

Education

SCHOOL TALK

By Dr. Marshall C. Darnell

Changing Face of Secondary Education

Fifty years ago driver education was a brand new idea. Ten years ago computer education was being introduced as a sophisticated high tech program. Today driver education and computer education have become accepted components of the curriculum. Only a passing thought is given to their introduction into the course of study and to the value of this instruction provided secondary students.

New programs are being suggested for implementation onto the curriculum at this time. For the next decade, we may look with some skepticism at such new classes, but as technology ushers in change, so too must the classes which are offered our youth be modified. While there will always be the need for those courses in English, mathematics and social studies, there will be a corresponding need for our students to know how to handle new information. The real secret to being a success in handling our present day computers is to

learn typing skills and the language which the computer requires.

Other classes in vocational education require the same basic skill development. Once advanced mathematics, geometry, and trigonometry were standard courses for the college bound student. Once again, due to technology, upper division math courses are being required for mastery in job skill development for a number of vocational program areas. To accommodate this need for basic skill development, a new idea has emerged which will allow students an opportunity to acquire credits in math and science from highly technological vocational area programs. A student could then satisfy a math or science credit by taking a course in electronics or health occupations. The structure of education, the way that we view the granting of credits and even the number of courses required for earning a high school diploma will be a subject of review and analysis.

The time when we can lock-step the student into a college preparatory program may have passed. The job market today requires not only students who can attend a university and earn a baccalaureate degree but the same job market requires skilled technicians to serve a growing and emerging industrial complex.

Fifty years ago driver education was a brand new idea. The new ideas today are just as revolutionary, as the car transformed the American culture, so too has the computer produced a need to rethink the programs offered to our secondary students. Such changes cannot be made with haste or without careful planning, but they are in the discussion phase and the face of education is changing. Twenty years from now programs that were only offered to a select few students in 1986 may become commonplace for the youth enrolled in our schools.

The face of education is one ever changing but propelling by changes in technology and the needs required by our society. Students accept such changes readily but sometimes it is difficult for those of us who attended school in the past not to expect to have the same programs offered in the same sequence and pattern.

Next time you visit a school in Clark County, look for the changes, then ask the question, "are these the courses that our students will need for tomorrow?" because this is the substance of curriculum and the essence for America's progress into the future.

Unique Science Program at Rancho High

Science students at Rancho High School learn about plants, animals and minerals through several unique offerings.

Take, for instance, Lanny Littlefield's classroom. A science teacher and coach at Rancho, Littlefield took an active interest in snakes, spiders and lizards last year. Through his newfound interest he overcame a personal dislike of snakes, while developing an impressive educational exhibit. The reptile displays in his classroom feature a variety of species which are used as a supplement to textbook lessons.

On a typical day in his classroom, it's not unusual to see students handling one of several varieties of snakes such as the Mexican, Florida, Nevada, or California King; or one of his three fully-grown Burmese pythons ranging in length from seven to 13 feet and weighing from 30 to 80 pounds! There's also a Honduran milk snake, a Mexican negritas, and even a few giant tarantula spiders.

Littlefield says this "hands-on" approach to teaching the biological sciences has paid off in rewarding ways for students. Instead of shying away, students who were formerly fearful of reptiles now eagerly look forward to fondling them.

The greatest benefit, according to Littlefield, is that it keeps students interested and involved in their education.



National Bicentennial Writing Competition Announced

A high school student will win \$10,000 in a writing competition now being staged in conjunction with the 200th anniversary celebration of the U.S. Constitution next year.

Open to all high school students in grades 9-12 during the 1986-87 school year, and to those aged 14-18 not enrolled in college, the competition will involve students from every state, the District of Columbia and the combined territories.

The competition is being co-sponsored by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, the American Bar Association and USA Today/Gannett Co., Inc.

The Constitution was signed on Sept. 17, 1787, in Philadelphia. To celebrate that event, the Bicentennial Commission, headed by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, is coordinating activities throughout the nation.

Three winners will be selected from each state, the District of Columbia and the combined territories. The first-place winners each will receive \$1,000; second-place winners, \$500; and third-place winners, \$250.

In addition, the first-place winners and a teacher or other adult will receive an all-expense paid, round trip to Washington, D.C., in September 1987 to meet the president, the chief justice, leaders of Congress and members of the Bicentennial Commission. At that time, the national winner will be selected from among the first-place winners.

The topic for the competition is: "The Constitution: How Does The Separation of Powers Help Make It Work?"

Entries must be limited to

1,500 words, excluding footnotes, and must be typewritten or computer generated (double spaced) or written in legible longhand in ink. All entries must be accompanied by an official entry form and must include the original essay and two copies.

Teachers, students and parents seeking more information about the writing competition and wishing to obtain entry forms may send a postcard to the National Bicentennial Writing Competition, Box 50184, Washington, D.C. 20004-0184. The deadline for entries is April 15, 1987.

D.A.R.E. Program at Earl and Mack Elementary Schools

A D.A.R.E. Role Model Lesson, a drug awareness program, will utilize high school students as positive role models for sixth grade students at Earl Elementary School on Dec. 16 and at Mack Elementary School on Jan. 6.

The program will be presented at various periods all day for each of the scheduled days.

The program, a partnership between the Clark County School District, Metro Police Department and the Junior League of Las Vegas, will bring high school students into the elementary schools to speak to the younger students about how each of the high schoolers were personally able to resist using drugs.

After the presentations, there will be question and answer sessions held.

For additional information on D.A.R.E. or detailed schedules, please call the contact persons listed above.

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