geared toward generating student success is one in which the teacher acknowledges the effects of personality, emotion, motivation, intelligence and knowledge on student learning results. With some planning and adjustment, these cognitive processes can be integrated into the teacher's instruction, curriculum, and classroom management system so as to maximize learning results. By providing students with a somewhat personalized program, attending to their emotional needs, encouraging and fostering intrinsic motivation and teaching to their individual intelligences by activating previously encoded schemata, educators can nearly ensure that their students will find success.

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Lori A. Guzman has been a teacher with the San Joaquin County Office of Education, Alternative Programs for eight years. Her teaching emphasizes learning beyond the walls of the class setting. She is currently a teacher on special assignment, supervising a 205-acre environmental and agricultural focus site. Lori is also responsible for the development and organization of all program special projects and quests. Lori holds a masters degree in educational administration and an administrative credential through the University of the Pacific.





## How Do We Stop New Teacher Flight? *by Denise A. Pacheco*

**E**ducation appears to be a profession under siege. As test scores fall, social problems rise and areas of responsibility blur, teachers are left to navigate their way through what appear to be dangerous and uncharted seas. New teachers are the group that seems to be the most negatively affected by the problems facing the profession. Approximately one third of all new teachers nationwide will leave the profession within five years (Delgado, 1999). Why is this occurring, and what can be done to encourage new teachers to remain in education?

**D**istricts throughout the nation have attempted to ascertain the reasons for the exodus of new teachers from their profession. Isolation appears to be at the root of the problem (Delgado, 1999). Most professions provide gradual entry programs that allow recent graduates to acclimate themselves to the demands of their new positions. However, school districts give beginning teachers the same duties and

responsibilities as veteran teachers (Lucas, 1999). The amount of responsibility, coupled with the isolation in which most teachers work, results in beginning teachers who are unsure of their methods and often think of themselves as failures (Delgado, 1999).

Many districts have established school based mentoring programs in an attempt to increase the success of beginning teachers. The mentor programs that demonstrate the best levels of success are those that recognize the necessity for quality mentor training (Rowley, 1999). Rowley has identified six basic qualities essential to good mentors. Good mentors are committed to the role of mentoring, accepting of the beginning teacher, skilled at providing instructional support, effective in interpersonal relationships, models of continuous learners, and communicators of hope and optimism.

Good mentoring programs require commitment from the districts, as well as from the mentor teachers. In order for programs to be effective, districts must recognize the needs for formal mentor training and specific descriptions of the responsibilities of the mentor teachers (Rowley, 1999). Mentors who keep logs of conferences and participation with beginning teachers allow reflection of what is actually being done to help them. Additionally, stipends, early release time for observations and the opportunity for additional professional growth provide a clear message. Teaching is a complex and worthwhile profession that requires practice under the tutelage of a more experienced colleague, much as an intern needs the supervision of a resident to prepare for independent patient care (Rowley, 1999).

California is one of the states currently attempting to address a long list of educational problems. At the top of this list are the problems of losing beginning teachers to other professions, and increasing the quality of the practice of the teachers who are serving the educational needs of approximately 5.8 million children currently enrolled in California schools (Olebe, Jackson, Danielson, 1999).

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA) is currently in its second year of operation. The goal of the BTSA program is to enlist experienced teachers as support providers for first and second year teachers with preliminary credentials. The





## How Do We Stop New Teacher Flight? (cont'd)

veteran teachers function as facilitators, not evaluators of the beginning teachers. BTSA, which was developed to replace the mentor teacher program, uses the California Standards for the Teaching Profession as the bedrock of the program. The California state legislature allocated \$67.2 million to be used during the 1998-99 school year and \$75 million for use during the 1999-00 school year (Olebe et al).

Through the use of BTSA, California hopes to set new standards for teaching and assist teachers in examining their own practices in relation to the new standards for student achievement (Olebe et al, 1999). Several tools have been developed in order to facilitate reaching these goals. The California Standards for the Teaching Profession outlines six standards that are designed to inform good teaching practice. The standards are: engaging and supporting all students in learning; creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning; understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning; planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students; assessing student learning; and developing as a professional educator.

BTSA has developed a tool called the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST) to be used in conjunction with the teaching standards. The goal is to empower teachers to be successful in their classrooms (Olebe et al).

