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ABSTRACT

This document describes approaches in conducting naturalistic studies in two different countries with contrasting educational settings. Naturalistic research methodology is described by one of the writers as "an explicit undertaking to lay aside our ideas and concern ourselves with finding the subjects' perspectives in their non-theoretical lives." The paper seeks to illustrate the possibility of uncovering common elements in the conduct of naturalistic research. It uses examples from two naturalistic studies, the first located in a small, isolated school in North Queensland, Australia; the other set in a large inner-city school in Vancouver, Canada. The conduct of naturalistic research is influenced by the physical environment, by the community relationships the researcher establishes and by the expectations held for the outcome of the research. Relationships with students, school staff, parents and administrators are detailed. Paper closes with discussion of social characteristics of class structure, their economic parallels, and their possible ties to educational attainment. (Author/TES)

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COMMON ELEMENTS IN THE STUDY OF EDUCATION

IN RURAL AUSTRALIA AND URBAN CANADA

by

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COMMON ELEMENTS IN THE STUDY OF EDUCATION IN RURAL
AUSTRALIA AND URBAN CANADA

Naturalistic research has been undertaken in a variety of educational settings in the last decade, and most of the reports which followed have been presented as case studies.

The authors have each undertaken naturalistic studies, in different countries and in contrasting educational settings, and found that it is possible to uncover common elements in the conduct of such research. The paper illustrates this using examples from two naturalistic studies, the first located in a small, isolated school in North Queensland, Australia, the other set in a large inner-city school in Vancouver, Canada. Naturalistic research was described in an earlier paper by one of the writers as "an explicit undertaking to lay aside 'our' ideas and concern ourselves with finding the subjects' perspectives in their non-theoretical lives". (Mason, 1973) The way that this is achieved will be influenced by the physical environment, the relations that the researcher is able to establish in the 'field', and even the expectations that all concerned have for the outcomes of the research. This paper draws together naturalistic research by K. J. Stevens in rural Australia and G. A. Mason in an urban Canadian setting.

PART I

BACKGROUND TO EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN RURAL QUEENSLAND

The 1975 School Commission Report drew attention to educational disadvantage in country schools in Australia, yet, significantly, provided scant evidence for such a claim. A major finding of the Commission was that more research was required into this little-known aspect of Australian society. This was subsequently confirmed by the 1977 National Conference on Country Education held in Launceston, and the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, together with several research reports (McGaw et al 1975, Musgrave and Wind 1978, Turney et al 1980).

Little is known, however, about what actually goes on in the day to day life of rural schools. There are few first-hand accounts and almost no detailed research.

It was decided that a "typical" rural Queensland school should be used for the research, and this provided two initial problems. Firstly, so little was known about such schools from the available literature that only a few guidelines could be used: the school would be geographically isolated so that easy access to other schools and communities could not be readily achieved by its members; it would offer secondary education only as far as Grade ten (about Form Five in New Zealand terms); it would not be located in a single-industry town; and, importantly for the researcher, would be within five hours drive from the coast.

Secondly, the problem of what identity to choose in the school for the purposes of research had to be decided. Should the researcher be a participant or a non-participant observer? As the research was being undertaken in a very small school, this was a crucial decision.

ISSUES IN UNDERTAKING NATURALISTIC RESEARCH IN AN ISOLATED NORTH QUEENSLAND SCHOOL.

A number of issues emerged as important in the conduct of this research: the physical environment dictated a large part of the study, and in fact, the researcher had to make many adjustments to it; the matter of high visibility as a stranger in the community had to be overcome, certain protocol had to be learnt, the differing expectations members of the community held for the research had to be accommodated; and finally, the question of ethics in such a situation could not be avoided.

(a) Physical Circumstances

The interior of North Queensland is by most standards hot, and for much of the year very dry. In summer its isolation from the more populous coastal area is heightened by widespread flooding. This information could be obtained from any library, but the significance of it was not fully realized until the research had begun. The problem of simply getting through a school day in the absence of air-conditioning was one that had to be somehow met. It in no small way accounted for the

seven pubs serving a community of less than 1800 people, and their patronage by, among others, the staff of the school. Heat played its part in the pattern of interaction in the school and out of school, and for early advice to the writer to "walk slowly like a North Queenslander and take your salt tablets".

The isolation of the community was of the most physical kind - simple geographic distance to any other centre of population, a contrast to, say, the closer pattern of settlement of rural Victoria, Tasmania or New Zealand. The importance of one's mode of transport was not to be underestimated. Fortunately the writer had a "ute" or pick-up truck provided by the University which fitted into the landscape ideally, but unfortunately the University's name and crest had been monogrammed on it, a matter that subsequently attracted unwelcome attention from other "ute" drivers. A feature of North Queensland drivers was their respect for other people's vehicles, in a very similar way to the respect of the cowboy for his horse. On locking my (the University's) "ute" on the main street early in my stay in the town, a passerby loudly enquired where I was from if I thought I had to lock my car - an unknown practice in the locality. Car theft was virtually unheard of - to steal a man's car was almost like taking away his legs. To fit in with the local custom I had to cease locking the University's vehicle. As a member of the community, especially during the weekends, new forms of entertainment were readily found - the rodeo and the races. Horses played a very large part in the conversation of pupils in the school, (together with cars), and it was necessary to learn a new language to participate.

In summary, to be able to fit into the local community it was essential to adapt to local conditions. Days spent in the school were frequently followed by evenings in the pub and weekends at the racetrack or rodeo, a not unpleasant way of "finding the subjects' perspectives in their non-theoretical lives".

