

points of view

Creative teaching can make learning fun

IT WOULD be fun to peek into the future to see what Highmeadow students will do with their lives 20 years from now.

What interests will they develop from having attended the new, alternative school in Farmington Hills? Perhaps there will be an accountant who, in her spare time, plays in a community orchestra and studies astronomy as a hobby. Or maybe we'll see a professional actor who, on the personal side, enjoys computer programming.

Nearly 300 students in grades one to five are getting a chance to study just about anything they want from the sciences, to fine art and music, to

literature, high technology and everyday wonders. That list will, no doubt, grow as student interests expand.

Creating a school newspaper, studying about the American Indians, archaeology, shapes and angles in math and fitness are all classes slated to be offered at the new school.

Highmeadow Common Campus is a two-year pilot program, but school employees and others are excited about it, and think it has potential of being used throughout the district.

I got a small taste of Highmeadow when it opened last week. And although some of the programs were



Casey Hans

still being prepared, principal Jan Collison and her staff painted a colorful picture of how it will operate in a few weeks.

HIGHMEADOW WAS an elementary school, a high school and most recently a community education

center, north of 12 Mile between Orchard Lake Road and Middlebelt.

The old-fashioned lettering on school letterhead is hardly a clue to the progress being made at the newfangled school.

But the new paint on the school walls matches the fresh appeal the program has for all of us — those who graduated from school long ago, and those who are just beginning to discover their world.

This is what school should be all about.

Reading the Highmeadow course descriptions is enough to make a person of any age head back to school for a refresher course. Not

only do the courses sound interesting, but each one seems to promote discussion and interaction between students.

"COMMON CAMPUS" is the label given by the district, reasoning for the name was never really explained. Regardless of its name, the programs and staff who will implement them can do their own talking. Highmeadow's program will do what Farmington schools' music coordinator Paul Barber has been trying to accomplish for several years through Creativity Springs Alive project. As coordinator of the event, he has tried to focus on all

sorts of creative abilities, whether the student's primary interest or a secondary focus the student just enjoys.

In discussing "Creativity" with Barber last year, he emphasized the importance of creative outlets for everyone. I guess as a longtime music teacher, and founder and director of the Farmington Community Band, he sees the effect of creativity on many lives.

Being creative is for everyone, not just a select few who are highly gifted in certain areas. And more importantly, it can make learning fun. That's a boon for all of us.

Give kids ample time to mature Full-time moms not backward

A PRESS RELEASE landed on my desk a few days back. It made me flinch.

It intoned: "Young people should be encouraged to start planning or thinking about a career when they are 11 or 12."

Yuck. Now that's really disgusting, I told myself.

After reading on, I felt no better. Sent out by the Michigan Employment Security Commission, the release was touting a cable television program called "The Job Show," which, among other subjects, will address how young people can prepare for their first job.

In one segment, an official of the MESC will suggest that children should learn about the working world by serving as volunteers.

Apparently, this gem will appear on just about all cable markets in this suburban area at one time or another in the next week or so.

You know, marketing your children's future is becoming a real bad habit in this country. More and more special interests are getting involved in what is nothing more than simple exploitation.

This press release got me to thinking about some recent encounters I've had with children who work, a problem that is far more severe than most realize.



Steve Barnaby

We are allowing adults to get wealthy while stealing away our children's youth.

YOU'VE PROBABLY had the same encounters and hardly noticed. After all, we're becoming used to being waited on by children. It's the American way these days.

You know what I mean — children (they are called young adults) trapped in franchise food joints and women's clothing stores, many times supervised by people who are little more than children themselves. Even worse, you'll run into these kids alone in a shop, unsupervised, watching the world, and their youth, pass them by.

Charles Dickens couldn't have thought up better plots when it comes to cheating kids out of their childhoods.

Now that may sound like heresy in this day and age of homage to the almighty dollar. But it's a very sad truth. We are allowing adults to get wealthy while stealing away our children's time.

BUSINESS ESPECIALLY, in the last decade or so, has dipped its greedy fingers into the pot and figured out all sorts of ways to use your child's talent, pay them minimum wage and make millions of bucks in the offing.

Theory is that working makes children more responsible. But learning how to be a contributing, dependable member of the work force has little to do with collecting a paycheck for menial, worthless tasks.

Rather it has to do with receiving a well-rounded education, proper attention from parents and a chance for a time to grow from being a child to an adult.

That's the opportunity we should celebrate in this country — the time to grow. It's a luxury that children in many countries just don't have. It's the opportunity that's well worth taking.

MY WIFE made a tiny conversational slip the other day — but it was so telling it made my head snap.

When asked by new acquaintances what she did for a living, her response was breezy and pointed: "I'm a mother. And I do artwork on the side."

That was a major breakthrough for Terry, a former illustrator for The Detroit News. Her usual response would have been: "I'm an artist. I work out of the house."

But Terry — like thousands of other professional women — has discovered a curious pleasure and fulfillment in putting her career on hold to nurture our 1-year-old son, Nicholas.

For Terry, it is more a labor of love than a sacrifice.

IT WASN'T an easy choice, and it's been a difficult adjustment. Terry, however, wouldn't have it any other way. Neither would Nicholas.

Try explaining that to the parents who put their careers above everything else — everything, that is, but the prospects of a good, feisty debate over day care.

They resent parents like Terry and me, who dare to suggest that shuttling infants to day-care centers might be less than the best for the kids.



Bill Kole

Parents like us are branded as backward, ultraconservative, anti-feminist yahoos who proclaim "barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen" as a verse from the gospel according to Phyllis Schlafly.

Sometimes, when Nicholas totters around, shaking his fist and chortling in his own dialect of Mandarin Chinese, I wonder what he'd say to those cynics.

He, after all, has a full-time mother.

I don't condemn day-care centers or those who use them. To some, child care is an absolute economic necessity.

But so many of us have sold out to a materialistic society in which only two-income families can supposedly make it, and in which "making it" is measured by our own quests for ful-

fillment — or worse, by our inventories of personal possessions.

NO ONE EVER said a single-income family could afford to live at the same level as a working couple. Our home is a good example of that. It lacks the usual electronics. We don't own a VCR. We don't even have a color TV.

Nicholas, our most precious possession, doesn't seem to mind. There's no lack of love, security or attention, his three most desperate needs.

If making career No. 1 and children No. 2 is supposed to be so attractive, why do my female colleagues say they, too, plan to buck the trend and be there for their future kids?

They're savvy, professional journalists with potential, yet they don't seem to mind the thought of putting off plans until after their kids' formative years.

It's called back to basics. I don't probably too traditional a lifestyle for puppies. But it's good enough for Terry and me — and for the child we vowed to thoroughly love.

Bill Kole is a reporter for the Rochester Eccentric.

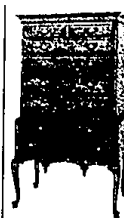
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