POINTS OF VIEW

New mix of businesses brings more people to town

'm shrinking, I'm shrinking. This is no fairy tale, as when I ice goes from lifesize to pintsize en Al-

This is what's happening to Bir-mingham's retail district — the classic downtown of south Oakland County. You have to go north to Rochester to find another.

And you know what, it's not all bad.

Offices and restaurants are going into spaces that were previously retail — bringing more people to town to utilize the solid base of shopping that remains.

Practically as you read this, Century 21 Town & Country real estate is cele-brating the grand opening of its new Birmingham office — in the former

Chudik's store on Brown Street which closed its doors almost two years ago.

Meanwhile, Weir Manuel Snyder & Ranke realty is expanding its South Woodward office into what was former-ly Today's Bride. That quaint building has been empty since a lawwitt was filed by hundreds of brides, whose or-ders remained unfilled as their wed-ding day approached.

Weir Manuel will keep its major sales office around the corner on South Woodward, but will gain room as it moves its support services to the Today's Bride building. They've been in the same spot since 1950, "We have been reammed for years," said Mark Thomas, Weir Manuel president.



Offices and restaurants are going into spaces that were previously retail— bringing more people to town to utilize the solid base of shopping that reThe symbol of a shaky Birmingham shopping district has been the vacant corner of Maple and Park (Ring Road), where Alma's Stereo once stood. Empty for four years, it will now house Pazzi Designs, an architectural firm moving from smaller quarters on Brownell.

They've carved a row of windows out of the stark brick wall to look out over Ring Road and allow the kind of light that architects need. It also opens up that area — an added bonus for the

There are two new restaurants that also took over previous retail space. Elie's Middle East restaurant is lodged in the out-of-business Birmingham Bookstore's former slot on Pierce; Sy Thai on Hamilton has brought Thai

New and expanded law offices and brokerage firms continue their march-to take up available space in plazas and malls, once designed for retail.

A group known as the Principal Shopping District now has the funds and program to market this new ver-sion of Birmingham.

If they can hunker down and retain the heart of this town — its one-of-a-kind shops, tens of art galleries and sleek enteries, together with a few qual-ity chain stores, it will bode well for the whole metro area.

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This education model stresses mastery of subjects

QUESTION: Outcome Based Edu-cation seems to be a hot issue in many states across the country, ac-cording to newspaper accounts. Is this something new? How does it differ from what has been going on in schools?

ANSWER: In theory, the Outcome Based Education (OBE) movement is very sound. An OBE curriculum basically states specific measurable learned outcomes in all subject areas, outcomes that a child is expected to master. Those who promote the theory believe education can no longer rely on the concept of a child's education being based solely on "time spent in class or school" (o.g., two years of math completed, three years of social studies.)

And really, credits toward graduation can be quite nebulous. Indeed, some high school teachers are getting hunchback carrying students through to graduation

to graduation.

The model OBE program does not rely on typical symbols, such as S (Satisfactory), AA (above average) or NI (Needs Improvement) in the elementary, nor grades (ABCDE) in high school.

An authentic Outcome Based program will have a testing (assessment) program that is aligned to the district's stated outcomes in each subject area. It measures whether or not a child has mastered a specific skill or objective such as subtracting mixed fractions. The child is usually expected to answer correctly three of four questions assessing for mastery.

Many school districts talk about
Outcome Based education, but few if
any used the classical OBE reporting
system below.
Typical Report Card — Area: Math
Concepts, Gradie: S. OBE Report Card
— Skill: Not Mastered, subtract mixed
fractions.

— Skill: Not Mastered, subtract mixed fractions.
Outcome Based Educators would say the S (Satisfactory) on our historical report card (above) doesn't identify the specific skills the child missed under Math Concepts. While an NM (Not Mastered) on the OBE report card (above) after a specific math skill immediately tells the teacher, the principal and the parent that this child can't subtract mixed fractions.

Therefore an S (Satisfactory) stu-

Therefore an S (Satisfactory) stu-



dent, in today's reporting system, could literally go through the elementary system not mastering 30 percent or more of the specific math skills needed for success at the middle school level.

The same holds true with the middle school where the typical C can mean a child has not mastered 30 percent of the skills in a particular math class.

The OBE people would ask of the C grade which math comprehension, computation or problem solving skills were missed (not mastered) and what is being done to see that the child masters those skills before moving him/fer up the ladder toward graduation? That is, how is a parent to know which math

skills were missed in the math concept area if an S (Satisfactory) is all that the report card shows? Were the missed skills manipulation of three digit numbers, area of a triangle . . don't know.

Subject mastery
A classic OBE report card would list every skill in the content (subject) area and consider mastery of a skill only when a child answers at least three of four questions measuring a particular skill.

skill.

Gov. Engler, of course, was moving into the mastery learning concept (OBE) when he announced that high school students will pass an essential (used to be called basic) skills state proficiency test in 1997 or not graduate. Frankly, I see nothing wrong with a state proficiency test. And if teachers think I'm laying it on them, they are wrong. When those mome and dads who have dumped their kids on the system find out that their kid isn't going to graduate, let's hope they show up for a teacher/parent conference and pay attention for a change.

Jifferent educational leaders have different educational cannot be successed to the success the success of the

different eninions on OBE. A national

ly known friend of mine, Dr. Bill Spady, director of the International Center for Outcome Based Education says, "A unit of credit has nothing to do with what a child has absorbed or can demonstrate. With different outcomes expected in different dissess and different standards in different buildings and in different districts, too many children graduate without the skills they need". And this is true!

Conversely, Dr. Michael Apple, professor of education at the University of Wisconsin says, "While Outcome Based Education has some good points, I am deeply worried about its hidden dangers.

"We're at a time when the conservative agenda is very powerful in education. More and more schools are being treated like factories where "inputs and output" are measured against in light of the "total needs of the child." So here was go again. Educators never seem to be able to agreel Dr. Spady wants measured outcomes while the warm, kindly professor, Dr. Apple, wants the Gestalt theory in place, that is; looking at person in totality and not only as a learner but a social, psychological human being with other needs.



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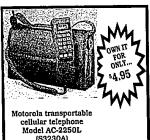




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