CFASST is a structured formative assessment process for beginning teachers and their support providers. There are two main components to CFASST. First, both new and veteran teachers need to use a common language when talking about teaching, and they need to have an agreed upon outline of standardized indicators of good teaching practices (Olebe et al, 1999). Second, the teaching practices need a common set of evaluative scales that describe teaching practices at differing levels of achievement. These scales are called the Descriptions of Practice (Olebe et al).

The support provider is not the determiner of where on the scale the beginning teachers are functioning. Beginning teachers evaluate their own performance. This is done by observations using objective data recorded by the support provider. When the beginning teacher and the support provider meet to discuss the observation, it is the beginning teacher who uses the observations, dialogue with the support provider, and student feedback to determine appropriate

placement on the scale of practice (figure 1).

The purpose of CFASST is formative assessment, not formal evaluation. Formative assessment is centered around the belief that good teaching practice is developed over several years of study and reflective practice beyond the formal education program. The role of the veteran teacher is to aid the beginning teacher in the reflective process. Formal evaluation is usually an intimidating process to beginning teachers. Whether or not a teacher will be recommended for reelection is based largely on the formal observation. With so much riding on the outcome, beginning teachers are often hesitant to voice their concerns about their own teaching practice.

The relationship between the beginning teacher and the support provider is confidential. Assuring confidentiality allows the beginning teacher to speak frankly with the veteran teacher. It is hard to imagine that a beginning teacher would feel comfortable discussing concerns and perceived failures, while worrying that the information would be shared with an administrator. Currently, it is still difficult to put new teachers at ease that BTSA and CFASST are formative, not evaluative. It is sometimes, also, a challenge to





**How Do We Stop New Teacher Flight?** (cont'd)

Figure 1.

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

**STANDARD ONE:**

<b>ENGAGING &amp; SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS IN LEARNING</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1•1 Connecting students' prior knowledge, life experience, and interests with learning goals</li> <li>1•2 Using a variety of instructional strategies and resources to respond to students' diverse needs</li> <li>1•3 Facilitating learning experiences that promote autonomy, interaction, and choice</li> <li>1•4 Engaging students in problem solving, critical thinking, and other activities that make subject matter meaningful</li> <li>1•5 Promoting self-directed, reflective learning for all students</li> </ul>

**STANDARD TWO:**

<b>CREATING &amp; MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2•1 Creating a physical environment that engages all students</li> <li>2•2 Establishing a climate that promotes fairness and respect</li> <li>2•3 Promoting social development and group responsibility</li> <li>2•4 Establishing and maintaining standards for student behavior</li> <li>2•5 Planning and implementing classroom procedures and routines that support student learning</li> <li>2•6 Using instructional time effectively</li> </ul>

**STANDARD THREE:**

<b>UNDERSTANDING &amp; ORGANIZING SUBJECT MATTER FOR STUDENT LEARNING</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3•1 Demonstrating knowledge of subject matter content and student development</li> <li>3•2 Organizing curriculum to support student understanding of subject matter</li> <li>3•3 Interrelating ideas and information within and across subject matter areas</li> <li>3•4 Developing student understanding through instructional strategies that are appropriate to the subject matter</li> <li>3•5 Using materials, resources, and technologies to make subject matter accessible to students</li> </ul>

**STANDARD FOUR:**

<b>PLANNING INSTRUCTION &amp; DESIGNING LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR ALL STUDENTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4•1 Drawing on and valuing students' backgrounds, interests, and developmental learning needs</li> <li>4•2 Establishing and articulating goals for student learning</li> <li>4•3 Developing and sequencing instructional activities and materials for student learning</li> <li>4•4 Designing long and short term plans to foster student learning</li> <li>4•5 Modifying instructional plans to adjust for student needs</li> </ul>

**STANDARD FIVE:**

<b>ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5•1 Establishing and communicating learning goals for all students</li> <li>5•2 Collecting and using multiple sources of information to assess student learning</li> <li>5•3 Involving and guiding students in assessing their own learning</li> <li>5•4 Using results of assessments to guide instruction</li> <li>5•5 Communicating with students, families, and other audiences about student progress</li> </ul>

**STANDARD SIX:**

<b>DEVELOPING AS A PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6•1 Reflecting on teaching practice and planning professional development</li> <li>6•2 Establishing professional goals and pursuing opportunities to grow professionally</li> <li>6•3 Working with communities to improve professional practice</li> <li>6•4 Working with families to improve professional practice</li> <li>6•5 Working with colleagues to improve professional practice</li> </ul>





**How Do We Stop New Teacher Flight?** (cont'd)

remind administrators, tactfully, that confidential does indeed mean confidential.

