

# OF INTEREST TO TEACHERS

## School Health: Children at Risk

In some areas of the United States, up to 50 percent of children have no health insurance. Twenty percent of those may lack access to any form of health care whatever, even through public agencies.

Sara Rosenbaum, director of the health division of the Children's Defense Fund, says that the number of uninsured children nearly doubled between the late 1970s and 1984, climbing from one child in eleven to one in six. Moreover, she estimates that for every child who is uninsured, another has health coverage so inadequate that it provides only for the most serious emergencies, not for preventive care or checkups.

According to a study by the American School Health Association, only 21 states require screening for hearing problems, and 29 require vision testing. In addition, only 20 states require a physical examination for participation in athletics, and just 17 require a health appraisal of students at any time.

The study also found that there was wide variability among states—and much flexibility within a given state—in the responsibilities of a school nurse. Required duties were often limited to the control and prevention of communicable disease, the provision of emergency services for injury and sudden illness, and the care and identification of handicapped students.

Only nine states listed the appraisal of students' health as a required function of the school nurse; only seven listed promoting the health of students as a required responsibility.

In just seven states, the study showed, is there a mandated nurse-to-student ratio. And six of the seven set the ratio at one nurse per school system.

In addition, the study found that nine states do not require proof of immunization as a condition for entering school, and that almost half—24 states—do not require schools to have a designated health-service facility, such as a health room with first-aid supplies or a clinic.

Should schools have in-house clinics? Some critics say No, that schools are already overburdened with the many responsibilities of teaching. But advocates point out that while education should not have to carry the burden for health care, schools are where the children are, and that children who are in pain, who cannot see or hear properly cannot learn properly either.

## Low-income Gifted Less Likely to Be Seen

"Gifted children are as likely to come from low-income families as from middle- or high-income families, but the chances of their talents being discovered are less than 1 percent, say researchers at the University of Illinois.

"Working with children in two Illinois Head Start programs, Merle Karnes, professor of special education at the University of Illinois, is working to identify and develop programs for the low income gifted students. Head Start is a federally funded program for preschoolers from low-income families.

"We're convinced that there are probably as many gifted and talented children among the Head Start populations as there are among children of the same age range from middle and upper classes," Ms. Karnes said. "And we feel that if these children aren't identified early and their special needs met, they might just fall through the cracks and their potential might never be fully realized."—*Education Week*, vol. IV, No. 18, January 23, 1985. Used by permission.

## Blacks and Higher Education

The number of blacks prepared to teach the skills of the future—math, science, and technology—is dwindling. Blacks and Hispanics, representing at least 18.5 percent of the U.S. population, earn less than 8 percent of the bachelor's degrees in biological science and less than 4 percent in the biological and physical sciences at the master's level. Black enrollment in graduate schools has dropped 19.2 percent since 1977.

By 1995 nearly 40 percent of college-age Americans will be black or Hispanic. Will these minority youngsters be mostly members of the underclass, mere discards of a new science and technology-based economy in which they cannot compete?

Carl Holman, president of the National Urban Coalition, says that unless "dual literacy" of reading, writing, and speaking plus literacy in science, math, and technology is stressed for black children from the earliest years onward, far too few of tomorrow's minority youngsters will attend college.

Holman recommends school-parent partnerships; workshops in family math for parents, teachers, and volunteers; as well as workshops in family science and computing. He also suggests that black businesses and individuals "adopt" black schools, classes, or individual students in need of help.—Reported by Dorothy Gilliam in the *Washington Post*, December 11, 1986.

## More Faculty Part-Timers

Part-time faculty hiring is up, according to the American Council on Education (ACE). ACE's *Campus Trends, 1985* reports that two-fifths of colleges and universities employ part-time faculty to teach more than a fourth of all classes. The report also says that a quarter of the institutions are retrenching to reduce the number of faculty members.

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## Learning About Handicaps

"Sixth graders tried to experience for themselves what it feels like to be handicapped as part of a special project in Kimberlee Kay Asbury's class in Cedar Grove (W.V.) Community School. Several students were blindfolded while others had arms and legs tied so they couldn't use them. They spent an afternoon participating in the project, Asbury said, and realized how simple tasks such as going up and down stairs, getting a drink of water and sitting at desks became extremely difficult. 'It was a fantastic learning experience for the students,' she said. 'Now they have a small understanding of what handicapped people deal with in everyday life.'"—*It Starts in the Classroom*, September 1986. Reprinted with permission from *It Starts in the Classroom*. Copyright 1986, National School Public Relations Association.

## Women Board Members— Rocking the Boat

"Who asks the probing questions at board meetings, is active in the community and in the schools, is results-oriented, and sees the school board as a legislature rather than as a board of trustees? Female board members, according to Stephanie Marshall, [whose survey of 45 school districts in Illinois] found a new breed of female school board members who approach their role differently than men.

"Marshall found women valued different issues such as curriculum, personnel, and evaluation rather than building and grounds and were more active than men in the schools, much to the annoyance of male superintendents.

"Superintendents are finding that the hand that rocked the cradle now rocks the boat.' While only 7 percent of board members were female in 1961, 33 percent now hold the post. These new women board members tend to view the position as a 9-5 job, and have an emotional investment in the position because they decided to serve on the board because they supported a particular agenda or issue, were community leaders, and wanted results.

"Rather than question this approach, superintendents would be smart to form a 'quiet alliance' with these groups, Marshall said, because they are community leaders and can influence public opinion.

"The new breed of leadership irritates many superintendents, Marshall said, because they are more accustomed to hierarchical management rather than the shared power and participatory leadership these women demand. Rather than fight these trends, superintendents must be aware of differences, help define the 'zone of

tolerance' in board and superintendent roles, learn to share power, and change their style of leadership."—*AASA Conventioneer*, February 22, 1986.