(b) Visibility

Unfortunately the writer was a highly visible person in a small community. Not only did he travel in a vehicle labelled with a University crest, but began on what was a very public note, by flying

into the town with his supervisor - a well-known Professor, in the latter's private aeroplane.

This was to have been to meet the Principal of the school together with a few community leaders who were interested in education. The event was a unique one in the history of the community and was well publicised and well attended. Community leaders willingly gave their versions of rural educational disadvantages. A most important matter however, was made clear to the two visitors - not only was a researcher welcome to work in the local school and its community, but such work was regarded as potentially valuable as it would hopefully publicise country peoples' "problems". The well-publicised initial meeting was followed some time later by the commencement of fieldwork based in the school at which point the matter of high visibility became obvious. How to find a niche in the school without disturbing the day-to-day pattern was not going to be easy. To begin with, the only place to live was in the teachers' quarters, so that total immersion in the life of the school was difficult to avoid. Pupils, teachers, the Principal, the parents association, and even the Rotary Club were curious about the research and were keen to offer advice and to have their questions answered. The Isolated Childrens' Parents' Association (ICPA) even sent parents to help speed up the research process by acquainting the researcher with who was who in the district.

At least a month passed before the researcher's presence in classes, the staffroom, playground, pubs and shops ceased to attract attention. The constant question "what have you found out?" continued to be asked and was difficult to answer. Gradually however, as the researcher ceased to attract attention, the life of the community could be discussed in conversation rather than in the awkward terms of an outsider asking questions.

The major problem in being a highly visible outsider was in finding a suitable place in the school that did not appear to identify oneself with any particular group, especially teachers or pupils.

(c) Protocol

Before entering the school, the researcher had decided to act as a non-participant observer of all that happened. This changed in the first week when a teacher became ill and the Principal found a ready replacement in his observer from the University. It was essential to not appear as a teacher if pupils were to be observed, but it was difficult to have this point of view accepted without appearing to be avoiding work. Most pupils did not appear to mind the occasional change of teacher, especially when they could show a New Zealander how to catch snakes (in the school grounds) or play "Aussie rules" (football). Whether to spend time in the playground or the staffroom during recess ceased to be a problem as interest in one's presence declined. The major protocol issue however, was between the Principal and his staff, and the fear of many of the latter that information may be passed on by the researcher. It was necessary to ensure that the Principal knew where the researcher was in the school at any time of the day, but the matter of what transpired between him and the researcher appeared to be a question most teachers wanted to have answered. Maintaining confidentiality became a major aspect of the day-to-day conduct of the research.

(d) Expectations

While it was possible to become part of the school, and even the community, to the extent that the researcher ceased to be the subject of constant attention, a more latent and powerful influence could not be overlooked - viz. the expectations of many interest groups of the research.

While the matter of educational disadvantage as outlined by the Schools Commission was not revealed in any discussion in the community, virtually all groups assumed that the research was being undertaken to draw attention to problems as they saw them. These ranged from one group impressing upon the researcher the need to remove their children from the isolation of the community and place them in boarding schools in distant cities, others arguing for the need to have a full secondary school established so that children would have an opportunity to matriculate. Teachers at all levels informed the researcher of the very real (and obvious) difficulties they faced in their first or second year of professional practice by being placed in such a small and isolated school, while the local M.P. took yet another view.

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The matching of these expectations yielded a lot of information about the community but, like the matter of protocol between Principal and teachers, to be seen too much in the presence of one group was likely to be damaging to relations with another. Members of a particular interest group were often anxious for the researcher to contact other like-minded people in the community, so that networks of relations began to emerge, all focusing on the school and what it did or did not do for the community.

(e) Ethics

Naturalistic research often involves ethical matters. In this case questions of discipline caused as much division in the community as they did among the staff. Corporal punishment was frequently used and because of the unique place of the researcher, much could be seen and heard. The summary punishment of a dozen boys by the Principal one morning without other staff members' knowledge caused considerable discontent. One teacher was heard to complain "half the school gets caned and no-one knows why". Furthermore, the witnessing of what could only be described as illegal behaviour by pupils put the researcher in an awkward position at times with teachers, but non-intervention often paid off. Some illegal behaviour was actually for the researcher's benefit and one pupil was heard to voice his approval when he (the researcher) did not act as a teacher would in the circumstances.

PART II

BACKGROUND TO EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN URBAN CANADA

The extensive attention given to the subject of educational disadvantage from the early 1960s in the United States in particular spilled over into Canada. Early studies were launched, notably through the Canadian Welfare Council, and one nationwide survey directly relates the school learning problems to social welfare, in studying families on social assistance where both poverty and the absence of one parent are considered as factors. (Malik, 1966)

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The children commonly called "disadvantaged" in Canada are the "one out of five" Canadians (Economic Council of Canada, 1968) who have too little of everything from economic resources, living conditions, personal attention, self-respect and self-confidence.

Quick, who edited the report by Canadian educators studying compensatory programmes for the disadvantaged, summed up the notion of disadvantage and related it to the question of educability when he said:

A child who is culturally* disadvantaged is usually one who has grown up in a home where social and economic conditions are sub-marginal. His parents, for the most part, lack motivation for self-improvement and material achievement and participate very little in the community at large. The deprived* child has not learned from his parents fundamental attitudes toward achievement and he has not developed significant attitudes for improvement. The lack of parental aspiration and the early deficit sensory training and expression, produce in the child, deficient language and perceptual development and little ability to think abstractly about the world around him. These deficiencies, although not synonymous with deficient intellectual ability are often interpreted as such. (Quick, 1964)

The concluding sentence by Quick is of course a vital one, as such deficiencies in performance by disadvantaged children were, and still are, often presented as evidence to support the notion that lower-class children are necessarily inferior in intelligence to middle and upper class children.