The two assessment modes used for the formative assessment are formal peer observation and structured inquiries. The structured inquiries include a series of activities which allow the beginning teacher to explore areas of his teaching practice. Regardless of the mode being utilized, beginning teachers follow a cycle of planning, teaching, reflecting, and applying what they have discovered. During the first year, teachers will do one inquiry based on the teaching standard, "Establishing an Environment for Student Learning." The belief is that if beginning teachers concentrate on a specific area they will have a greater opportunity to progress in their practices (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and California Department of Education, 1998).

BTSA is not the only new program geared at the development of good teaching practice among California teachers. The Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR Program), which is currently being implemented in many California schools, is designed to aid permanent teachers in the development of their teaching practice. Teachers receiving

"unsatisfactory" evaluations will be referred to the PAR Program. A consulting teacher will then be chosen to aid the referred teacher. This will be done by the consulting teacher demonstrating, observing, coaching, and conferencing with the referred teacher. Both BTSA and the PAR Program rely on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession to inform the professional development of the participating teachers. Unlike BTSA, PAR is evaluative rather than formative.

As a participant in the role of a support provider, it is apparent to this writer that BTSA has much to offer the beginning teacher, as well as the support provider. The inquiry of teaching practice and observation of teachers new to the profession allow a veteran the opportunity to reflect on accepted practices.

**About the Author:**

**Denise A. Pacheco** has been a teacher with the San Joaquin County Office of Education, Alternative Programs for six years. Her primary emphasis has been working with students who have been expelled or who are wards. In her capacity as a teacher she has worked on a data based literacy project currently being developed at SJCOE and whose results were presented at the 2000 ASCD Conference. Additionally, she initiated the use of the Interactive Mathematics Program (IMP) with an at-risk, transient population.

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*Student  
Success Story*

## The Story of Sonya Stamper

by Lee Chic and Sonya Stamper

San Mateo County Office of Education's Community Schools Program opened its first regional school in 1983 and the last of three in 1984 with the mission of empowering students to become responsible and productive members of their communities by helping them acquire academic and independent life skills, positive life skills, and effective relationships with others. Today, the Community Schools program has expanded and now provides services to 60 students, through four teachers, four instructional assistants, and four probation group supervisors at Gateway Center while also maintaining the three regional schools. High-school aged students who are at risk for school failure are referred by the San Mateo County Probation Department or school districts. The Community School program is student-centered and adapts to meet individual student needs by providing, for any number of reasons, opportunities for student success as an alternative to traditional mainstream high schools. An individualized learning plan (ILP) is created for each student, and frequently reviewed, to ensure that students are progressing toward their academic, social, and vocational goals. The community, private and public agencies, and local school districts are integral parts of program planning and transition services. Many Community School students succeed in these alternative education programs and go on to enjoy further positive educational experiences. Sonya Stamper, whose story follows, was a Community School graduate in 1986.

At the age of 14, I gave birth to my first daughter, Ayisha, and one year later to my second daughter, Ajene. There I was walking in my mother's footsteps, pregnant as she had been as a teen. I never could imagine what life was like for my mother until I tried on her shoes and they fit. My blues, my mother's blues, and my grandmother's blues; all the same song--the common cry of young single mothers whose lives represent the poverty, sacrifice, and despair of downtrodden communities.

Pregnant when I entered my freshman year in high school, I felt like an institutional reject with nowhere to seek refuge. Parents of

my peers used me as an example to convey to their children what the future could hold for them if they did not act responsibly. The church disapproved of my situation because I had sinned in the eyes of God. High school administrators threatened me with expulsion because I was the girl who ruined her bright future, fearing that my condition would spread like an epidemic among the entire student body.

Instead of being expelled from school, I was given a choice to transfer to a continuation high school that offered the School Age Mother's Program (SAMP). This program was designed to help school age mothers continue high school by providing on-site child care. The program also educated expectant mothers about the fundamentals of childbirth and child rearing. Unfortunately, the SAMP program did not have adequate funding to assist every young mother to fruition of high school graduation. Since I was only a freshman and, at the time, the youngest girl in the SAMP program, I was transferred back to mainstream high school.

My mother and extended family remained very supportive





**Student  
Success Story**

**The Story of Sonya Stamper (cont'd)**

of my academic endeavors. Family contributions were made to provide adequate child care while I remained in school. Nevertheless, it was very difficult to attend mainstream high school now with two babies, both in diapers. On a good night, I would get about three hours of sleep. Then I would go to school and try to function in the honors classes in which I had been placed. Not surprisingly, I fell far behind in all my classes. As a result, I became very depressed.