## Commitment to the Learning Disabled

At a National Conference on Learning Disabilities, held at the National Institutes of Health in January, participants agreed that no one really could state the prevalence of learning disabilities, at least in part because few representatives of the various fields could agree on a definition.

But underlying all the disagreement on nomenclature, definition, treatment approaches, and research approaches was a mostly unspoken agreement with the statement of purpose of the Foundation for Children With Learning Disabilities, a national resource clearing house.

The statement concludes: "Let no child be demeaned, nor have his wonder diminished, because of our ignorance or inactivity. Let no child be deprived of discovery, because we lack the resources to discover his problem. Let no child—ever—doubt himself or his mind because we are unsure of our commitment."—Reported in the *Washington Post*, Health section, January 20, 1987, p. 9.

## New Nonverbal Test Diagnoses Dyslexia in Preschoolers

A new diagnostic test can be used to identify the common learning disability called dyslexia in young children before they enter school or experience problems in learning language skills, according to David Gow, headmaster of Gow School, the oldest preparatory school in the U.S. for dyslexic students.

The new technique—which traces, records, and analyzes eye movement patterns with the help of a computer—is the result of a two-year study of 350 students, both severe dyslexics and normal readers. In this study a series of light stimuli were substituted for words, and students were tracked for sequencing ability and eye-movement patterns. The dyslexics displayed irregular patterns that differed significantly and consistently from normal readers in the control group.

Because the test can diagnose dyslexia early, remediation can begin before dyslexic children develop feelings of failure and frustration.

The new diagnostic test is easy to administer, lasts only a few minutes, and uses computerized equipment that provides accurate recordings and fully analyzed data. A standardized version of the test should be ready for distribution within a year.

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## People Skills Set Excellent Teachers Apart

"The 'human skills' of teachers are the critical ones that set excellent teachers apart from the rest—and they are being ignored in current reform efforts, two researchers reported at an [American Association of School Administrators convention recently].

"Possessing good basic skills is important, said John Roueche of the University of Texas, but more important 'is how to use those skills to motivate students.' Roueche and George Baker, also of UT, studied the secondary schools selected as exemplary by the U.S. Department of Education in 1983-1984. They conducted in-depth paper and telephone surveys of about 40 of the 154 schools, examining carefully the school climate, the leadership characteristics of the principals and profiles of the [teachers] nominated by the principals as the best in their schools.

"The true genius of the teacher is his or her ability to motivate students,' said Roueche. 'We both are worried about the increasing emphasis on teachers' knowledge of content in the reforms as the sole criteria of good teaching,' he said. Roueche added that the human skills are not only observable 'but also measurable,' and suggested that principals invite prospective teachers to come and teach classes before hiring them.

"Socio-economic status, parent cohesiveness and school facilities were not as important to schools making great progress in student achievement as were the presence of 'a principal and a group of teachers truly dedicated to making a difference in the lives of their students.' These schools also were outstanding in music, art and sports—not just academics—proving that 'the pursuit of excellence is not one-dimensional.' . . .

"Good teachers are 'unrelenting' in sticking to high standards, they give and use homework everyday and emphasize literacy in every subject. 'If you could make a quantum difference in a school on Monday morning,' Roueche said, 'simply start asking to see samples of written work required in every class every week.' Gradually, this would commit a faculty to writing literacy in all courses at every level, he said.

"The leadership attributes of good principals, Baker said, are generic to those found by researchers looking at highly successful corporations. Their policies and procedures set broad standards but give teachers great flexibility, they are committed to the mission of the school, their 'focus is on the customer—the kids,' they recognize that productivity comes through people (they give recognition to good teaching) and they build a 'collaborative' system."—*American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Conventioneer*, vol. IX, No. 3, February 23, 1986.

## The "New Volunteer"

"The 'typical' classroom volunteer is no longer typical, and therefore the 'typical' kind of recognition may no longer satisfy them. That was the conclusion of the Littleton (Colo.) Public Schools, which devised a plan—called the Volunteer Information Record (VIR)—to offer them a little bit extra.

"For example, many of the volunteer mothers were considering a return to the job market, but they were facing difficulty because there was no record of their having worked for several years. Thus district officials decided that if they could accurately describe and document a volunteer's work, they could build a personnel file for each individual and then provide professional references acceptable to the business community.

"The VIR, which is only for those volunteers who request it, comes complete with job titles (other than 'volunteer,') job descriptions, logs, forms and promotional material—just like the real world. And it has had a noticeable effect. 'Participating volunteers report an increased sense of belonging to an important team and building skills for their own futures,' according to a district report. 'From a district perspective, we have noticed better attendance at monthly meetings, a more cooperative attitude and increased support for district priorities.'"—*It Starts in the Classroom*, November 1986. Reprinted by permission from *It Starts in the Classroom*. Copyright 1986, National School Public Relations Association.

## Guidelines for Fund Raising

Here are some guidelines to consider when your school is launching a fund-raising drive:

1. Will it be worthwhile financially? It might be that a love offering, well promoted, would net more funds than a pizza party.

2. Will it offer opportunities to bear witness to our faith, as well as to meet the school's immediate need? Contacting prospective students, giving out free literature, conducting such services as garage sales and car washes, and providing Christian atmosphere and music are good examples of such opportunities.

3. Will it offer opportunities for Christian ministry? Programs should include time to pray and share together as well as to work and give.

4. Will it glorify our Lord and His cause?

To ensure success, first survey your project, then plan the time, place, and event. Be sure to plan for publicity, supplies, set-up, number of workers needed, production of tickets and accounting for funds collected, and clean up.—Adapted from March/April/May 1986, *Church Teachers*. □