

## points of view

## Jobless college grads need TLC

BRAD MUMBRUE WAS a National Merit Commended Scholar when he graduated from West Bloomfield High School in 1984.

He is a graduate of the University of Michigan in economics, speaks fluent French and spent a semester studying in Europe while earning his MBA this past June from the University of Washington.

But Brad Mumbue can't find a job. He and hundreds of other recent college graduates throughout our suburbs are victims of this recession — most certainly a depression in their eyes.

And it is infuriating that they, with all their potential, can not even grab a rung toward a career for which they (and their parents) have been aiming ever since they entered the world.

To make himself noticed among the thousands of 1991 college gradu-

ates who can't find jobs, Brad has sent out hundreds of resumes, tailored resumes to a particular company (such as sending out his resume to Kellogg in a cereal box) and sought advice from his elders.

ONE PIECE of that advice from one well-meaning advisor was to omit his MBA from his resume, so that employers with entry-level jobs would not think that he is overqualified.

How demeaning — and how hypocritical. From the time we first began reading to our preschoolers, we inculcated in them the necessity to do well in school, so they could go to good colleges, so they could get the good education to outfit them for the good job.

And now, our advice is — pretend you don't have that education? I think those of us who were lucky



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enough to begin our careers in an era in which we not only could get a job, but could pick and choose among job opportunities, have a real responsibility to young people like Brad.

We have a responsibility to give good, long-range advice and to help them make a start whenever we can. I'll never forget the young would-be journalist calling to inquire last spring about a possible job. I described to him the state of the economy and the hiring freeze at most papers including our own, for an answer.

HE WROTE ME a letter after landing what I think was an opportunity to freelance at an Ypsilanti paper, criticizing me for attempting to discourage him.

He was right — and I wrote him a note of apology.

We have to be very careful that we don't let our own problems trying to meet standards of excellence with reduced staffs or perhaps fighting for our own positions jaundice our views.

Our educated young people are our future — no matter what business we're in.

Here's hoping that in 1992 we can offer them the opportunities they deserve.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

## New MEAP tests need test of time

I heard that the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test scores are very low this year. I thought these tests were just basic skill tests. What's the problem?

A: The rules of the game have changed. The MEAP test (math, reading, science, social studies) which all Michigan students take at certain grade levels is not a basic skills test any longer. The MEAP test is now a test of higher level/problem-solving skills... and it's tough.

One superintendent, it is rumored, bundled up the tests last October and shipped them back calling them ridiculous. Look at what has occurred in the last year. Some districts that had 80 percent of their students passing i.e., 10th grade math last year are seeing only 38 percent mastering the math test this year.

Indeed, some middle America districts (in the Observer & Eccentric area) had only 13 percent of their students pass the 10th grade MEAP math test. I'm talking about suburban communities.

WHAT IS the problem? Formerly, the MEAP test questions required little if any high level thinking or problem-solving skills. Now the essence of each test and each test question is based on an assumption all children are higher level thinkers — which I don't believe.

In the past, the fourth grade reading test was considered mastered by a student if he/she got 15 or 16 questions out of 20 correct. This year the state Department of Education accepted 10 out of 20 correct responses as a mastery level for reading.

Ever take a test, any test, and get 50 percent right without failing the test. I have not. What's the problem?

Look at the fourth grade reading test. It required 9-year-olds to contemplate the rise and development of the Roman Empire. These young ones dealt with issues such as the Roman city-state (a term I can't even remember from my four years of Latin) the role of international trade and the Pax Romana.



Doc Doyle

(a period of peace within the Roman empire).

The Roman Empire fourth grade MEAP reading section caused so much of a stir that Gary Hawks, then acting state superintendent of schools, sent a memo (I'm in your corner superintendents, principals and teachers) out to every local school district.

He said... "The Roman Empire" test items were lower than predicted by our pilot test results. However, the test section support our Michigan reading Model very well." And there is the key. It supports the Michigan Model.

WHAT IS the Michigan Model? It is the initial step by the department of education to mandate a statewide curriculum. Indeed, the curriculum is already developed. The department says school districts may follow this curriculum if they so desire.

Where is all this going? What we will probably see is more dropouts in the inner cities, more exit competency tests at all grade levels, many entrepreneurs opening privately-owned test-taking classes (for a fee), teacher teaching to a state-mandated curriculum and more teaching to the MEAP-type test questions.

We also will experience parents paying more attention (once they find out their son/daughter is not going to graduate without having passed a competency test and closer monitoring of test results by building principals who tended to ignore test results in the past. There will be a new look at social promotion... that phenomenon which says if a child is too big for the desk pass him/her.

Let's give this new movement some time. James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator, university instructor, is president of Doyle & Associates, an educational consulting firm.

## Quick, slick vote raises question

THE CHOICE of Robert Schiller as Michigan's new superintendent of public instruction was smooth.

Even slick.

Schiller, 44, deputy superintendent in Delaware, was interviewed by the State Board of Education beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18. He was the last of five finalists.

AT 9 A.M. Wednesday the board was scheduled to convene and make its choice, agenda item "NN." But there was a lot of milling around and sipping of coffee.

Everyone was in the fourth floor meeting room of the Hamm Building except Dorothy Beardmore, R-Rochester Hills, board president.

At 9:20 the meeting started. Beardmore immediately moved that Schiller be chosen. Barbara Roberts Mason, D-Lansing, seconded the motion. They didn't bother with a roll call. The voice vote was unanimous. It was over in seconds.

How do you like that? The most important job in Michigan's educational hierarchy, and our eight members of the State Board of Education

don't even need to discuss the candidates. So well did they know the outcome that the often partisan board didn't need a roll call.

Annette Miller, D-Huntington Woods, said there were other good candidates but Schiller "was on all of our lists of finalists."

Oh? What lists? There weren't any lists visible Wednesday morning.

A little too slick.

CAME THE explanation. Beardmore said they had discussed the candidates "in small groups" the night before.

The Open Meetings Act requires that "all deliberations" be in a public meeting.

Schiller told me he and his wife were scheduled to fly home at 6 a.m. Wednesday, instead they got word to wait around.

That morning, Schiller said he met with Gov. John Engler. Obviously Engler knew something.

At 9 a.m. Lucille Schiller got a call in their hotel from Beardmore and passed word to her husband. He promptly called Beardmore back. He was getting the Big Job.



Tim Richard

That was 15 or 20 minutes before the board publicly voted. The Open Meetings Act requires that all votes be taken in a public meeting.

Clearly, the board had decided prior to the time it reached item "NN."

THE OPEN Meetings Act makes candidates' names public property unless the candidate asks confidentially. My experience is that only half the candidates request confidentiality.

The reporter for the outstate Booth Newspapers had covered the proceedings and said no candidates' names ever were released. "They didn't even tell us the number of candidates," she said.

No list of candidates. No number of candidates. No public discussion.

A decision prior to the public meeting.

Board member Mason let the cat out of the bag when she said publicly, "It was difficult to adhere to the Open Meetings Act." She said the state board should seek amendments to OMA to facilitate the search process.

In truth, it's not difficult to do a hiring under OMA. Lots of boards do it. You just make up your mind that you're doing the public's business, and the public has a right to know.

To the state board's credit, it interviewed finalists in the open, as the law mandates. That's the crucial step in letting the public and various governmental constituencies know what's in store.

Credit Gov. John Engler, too, for taking an active part in the process without cramming his choice down everyone's throat. The vote was 8-0.

Otherwise, it was a little too slick.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events.

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