I knew I would not succeed the conventional way. I left the traditional high school setting and entered Community School, which at the time was located in my community, East Palo Alto. The Community School allowed me to prepare for my GED, and provided me with the stepping stone I needed to go on to college. The "work at your own pace" atmosphere coupled with supportive teaching staff revived my confidence in my learning ability. I studied intensively in preparation for the GED and with the guidance of the instructors, I was ready for the exam after a very brief time at Community School.

After I completed the course work and exam that allowed me to obtain my GED, I entered community college and began taking classes. I started out taking

a couple of courses each semester. Eventually, I had accumulated enough units to transfer to San Jose State University where I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in African-American studies with a minor in Sociology. Currently, I am completing my Masters of Social Work also at San Jose State University with an expected graduation date of May 2000.

Despite the negative attacks that I endured by society for becoming a mother too soon, I was able to accomplish my goals. I realize that my accomplishments are an exception to the rule. There are millions of teenagers

faced with the same dilemmas I was fortunate enough to overcome. A future predetermined for devastation can be transformed through education. My life is proof. I hope that an adversity to achievement tale, such as mine, can serve as an inspiration to help gear the lives of those facing similar dilemmas toward alternative education and others to understand the need for such programs. There is more than one way to accomplish a goal. The road to success has many different paths and life's circumstances determine the route one must take.



Above (left to right) Ayisha, Sonya, and Ajene

.....  
: Ms. Lee Chic is a Regional Community School Program Manager :  
: for the San Mateo County Office of Education. :  
.....





*Student*  
*Success Story*

## System Kid Makes It: Hats off to the Graduate

by Gloria Boylan

The crowd of nearly 100 students and invited guests were seated in the gymnasium in quiet anticipation. What they were about to witness had only happened twice before in the five year history of Polinsky Center and everyone knew this was an extra special event. Her teachers and staff looked proudly on, as did Frederick, her four-year-old son who sat among a sea of youngsters who watched their role model. The strains of Pomp and Circumstance began and a very proud young woman walked to the podium amidst cheers and a standing ovation to receive her high school diploma--some wiped tears away. In a time when the nation is recognizing remarkable people, Nichole Snyder is a high school graduate and a teen mother whose accomplishments, in spite of her circumstances, stand out.

Seven years ago this event would have been unthinkable. Neglected and without the support of her family, Nichole sought refuge in the life style of a gang by age 11. At age 13, pregnant and with nowhere to turn, Nichole reluctantly became a ward of the court. Once she entered the system, this otherwise bright girl, due to her defiant behavior, was deemed eligible for Special Education Services under the category of Emotionally Disturbed. Now, well-intentioned social workers, teachers and staff were in and out of Nichole's life, reaching out to her with limited success. One pillar of stability became the Polinsky Children's Center

and School, the county's shelter for abused, abandoned and neglected youth. At Polinsky, Nichole began to finally open herself up to the education process and support of staff who believed in her when she didn't believe in herself.

A turning point for Nichole came one day when her son was in peril. Frederick, then two, fell while running in the park and was struck by a needle left lying in the dirt. Nichole decided that she wanted more for her son and decided to use the system to turn their lives around.

As Nichole addressed the audience it was clear that she had accomplished her vision and now she was telling others how they could, too. She told the students to "focus on the upside and there is no limit to what you can do," that "you can do anything you set your mind to--so make the right choices," and "there are many things about the system that are good and many people who want to help you--let them help you." She taught them "to work with the system," and you could hear a pin drop.

Hats off to Nichole Snyder, truly number one in our class of one.

*Gloria Boylan is a RSP Teacher at Polinsky Children's Center and School at the San Diego County Office of Education*





***Innovative***  
***Program***

## **Act one.**

### ***San Joaquin County Office of Education***

**POPULATION SERVED:**

- City of Stockton
- High school and junior high students between the ages 13-18
- Students not in regular school system due to one of the following:
  - parent request
  - expulsion
  - probation

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

Act one. is a focus site for performing arts. In addition to a full academic program, instructors spend approximately one hour per day teaching one or more aspects of performing arts: dance, piano, music reading/theory, drama, mime, singing. The school has a fully-equipped piano lab, a dance room, and a large classroom with a small platform area. Guest teachers are brought in to lead workshops in hip hop/ street funk, salsa, swing, and jazz dance styles; a mime troupe is coming in the spring to perform and lead a series of workshops; students spend 2-3 hours per week at the keyboard or in music reading lessons. Music has been ordered to begin a choir. All students are required to participate in all performance teaching sessions.