From even a brief perusal of the early literature it is clear that there existed an excessive preoccupation with children's families. The predominant focus of many of the studies has been with the social class background, the economic and occupational status of the parents, factors which are often deployed to the detriment of the children. This led Silberman (1970) in the United States to state:

This literature has contributed a great deal to our understanding of why 'disadvantaged' children fail, with a few exceptions, it has contributed very little to our understanding of why schools fail, or of how they might be changed in order to make learning successful for children from these backgrounds. Indeed, the question hardly even comes up in most scholarly literature.

Silberman went on to say:

It is taken for granted that if children fail to learn, the fault must lie with them rather than the school.

* Emphases mine: simply to show the early labels popularly used at that time.

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Thus from the research literature we are left without any indication of how schooling affects such children, in a qualitative sense. There is no indication of how disadvantaged children perceive school and come to define their own identities as a result of their participation in school. Little attention was given to the institutionalized life of the children or, more specifically, the quality of the interaction between children, their teachers and other aspects of the school environment. The atmosphere and tone of the institution is set by the complex interaction of all the participants. In the classroom interaction, the teacher influences the children, not only by intentional behaviour and actions, but often without awareness of the behaviour and the effect of that behaviour upon the child.

The guiding assumption of this investigation was that learning in schools takes place in interaction with other people, and how children learn is partly dependent upon how they are taught, and how the school environment, the institutionalized beliefs, images and expectations are perceived by the learner. Investigators rarely take the perspective of this study and question what it is they are asking these children to fit into. It was felt necessary that it was time to hear from those intimately involved - the 'disadvantaged' children themselves. Consequently, naturalistic research techniques were felt to be appropriate to gain highly personal data.

ISSUES IN UNDERTAKING NATURALISTIC RESEARCH IN AN INNER-CITY SCHOOL IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Any in-depth, long-term study involves a number of issues, professional and personal, which have to be considered. Largely due to the primary interest in the topic of poverty and educational disadvantage, other research made to the subject, plus theoretical and field work considerations - and importantly not to underestimate personal preference - a school was selected in a sub-centre of the Greater Metropolitan area of Vancouver.

(a) Physical circumstances

The area served by the school in this study included a district in which many houses were in a state of disrepair. The area also contained the largest percentage of: families in the 20-44 age group; apartments

and flats; lodging families; households occupied less than 3 years; and men earning less than \$3000 per year. The area also had a high percentage of households with less than 2 years occupancy, thus the nature of transiency of the area was established. This transiency extended to the school. Thus even though the research focused on one school for intensive study, the investigation was with children who for the most part had attended several different schools. The study was not so much of a study of one school but rather an analysis of a diverse group of pupils, with heterogeneity of prior school contact and experience, who had come together as "accidental neighbours" by their attendance at this school. The second point of unity lay in the fact that many were singled out and characterized as being from low income family backgrounds, welfare families, or one-parent situations and labelled as 'deprived' by the school.

The school was identified by the school board as having special educational needs and was designated an "inner-city" school in order to appropriate additional finances and programmes at the school.

The Principal was particularly keen to have an in-depth study conducted at the school. He openly stated that many of the children present at the school at any one time did not seem to benefit from schooling and "what is needed is for someone to zero in on what creates a dislike of school and why they don't perform in class".

(b) Visibility

Ease of access to the school was favoured by initial conversations between a Professor of Educational Sociology at the University of British Columbia and the Principal of the school. The importance of University faculty members gaining and maintaining good relations with public schools was vividly illustrated in this context.

The problem of an "identity" which would or could be easily accepted by the children was overcome by concealing my identity as a University researcher by simply using the title of "writer", interested in learning about what children think about schools. It was felt that the use of the identity as a writer would not necessarily lead to an association with the administration of the school. The interest given by the children toward the idea of a story being written about

them and the school, without me having to explain further, would indicate the acceptance of this identity as non-threatening to them. Particular attention was also given to telling the children I spoke with that false names would be used in 'the story'.

After the first two weeks of the study I was never mistaken for a new teacher, or substitute teacher, nor a surrogate teacher - there were at the time five student teachers from the local University doing their teaching practice. In the role of observer there was a deliberate attempt to interact with the children and become familiar with them in order to record their responses towards their experiences of school; in this sense the observer is perhaps also a participant.

I deliberately established and maintained a high visibility with the children, whilst avoiding anything but minimal contact with the teachers. This I should add did nothing to relieve the anxiety that some teachers maintained towards the study. The Principal on the other hand saw the need for me to keep a high profile in front of the children and not to be identified with him or the school in general. On several occasions he said that if my going into his office created any difficulties for me, real or potential, then I should not feel embarrassed in staying away. My regular berth in the school became the library - a sort of neutral 'half-way' house, used by children for project work, generally supervised by the librarian, not the classroom teachers, and also a place for casual reading and board games. For me, the library proved a practical workplace, and incidentally apparently served to further confirm my adopted role as a writer of stories.

(c) Protocol

As has been stated already, the Principal was eager for the study to be conducted at his school, and his warm support proved vital throughout the six months of contact. It should be mentioned that although the teachers had mixed reaction to the study, all of them in practice offered full cooperation. It was quite probably the Principal's open support, and enthusiasm for the study, that the teachers felt they should, or must, allow me the considerable freedom and frequent impositions on their time, through time spent with the pupils.

