

Officials want better schools

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Raise school quality without spending more money.

That was the name of the game earlier this month as Michigan educators heard the governor and a national guru discuss restructuring and big changes, particularly at the high school level.

"I don't have any rabbits to pull out of the hat. The key is to find those success stories... showcase them... so we can get more of them," said Gov. James J. Blanchard.

"The real key to positive change is rewarding it," Blanchard told an audience of 450 principals and teachers in a conference sponsored by the State Board of Education in Dearborn. He cited the new system of grants to "lighthouse schools" trying experimental teaching methods.

PROF. THEODORE Sizer of Brown University urged high schools to abandon the system where one teacher sees 150 to 200 students a semester while teaching one academic specialty.

Sizer said teachers should see no more than 80 students in twice as many hours. It would mean teaching a combination of courses such as English and history or algebra and chemistry.

"Personalization is the heart of it," said Sizer, who achieved national prominence Feb. 26 in a six-page article in U.S. News & World Report. "The teacher becomes a generalist. Now, the only ones in high school expected to be generalists are the kids and librarians," he said.

Sizer said the system of breaking the high school curriculum into four to seven 45-minute compartments and rotating students between teachers is "the result of late 19th century turf battles in universities." The effect was "no intellectual coherence" between (say) French, U.S. history and algebra.

A FORMER Harvard University education dean, Sizer, 57, in 1984 began the Coalition of Essential Schools, 52 reform-minded schools attempting to become generalists.

In his system, the teacher becomes more like an athletic coach, advising and encouraging, not just lecturing.

The school becomes less of a "suburban shopping mall" offering a "bizzazz" of electives. Fewer courses are offered in greater depth.

In other states, his plan has run into opposition — from teachers who dislike retraining or distrust a fad forced on them from above, from parents who like their schools' emphasis on sports.

Asked by a teacher his view of Blanchard's proposal to raise the compulsory school attendance age to 18 from 16, Sizer replied:

"The point is: Why do kids drop out in the first place? Many teachers in schools with high dropout rates will confess privately they would drop out of their own schools."

BUT SIZER and Blanchard were agreed that such reforms needn't call for drastic amounts of new revenue.

"More people than we realize think more money is the answer," Blanchard told an audience questioner.

"I'm absolutely convinced money helps... as an incentive. Don't just sprinkle it around but more focus."

"If it (money) is handed to 'em (schools) in revenue sharing, it disappears into thin air."

IN A NEWS conference, Blanchard was asked about the state House of Representatives' 61-35 rejection of a "schools of choice" bill under which parents would be able to select the school within a district their youngsters would attend.

"It's going to pass," Blanchard

predicted. "It (House defeat) is a momentary thing."

The Senate passed its own bill last year, but the House version ran into opposition from teachers' unions, among others.

Sizer, appearing with Blanchard, endorsed schools of choice. He said wealthy parents can choose which schools their kids attend by where they live. "Why not choice for everybody? If it's good for the wealthy, it's good for the poor," Sizer said.

Opening the two-day conference, Dorothy Beardmore, member of the State Board of Education and former Rochester board member, said that "restructuring" schools means simply "big change to achieve desired student outputs."

consumer mailbag



Terry Gibb

Q. My neighbor reads your column regularly. She said you had some good meatless recipe suggestions. Could you send me a few different recipes?

A. Your neighbor is correct. Concern has a whole book full of meatless recipe suggestions — a cookbook, *I Am Not a Vegetarian — Meatless Main Dishes for Meat-eaters* was compiled, tested and enjoyed by Concern's dedicated volunteers.

The cookbook covers everything

from soup to nuts. It's a great addition to any cookbook collection, and it's printed entirely on recycled paper. Here's a couple of samples from *I Am Not a Vegetarian*:

STROGANOFF

2 cups cooked, brown rice
1 medium onion, chopped
2 medium zucchini, sliced
1 green pepper, chopped
1/2 cup nutritional yeast flakes (optional)
3 tablespoons flour

3-4 tablespoons soy sauce
hot water
1/4 cup yogurt
salt and pepper to taste

Saute onion, zucchini and green pepper in 2 tablespoons oil. Keep warm. Toast yeast and flour in a "dry" skillet, stirring constantly being careful not to let it burn. Add oil, stirring to blend well. Add hot water a few tablespoons at a time until mixture forms a very thick gravy. Add soy sauce, dill, pepper and yogurt. Heat through, stirring constantly. Add vegetables. Serve over rice. Makes four servings.

MEDITERRANEAN SUPPER

8 slices whole wheat bread, crusts removed
1 1/4 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese

1 1/4 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 cup ripe olives, drained and sliced
1 teaspoon dry mustard
4 cups milk
10 large green stuffed olives

Butter 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Alternate layers of bread, cheeses and ripe stuffed olives. Beat eggs and combine with milk. Add dry mustard. Pour over bread-cheese layers. Refrigerate for at least one hour or overnight. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour. Garnish with green olives and serve. Makes six servings.

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Pursell wants center funded

The federal government can encourage use of educational research by funding a research center in each state, says U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth.

"We're spending millions on research in Washington that no one is using," said Pursell, a member of the House Appropriations Committee and education subcommittee.

Without new money, Pursell said, the federal government can make incentive grants to spread the word on whether such ideas as longer school days really work.

He has introduced a bill to fund such research centers.

A former teacher whose wife still teaches in the Livonia district, Pursell said more attention should be directed to elementary education, where future dropouts already can be identified through such social factors as divorce, single parents and drug usage.

"Most elementary schools don't have counselors. The counselors are in the wrong places," he said.