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***Innovative***  
***Program***

## **Mountain View Vocational Community School**

*San Luis Obispo County Office of Education*

**POPULATION SERVED:**

- Community school students, ages 15-18

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

Vocational-emphasis training school for community school students.

A collaborative relationship has been developed among several agencies: the County Office of Education, the Probation Department, Family Care Network (a local foster care agency), and the National Guard. Representatives from these agencies joined together to write a proposal to address the need for hands-on vocational training for older community school and probation youth whose needs were not being met by the more traditional classroom setting.

The National Guard provided a location, which is a bucolic setting in the hills around Camp San Luis, a National Guard post dating from before WWII. The Probation Department provided funds for transportation, as well as two old buses for short-term transporting of students. Family Care Network wrote an OCJP grant application, which was awarded in the amount of \$100K each year for 3 years; this amount pays for additional staffing, including a counselor and two vocational technician instructors. Community schools provide a teacher, an instructional assistant, furniture, equipment, and curriculum.

Students eligible for the program must be designated at-risk per Ed. Code 1981 and referred by the Probation Department as WIC 602, 601, 654, or 300. Older, more mature students are typically enrolled, who have been identified by staff as ready to take on the responsibility of making a change in their lives. A classroom setting, with a computer lab (Digital High School funds), is provided for daily seat-time academic instruction; added to this, however, is a large woodshop, a business/marketing classroom with a student store, expansive areas to learn horticulture and building, and a wide variety of facilities needing renovation and improvement.

Students spend some of their six-hour day in the classroom on assigned contract work, in small groups, or receiving whole-group instruction; course assignments are based upon transcript assessments and individual goal setting. Independent study is currently not an instructional strategy available to Mountain View; it may be added if students qualify based upon a job off-campus or other identified need. Other activities in their day may include individual or small-group counseling; instruction in woodworking, light construction, plumbing, electrical, drywall, or other trade; participating in the





**Mountain View Vocational Community School** (cont'd)

business/marketing class; job shadowing in the community or on the National Guard post; or attending a Cuesta Community College course nearby. During the first year, students completely remodeled a large adjacent building, which is now incorporated into the program as two classrooms.

Vocational education is a vital need for our students. This community school is unique in our county in that it offers hands-on, daily instruction in trades that will assist students to be constructive and self-supporting citizens upon completion of the program. As of February 2000, a GED/CHSPE Prep program has been started, and union tradespeople have been integrated into the instructional program.

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*Innovative*  
*Program*

## Salinas Valley Education Center

### *Monterey County Office of Education*

#### **POPULATION SERVED:**

- Grades 7-12
- Ranch Detention Facility
- 602 adjudicated males and females

#### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

The adventure of Mick Bird rowing solo around the world is an important part of the curriculum at the Salinas Valley Education Center, making our students more active thinkers of their place in the world and connecting them to the practical facts of Mick's trip. For more than a year we have shared e-mail with Mick, and finally he visited the school on January 19, 2000 during one of his breaks from rowing. Mick gave a presentation about his trip, which was followed by questions from the students. Thank-you letters to him are just one part of the curriculum. E-mail, website studies and teleconferencing with Mick's satellite cell phone at sea keep students in touch with Mick's quest. We'll also be studying the geography and mathematics of his trip. Mick Bird's commitment to a floating classroom is being fulfilled with his connection to our school.

We would like you to appreciate Mick through the students' own words:

*"You made me get more courage to accomplish the goals that I have in mind."*

*"...thank you for coming all the way from Los Angeles to Salinas."*

*"...I learned that no matter what I want to do it is possible only if I give it my all and devote myself to it."*

*"...as you would say, Na'au...I will listen to my heart."*

*"You are a real inspiration Mick Bird."*

*"...we are all big fans and supporters of your project and will be following you to South Africa."*

*"You will be remembered in the Youth Center for a long time."*

This is an innovative program of social studies teacher, Dan Loving: "Starting in 1998, Mick Bird has endeavored to row a 28-foot boat around the world. So far he has rowed from California to Australia. Starting this April he will begin again, heading for South Africa, followed by a break to raise money, visit schools and spend time with his family. The next phase of his trip after South Africa takes him to South America. The final leg of his trip will pass through the Panama Canal, cross the Pacific Ocean





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**Salinas Valley Education Center** (cont'd)

and end at Hawaii. In all, Mick will have rowed more than 22,000 miles. Along the way he will be sharing his experiences with the media and classrooms all over the world, including ours at Monterey County Office of Education.