(d) Expectations

Some of the teachers at the school thought they were being set up, since I did not reveal any of the ongoing data which I collected, neither did I appear to seek their opinions on the disadvantaged children. At the start of the study I did meet formally with all the teachers to explain my planned study, although at that time the original statement of the problem drawn up prior to fieldwork entry, was vague and implicit. The apparent lack of definitive research goals or themes for investigation did little to allay teaching fears. The primary goal of attempting to record the children's definition of the schooling process seemed to the teachers to be peculiarly subjective and biased - the teachers felt that they should have their say. It should be added that I did collect data from the teachers, unobtrusively, and their comments seemed to confirm the notion that they appeared to believe that being disadvantaged or 'deprived' was something children brought with them to school and that for the most part the school(s) cannot do very much to affect their status one way or another. If anything, the teachers expected me to concur with their definition of the situation, a few 'suspected' that my overt concentration on how the children perceive what goes on in school, and how they feel it affects them, necessarily aligned me with the children, and with a short inferential leap against the teachers. This latter view was not the deliberate case, although placing emphasis on the basic value orientation of how the children felt and perceived their school career and identity did not exclude comments on the teachers - but more collectively than as individuals.

(e) Ethics

In retrospect I think it may have been politically and ethically appropriate to discuss insights gained in the research environment with the teachers as my study progressed. Yet it would have been difficult and potentially a source of greater alienation between the researcher and the school staff to open up the unfolded data and perspective that evolved. The perspective that a child's behaviour and performance in school is not only influenced by the social class background and the socio-cultural environment in which the child lives but may be determined more by the school, would hardly be a comforting thought in the context of the inner-city school.

Increasingly it became a central conviction of the study that the way children "see" themselves is crucial to the ability to learn, and therefore to take advantage of the school's opportunities. In the worst of such circumstances, children may be suppressed or inhibited by the school context, by the relations or lack of them within the school. The influence of the school upon the children's self conception is great because it involves socialization in an obligatory and long-enduring role, namely that of pupils. The core of this naturalistic research was the search for the concerns of the children themselves and is quite different from examining the "real" world of the children with a preconceived set of hypotheses.

PART III

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many North Americans, not unlike their Australasian counterparts, had been unwilling to accept that their respective countries had a rigid class structure. In so much as the distinctions between social classes were not in fact so marked by clearly defined objective standards, and that the conventions of caste and legitimized inequality of status has supposedly never had the wide support found in the 'older' countries of Europe, the unwillingness can be appreciated.

Having said that, however, it did not dismiss the prevailing characteristics of the class division which did exist relating to inequalities of wealth, opportunities and social recognition. Thus the barriers of inequality are the vertical ones of a socio-economic hierarchy. The criteria of classes which were presented by Radford (1934) in his book Plain Ordinary Man are of significance here because to each social characteristic he posits, there is an economic parallel. The first characteristic is EXCLUSIVENESS and Radford says that the most 'socially disintegrating devices' are those employed in the political, legal and economic institutions. The occupational sector is an important area covered by this wide statement with but one example including the educational prerequisites which permit or deny entry to certain professions. The second characteristic relates to the feeling of DEPENDENCE, or INDEPENDENCE which members of various classes have.

Educational qualification and/or specific job attainments may provide the independence; the lack of them can lock people into forced dependency. Thirdly, a characteristic which is related but often overlooked, is that class differences are differences of FREEDOM. There is the freedom which comes about through culture or education in the widest sense, or again to use the work sector by way of illustration, the freedom which is effected by being able to exercise the choice as to the sort of way that one earns a living and the numerous repercussions which relate to this.

The interesting point about the three social criteria is that in addition to their being directly related to the basic economic position of the individual there is also a vital educational component to each of them. Indeed the discussion of social class and the delicate subject of inequality later led many forward-looking students of social science into the field of education. The influence of class level and income upon educational attainment had been presented by Furneaux (1961) in his pioneer study The Chosen Few 1948-58 in Great Britain, as well as notable studies written decades earlier, principally the "reservoir" studies by Hogben and the work of Lewis (1923) with one of the few early examples of studies of direct and qualitative character in his book Children of the Unskilled. However, more recently, almost without parallel, the relationship of income level and class position upon educability - the ability to take advantage of education, has received massive attention. Based upon the internationally repeated statistical fact that low socio-economic background is related to poor performance in school attainment, early age of school-leaving, and narrowed occupational choice a primary emphasis has been upon amelioration. As Girard (1954) in France had stated:

"... by raising the standard of living, and providing better facilities for the education of children of all classes, we would enable the talents of a greater number to be given their due measure of recognition."

Looking back, this was easier said than done. Talent searches and proposals for increasing the effectiveness of the educational system in fulfilling both the quantity and quality of schooling for low socio-economic group children became a dominant concern, with equal need and

justification in the 'new' as well as the 'old' world. Yet the issues involved in the etiology of low-income and the educational 'effects' appeared increasingly complex and no simple answer to overcoming them was to be found as the lid was taken off this Pandora's box.

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ABSTRACT

Low cost or no cost ideas for programs in smaller rural schools are listed. Areas covered include public relations, special programs and curriculum. Based on the experience of a small school district in Elizabeth, Illinois, these ideas include the school's relationship to students, faculty and the community; extracurricular activities relating to substance abuse, academic competition, and personal adjustment; and development of innovative approaches in math, physical education, social studies, music and vocational education. The effectiveness of boards of education, teachers, parents, administrators, taxpayers, and students can be enhanced if they see themselves engaged in an activity on which they are all on the same side, attempting to accomplish the same goals.
 (SKW)

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SMALL RURAL SCHOOL PROGRAMS

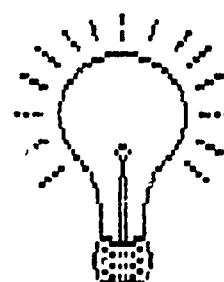
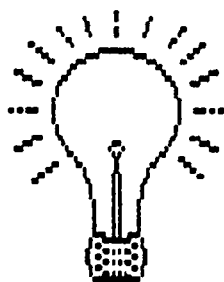
The attached summary of ideas and programs were developed by those of us involved with education at the River Ridge Community Unit School District serving Elizabeth and Hanover, Illinois, in JoDaviess County.

This collection of ideas has been prepared to share with you some of the things we are doing on a low or no cost basis. Most ideas are not unique to our district, and the list is certainly not inclusive of all the programs or ideas we think are worthy of sharing.

We hope that you might find something of interest or help in this collection, and that maybe at sometime we might benefit from one of your suggestions as well.

River Ridge is a rural school district with 600 students K-12. We serve two communities with school buildings in each. Our middle school students attend school in Hanover and our high school students attend school in Elizabeth. Each building also serves a K-5 population.

We welcome and invite your comments or questions. Please feel free to contact Supt. James Burgett, River Ridge C.U.D. #210, Box 489, Elizabeth, IL 61028 at anytime.



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PUBLIC RELATIONS

THE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER- Positive communication is the key to public support. We produce a district newsletter that is mailed to every resident in our district, not just to the families of students. We also put "out-of-towners" on the mailing list if they have shown interest in our system. For instance we have a former superintendent, a retired Army general who graduated 52 years ago, a business secretary that likes to follow our school's progress, newspaper writers that have done stories on our school, the Regional Supt., directors of our cooperatives, and the names of parents who do not live with their children on our mailing list, to name a few. We continually invite new readers to be added to our mailing list. It only costs a few cents to mail our newsletter and it is money well invested.

Our newsletter always includes a district calender of events, usually a central theme (such as THE SCHOOL REPORT CARD, registration, winter sports, parenting suggestions, etc.), articles about awards and honors, special projects or programs in certain subject areas or grade levels, often an editorial from the supt., and usually an "ad" about an upcoming school event. Staff members are encouraged to submit ideas and information. The newsletter is written and produced on our office computer, using the PRINTSHOP and lots of IASB clip art. We duplicate it on "HAROLD"* and our HS business classes do the folding and stapling. We distribute about 1,850 copies with each issue.

The cost per issue for postage and supplies is about \$110. The public relations generated is priceless.

*HAROLD is one of our machines. He is a Xerox 2400. We also have HENRIETTA, another Xerox 2400, and RITA (THE REDUCER) our Xerox 1012. We found that personalizing the machines was a positive attitude idea. It adds a little fun and creativity to things when everyone from little kids to community leaders refer to your copier as HAROLD. I also remember the chuckle we had when we called the 800 number to report on a malfunction. We told the lady who answered to tell our technician that "Harold was experlencing some indigestion and sounded a bit raspy." After a mild protest she took the message. The serviceman arrived later to fix the copier...but he arrived with a story and a smile!

THE MESSAGE BOARD- Each of our schools has a large message board placed outside the buildings where as many people as possible can read the message each day. Each message board was purchased through community fund raisers. We consider this our most important public relations tool. We make an effort to change the message 3-4 times each week, and daily as often as we can. The administration writes the messages and the upper grade and high school special education classes take responsibility for the actual work in changing the signs. The teachers make this a class project that requires maintaining an inventory of the letters, counting, spelling, centering, and some simple elbow grease. The teachers also take responsibility for proofreading the messages daily.

We had one of our more talented high school students write a computer program that allows the administration to merely type the message on the computer. The program then determines if the inventory has enough letters and finally prints the message out on the screen (and on paper) as it would fit, word for word, on the five lines of the message board. This save a tremendous amount of time and frustration.

A policy prohibits personal messages such as birthday greetings, garage sale announcements, etc., and limits use of the sign board to school functions and community service announcements. A one-week advance notice is required, and messages are approved according to an established priority.

We use the message board to announce school events or fund raisers, and then follow up with a thank you to those that participated. We use it to express good luck to students competing in certain activities, or to welcome visiting teams. A recent message wished good luck to a neighboring school who was advancing in the IHSA state football tournament.

New and fresh messages, some routine, some creative, keep everyone looking. I recently heard a comment from a man who passes by our high school daily on his way to work, but doesn't live or work in with 25 miles of our district. He said, "I never pass by without looking at your sign...In some ways I know more about your community than I do about my own!"

Since the students, banks, and one industry contributed toward the purchase of both message boards, there was no cost to providing this service. Even the upkeep of the message board is financed through the student activity fund.

THE BOARD REPORT- Nothing undermines more quickly than rumor. The faster you can share information with the public the better, and the ones who should know first are the employees. For this reason we release a "BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT" to all employees the morning after each board meeting. In fact, the report itself is written the night of the meeting, copied, and distributed to our other building and to the mailboxes in the high school before employees arrive for work. In essence, they are the "first to know" what happened at the board meeting, and they become the primary outlet of accurate information.

This process does more than just help to share the news of the meeting, it makes the employees feel that they are a part of the process...and it helps build a sense of trust.

Cost is less than \$25/year for this service.