The Salinas Valley Education Center is the school program in the Monterey County Youth Center that serves adjudicated male and female juveniles. Students are sentenced to the facility for non-violent crimes for up to one-year, with a minimum stay of six months. Juveniles then participate in an after-care program that involves continued group and individual counseling, substance abuse prevention classes, and violence prevention training. School is an integral part of the program, so much so that students who have graduated from the Youth Center continue to return daily for the school program.

**CONTACT:**

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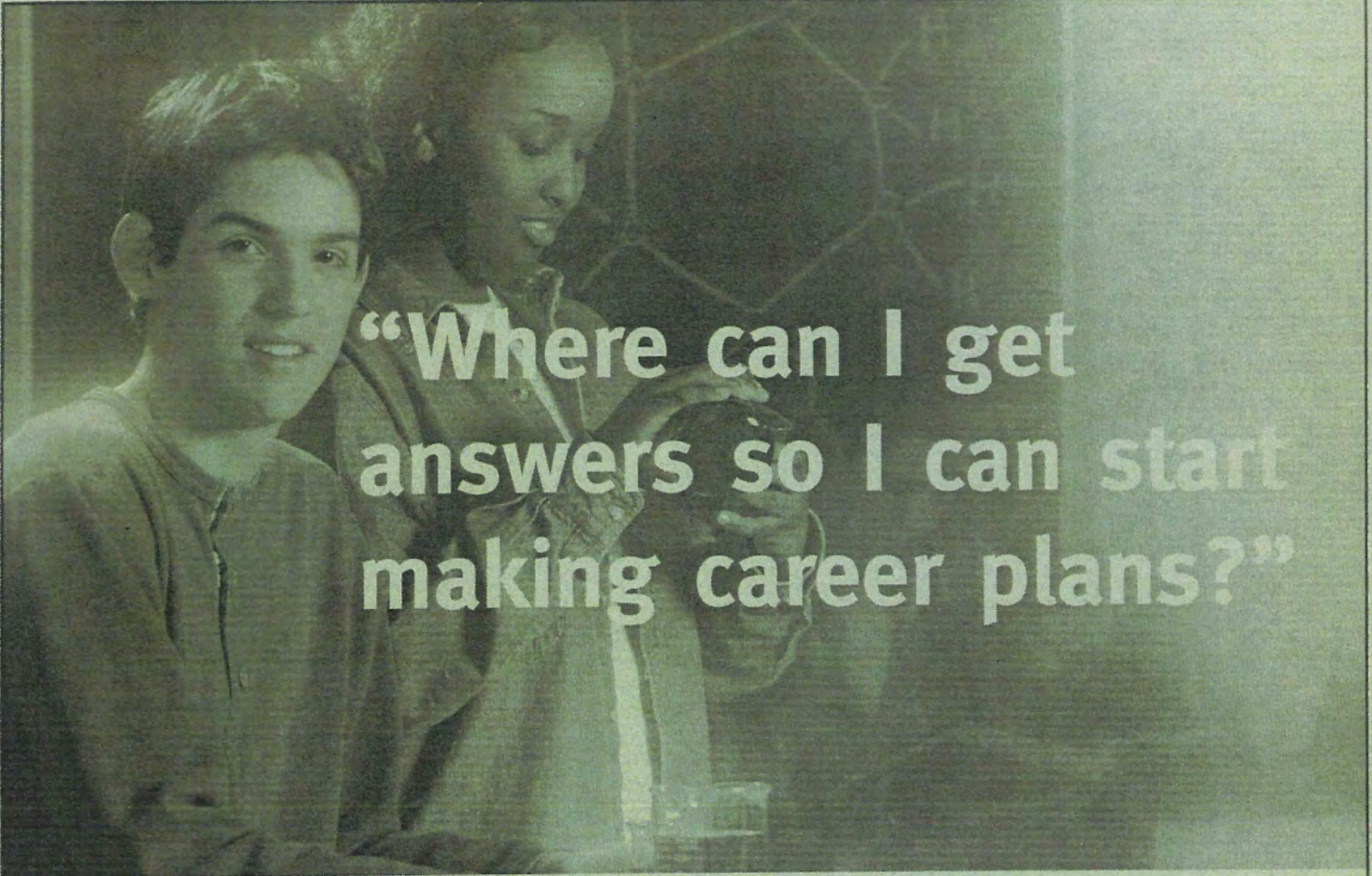
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