WELCOME AND THANK YOU- We strongly encourage our staff and administration to send lots of notes and letters and to make phone calls whenever a "welcome" or a "thank you" is appropriate. We also encourage "Good News Notes" and stock "Good News" notepads and district thank you cards. We have our local area vocational center print these for only the cost of the materials.

When a new family enrolls, when someone earns a special honor, after a suggestion is offered, or someone helps a school bus in distress...or for whatever reason, we quickly send a letter, a note, or make a phone call. Quite often we follow up on thank you messages by including them in our newsletter as well.

Nothing promotes a more positive attitude from families and community members than receiving a "Good News" letter from the school!

The cost is basically for postage since supply costs are minimal.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The following list of programs reflect an attitude of caring and a willingness to put forth that "little extra" by our staff members.

SAFEKIDS is a program that is financed by C.R.U.S.A.D. (Citizens Resolved & United in Support of Adolescent Development), our local community action group. It is a program that meets one night per week for nine weeks and involves 3rd and 4th graders. It deals with the skills and

knowledge that kids need when they are home alone, babysitting, or in certain situations of potential danger.

There is no cost to the school since all expenses are met by a grant obtained by CRUSAD.

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU TWO is a program for students in grades K-4. At some levels it is integrated into the regular subject matter, and at other levels it is handled as a separate subject. Instructional kits with materials, manuals, and programs were purchased through a State Drug/Alcohol Program grant. The teachers were then trained the following year through a second grant. Now the program is operational for all K-4 students.

The goals of this program are to gather and evaluate a body of knowledge on drugs, to develop skills for making responsible decisions, and to strengthen the concept that each student is a unique and special person who is continually growing and changing, and who is capable of directing that growth. Hopefully the learner will develop skills for coping responsibly with stressful situations.

The cost to the district for this program was funded through the grants received. The cost of continued operation is contained within the district's normal instructional budget.

SADD is a high school organization known as "STUDENTS AGAINST DRIVING DRUNK." Our school chapter of this national organization is a very active group that involves a great many students. Three committees are quite productive in the SADD organization. The Activities Committee plans a school sponsored activity each month. Dances, roller skating, swimming, pizza/movie nights are examples of the well attended SADD sponsored activities.

The Awareness Committee is responsible for the dissemination of information and the sharing of SADD related facts to the student body. Working with the school newspaper, school newsletter, CRUSAD organization, classroom teachers, and other outlets, information is always on the front burner.

The Prevention Committee is charged with the task of presenting programs that relate directly with the high school students.

Our SADD Chapter also has 12 students who participate in the CLOWNING Program. CLOWNING stands for Children Learning Other Ways Naturally. The students have received professional training in make-up and dress, and present their message to K-4 students through skits that compliment the "HERES LOOKING AT YOU TWO" program mentioned above. The skits deal with control of feelings, appropriate behavior,

and ideas that generally relate self-awareness and positive attitude skills.

In addition to the "normal" activities of SADD, each meeting has some time set aside for the development of PEER FACILITATOR skills and for the establishment of SUPPORT GROUPS.

SADD is self-supporting. The district pays the supervisor a stipend. The supervisor is also the high school guidance counselor. The CLOWNING training and supplies were paid for by two consecutive grants.

INTRAMURAL ACADEMIC BOWL is an exceptional program started last year at the high school level. Although the middle school and high school both have academic bowl teams that compete with other schools, this novel "Intramural" approach has really taken off with the high school students. Currently there are 16 intramural teams of five students each (representing 47% of the entire high school student body). The teams compete either before school or after school in tournament play. At the end of each nine week grading period there is a semi-final and championship match open to the public.

The senior class of 1987 presented the school with an academic bowl scoreboard, and the district already pays the coach a stipend for his interscholastic team, so essentially this intramural program is cost-free.

LTS is a class offered to sophomores. LTS stands for LOVE, TRUST AND SUCCESS. It is a one-semester class offered opposite driver's education. (A sophomore will take driver's ed. one semester and the next semester he/she has the option of taking LTS during what would otherwise be a one semester study hall.) LTS meets three times each week.

LTS is a discussion class where students talk about values, attitudes and decision making. Sexual behavior, AIDS, love vs infatuation, goal-setting, family responsibility, personal worth and attitude control are some of the topics discussed. Video tapes, lecture, discussion and group activities are incorporated into this homework-free experience. This popular class earns the student a half credit. The class is not required and the credit does not fulfill any specific requirement toward graduation.

The class is taught by the superintendent and gives him an opportunity to get to know the students on a personal level...thus closing the gap that might exist between the administration and the students.

There is literally no cost to this program since the cost of instruction is not an extra item for the budget.

T/A SYSTEM is a very successful program that provides a "TEACHER/ADVISOR" for every student in the middle school (grades 6-8).

Every teacher that instructs a middle school student (and is available and willing) is a "TEACHER/ADVISOR." The students are then selected through a draft system similar to the NFL draft, and end up in one of many T/A groups, each with about 15 students. The T/A Advisor, as they are called, remains with the same student throughout his/her middle school career. Each T/A group has a mixture of 6th, 7th and 8th graders.

The T/A groups meet a minimum of once a week. Every other meeting time involves group discussions or activities relating to improvement of the self-image, getting along with others, decision making, or other such skill development. The alternate session is centered around an event or game that may or may not involve other T/A groups.

The T/A Advisor may work with his/her students at conference times, when staffings are conducted, or with other meetings. The T/A Advisor often gives support and guidance to students with achievement difficulties and provides congratulations to students doing well.

Advisors have received training in the system and work closely with each other in planning and evaluating the system. The building principal and guidance counselor each have a T/A group along with most of the teaching staff.

The training sessions were supported through a State of Illinois Inservice Grant. The expenses involved in this program are practically non-existent.

LINK is the name of a similar program in the High School. Every high school student is assigned a "LINK". (Believe it or not, LINK is NOT an acronym! Link means link!) The principal, guidance counselor, and superintendent, as well as most of the teachers, serve as LINKS to about 9 students each. The students assigned are from each grade level, 9-12.

Unlike the T/A System, the LINK system does not meet in small groups, but the LINKS work on a one-to-one basis with their students.

LINKS are assigned no specific duties. They are as effective or ineffective as they elect to be, but the

students compare notes on what the other LINKS do and thus most LINKS are actively involved.

Like most high schools, ours prints a D/F (and Good News) report each week. The name of the student, the course, and the grade (D or F) is distributed to all teachers weekly. Also, the name of the student's LINK is on the list. LINKS then contact the student for support, advice, or to hear concerns. Teachers also contact other LINKS to see what they might suggest.

The honor roll is another time when the LINK has an opportunity to communicate with the student on a positive note. I send letters home with each of my LINKS every time they make the honor roll. I also try to meet with each link at least once each grading period, and usually more often. I send them birthday cards and follow their efforts in cocurricular activities as well...using any opportunity to offer them the praise they have earned.

LINK is a successful program. Potential suicides have been averted, parents have made contacts through LINKS that might not have been made otherwise, and a lot of positive communication has resulted. LINK works because it actually provides each student with a "link" to the system. The link intentionally does not act in the traditional "teacher" role, but serves more as an advocate and as someone who truly cares about the individual's total situation.

JTPA TUTORING is the name of a special program offered to high school students who qualify as JTPA clients. Through a special JTPA grant we are able to combine the services of a Chapter I aide (a certified instructor) and offer individual and small group tutoring to many high school students at little cost to the district. This very exceptional program gives us the flexibility to meet the needs of some "borderline" students that might not otherwise qualify for special education or related services.

One teacher recently commented that the program "is having terrific impact, especially in helping students become more self-directed in developing good study skills."

The instructor is employed full time and is funded completely by JTPA and Chapter I grants.

GIFTED is an area that many schools poke around at but few really get involved due to the general lack of money. We have an outstanding math and language arts program in grades 1-8. In the high school grades we have an operating gifted math program resulting in a "fifth year" advanced placement class.

Approximately 5% of our students participate in the 1-8 gifted program. These same students receive a minimum of 30 minutes of daily instruction. The success of the program is due to the dedication of the elementary principal and of the 6 teachers who are certified in gifted education.

Certification classes, payment for writing plans and/or lessons, and most gifted supplies are funded solely by our gifted program grant.

CURRICULUM IDEAS

(This is only a sample of ideas submitted)

Most of the following ideas are within the budget of the regular instructional program, so no additional costs are involved.

MATH- The math teachers are very pleased that Algebra I is an option for 8th graders and that these same students have an opportunity to take Algebra II as freshman. The sequence that follows allows more students to participate in the 12th grade advanced placement calculus class.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION- Social activities in the physical education classes have been received quite well by the students. Although not offered every year, outside experts have been employed to teach ballroom dancing and roller skating to all high school students. The students are assessed a fee for the roller skate rental and the district assumes the added cost for the ballroom dancing instructor (about \$300 for two weeks of instruction).

SOCIAL STUDIES- Special projects in the middle school and high school social studies program make this area a very popular subject for most students.

In the sixth grade social studies is combined with English when a research project based on a specific country is assigned. Costumes, recipes, model homes/buildings and other related items are shared when the project concludes on "International Day." (This same approach is used in some of the primary grades as well.)

In the middle school students participate in an exercise to introduce studying the Bill of Rights in which they are presented information to pass judgement on an individual...only to find at the end they have either sentenced or freed Jesus Christ. They do a similar exercise at the end of the study with Adolph Hitler.

At the high school level students are involved heavily in special projects such as "Sugar Babies" in the unit of sociology, and "The Established Order of Things" as they deal with discrimination. The TV/VCR play an important role in current events, and students make excellent use of the computer for geography and related skills.

MUSIC programs at the elementary level utilize flash cards to introduce and reinforce musical symbols, and primary students play "Name That Tune" to help them recognize songs they have been singing.

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS have a variety of "special" ideas. Belly Spelling, Belly Phonics and Belly Math are ideas used in one first grade. Reading incentive programs are used throughout grades 1-4. The "Book-It" program offered by Pizza Hut, the "Try" Program offered by Happy Joes, and local reading contests sponsored by our own education association are responsible for a serious interest in reading. Many teachers award classroom certificates, and the corporations provide coupons for free pizzas. The association presents T-shirts for reading accomplishments as well.

One elementary teacher sponsors afterschool and weekend field trips to local areas. Students that demonstrate responsible behavior earn the right to participate in these "extra" trips.

ENGLISH classes are electives in the Jr/Sr years with courses for college bound students offered at each level. Writing, reading, grammar and literature are strongly emphasized in all classes, at various degrees of difficulty.

SPECIAL CLASSES such as Chapter I Reading and special education are given equal consideration when equipment is purchased or supplies are needed. The high school special education resource room is called "The Secondary Skills Suite" and consists of a two room complex with a kitchen, sewing center, computer area and work tables in one room, and the traditional classroom setting in the other connected room.

AG/SHOP is a diverse subject area that includes drafting, agriculture, woodworking, and basic shop classes. An annual project for the middle school and high school is the construction and sale of a small building (shed) usually built to the owners specifications. The ag class operates a small 5 acre plot of land in cooperation with the crop production units of study.

POTPOURRI

BOOTS AND GLOVES are items that some low income students don't have. We maintain a **BOOT/GLOVE** fund that provides these items very discreetly. Administrators, secretaries, teachers and community members keep the coffers filled with "silent" contributions. The building principal makes these items available individually, and in the most appropriate manner.

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM- This is a great place to study on a hot day or for a change of pace. A few years ago, with summer JTPA students, we constructed two outside classrooms. One is in a wooded section of our school grounds and is merely railroad ties laid into the ground in a semi-circle/amphitheater arrangement...good for pre and post mosquito weather. The other consists of wolmanized benches (cemented into the ground) in a shaded section of the school property. This arrangement is also semi-circular. Both are excellent places for study. We also had all the trees identified and a small path made through our wooded property for science class use. Since the Student Council provided the wood, and JTPA the labor...the cost was zero to the school district.

NOON HOUR ACTIVITIES are an integral part of the middle and high school programs. Both volunteers and a paid supervisor (in the high school) are responsible for the programs. Organized volleyball games, basketball games, tournaments, tug-of-wars, trampoline instruction, "super athlete contests", board games, MTV rooms, and other activities are planned each noon hour to provide activities for middle school students when they can't go outside, and for high school students every day (they are restricted to the building due to our closed campus policy). The programs have turned out to be a big success.

By utilizing a certified teacher to organize and implement the program at the high school level we lose his services for one study hall...and that is the "cost" of this program.

COMPUTERS & COMPUTERS- The big interest, these days, is in computers. No school has the funds to purchase as many computers as they need, or to keep them as updated as they should be. We have both created and are solving our own problem.

We established, a few years ago, the goal of a computer in every classroom by 1990. At the present time we have computers in most of the high school classes, and, in addition, operate a computer lab in the high school and one in the middle school. We also have a few mobile units that the grade school teachers share. We still hope to reach our goal, but with restricted funding, we require outside

financial help. To acquire the necessary funding we did the following three things; first, we established a local fund for contributions, second, we looked for individual "large amount" contributors, and third we talked with local business firms.

To date we have collected over \$25,000 from the three efforts with another \$5,000 pending for this year. Combined with Chapter II funds and other smaller grants, we have been able to provide excellent computer opportunities for our students...and we continue to work toward our 1990 goal.

NAEIR is an acronym for the National Association for the Exchange of Industrial Resources. It is an organization that costs \$495/year to join, and about \$150 in shipping/handling fees per year. It is exactly what the name implies. It is a service organization that allows members to receive "Industrial resources" for no cost other than the annual membership and a small handling charge. Four times a year members receive an order book and request as many (they prefer you order at least 100) items as you want. Your order is prorated based on the total number of requests from all members and the amount of items available. Members are guaranteed to double their membership fees in requested merchandise each year.

NAEIR has been a budget saver for our district each year we have joined. I feel it is cost efficient only if I can reduce my budgeted expenditures by the cost of membership and fees. Our last two orders alone more than replaced our yearly costs, and in addition, we received many items we would not have ordered, but are very useful for our instructional program.

According to my figures we are several thousand dollars ahead of the game in terms of actual budget reductions by belonging to NAEIR. (Interested? Write NAEIR, 560 McClure St., P.O. Box 8076, Galesburg, IL 61402).

FIELD TRIPS are something schools begin to drop when funds are limited. Not so here. We, if anything, have more field trips than ever. How so? We charge a nominal fee for bus transportation to cover actual expenditures (driver, gas, tolls), and make the student responsible for admissions. The cost to the district is limited to bus overhead and an occasional substitute. In return we find our teachers planning exciting outings and meaningful educational experiences for our students. Rarely do we have a student that cannot pay, but when we do, we reach into our HAT/GLOVE fund and find an extra two or three dollars.

ENERGY CONSERVATION is a must for districts that want to save money. If bonding is possible then a district should sell bonds and do as much energy conservation work as possible. We have experienced vast operational savings, a more comfortable environment, and an overall safer school district by meeting these needs head on. The grant process is scary, but workable. Energy conservation is easy to sell to the public and is about the most cost efficient move a district can make.

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-Finally-

"FORGET ABOUT SIDES" is an attitude, not a program. I would be amiss if I didn't comment on this. Boards of education, teachers, administrators, taxpayers, parents and students are ON THE SAME SIDE. The goal is to provide an education and to make a worthy citizen out of every student. That goal should be shared by everyone. Once this concept is realized we begin to work toward the realization of this goal...together. Negotiations are needed, but should be done from the same side of the fence. Some decisions are best left to teachers, and some best left to administrators...and that needs to be understood. Parents and students must realize they have responsibilities in reaching the common goal as well. Taxpayers must also remember that they too went to school when others were paying the freight...and that they have an essential role to play in the continuation of this cycle.

I'm not foolish enough to believe that we don't have some rough spots in our system. There will always be those that think teachers are overpaid, that administrators have nothing to do, and that the board of education is only there to raise property taxes. And, there will always be parents who think the system is unfair, too demanding or not demanding enough, and that it is not meeting the needs of their child. And, I guess, that is the basis of the eternal challenge...to meet these attitudes head on and to try to get the "team" working together. It can be done. It must be done. And, it must be center focus of a school district if it is to be successful. Cost? Hard work and commitment. It is this same hard work, same dedication, same positive attitude from my staff, my administrators, my board of education, my parents and students, and my communities that have allowed me the opportunity to share this information with you. For without them, there would be nothing to write. I hope this information has been of some help to you and your district.