

Open Letter- ESAA Teachers Defend Remedial Math Lab Program

(Editor's Note: Following is a recent letter to Rep. Walter B. Jones of the First Congressional District, regarding the new elementary school guidance and remedial math labs which are new in Edenton-Chowan Schools this year.)

Dear Congressman Jones:

We would like to introduce ourselves to you as Jo Wheeler and Ginny Summers, presently employed as Math Lab teacher and Guidance Counselor at White Oak Elementary School in Tyner.

We are writing to you in regard to the future of the Math Lab and Guidance Programs in our school. The reason for our concern is that we feel these programs are extremely valuable, yet they might not be funded for next year. Both programs are funded through ESAA (Emergency School Aid Act).

The Math Lab is set up to work with remedial math students. The students are one grade level or more behind in math. Remediation is necessary because these students fell in the 1-50 per cent in the nation in math. Our lab consists of 65 remedial students in grades 1-4. They are scheduled in the Math Lab for a maximum of five hours of remediation a week. Our goal is to bring these students up at least one grade level by the end of the year.

These children receive individualized instruction in their own deficient skills, progressing at their own rate. Individual instruction that they would not be able to obtain in a classroom situation. We are giving these children actual feeling experiences in the world of mathematics. To them, math is magical, they have found that all of a sudden math is fun. They experience success, feel good about themselves and are excited about the possibility of actually becoming the hands of a clock, feeling how it is to become a fraction, and concocting their own recipes when studying measurement. Now, math has come alive.

Math is no longer restricted to a pile of numbers in a book, numbers to be added and subtracted only. We have taken their own needed skills and integrated them into these living experiences, whether it's turning the room into a grocery store when learning about money, to dividing

ourselves into actual fractions when learning about parts and wholes. This whole beautiful process is not only restricted to the lab, but shared with the classroom teacher. Close contact between the lab and teacher helps us, as remedial math teachers to supplement the classroom teacher.

That remedial child gains math lab and classroom learning experiences that are invaluable. Not only is it critical to keep close contact with that classroom teacher, but also with the parents who are aware of why their child is in the lab and how they can help at home. Sometimes home learning experiences are just as valuable as school ones. We have interested parents who do come in for weekly conferences, beg for suggestions of how to help at home, and one parent who has actually become a parent tutor in our lab.

These accomplishments would not be possible without the help of my two aides who work with me in the math lab, Mary Alice Baker and Agnes Blount.

Mr. Jones, the beautiful part of this whole experience is that it's working! We have diagnostic tools which we use to test the children periodically which shows their progress. Even more rewarding to me, is to be able to see their progress without these tools, through the help of the Elementary Guidance Program.

This is the first year that a comprehensive guidance program has been established at White Oak School. The program was set up to meet the developmental as well as immediate needs of the school. This involves counseling, consulting, and also coordinating the efforts of the children, faculty, parents, support personnel and relevant community agencies.

Although the guidance program is primarily geared to meet the needs of remedial ESAA students, it affects all children, not just those with problems. Since the program is developmentally oriented, guidance is needed to help these children pass through these stages successfully.

The strategies to meet these needs are varied. Classroom guidance sessions are held in each classroom once a week. Here all of the children are exposed to role-playing,

discussions, films and DUSO. DUSO stands for developing understanding of self and others, and is a program with stories, songs, puppets and role playing activities. DUSO the dolphin, a favorite puppet of the children, shares these activities with them. The DUSO program is divided into developmental stages that all children experience, as follows:

1. Understanding and accepting self
2. Understanding feelings
3. Understanding others
4. Understanding independence
5. Understanding goals and purposeful behavior
6. Understanding mastery, competence and resourcefulness
7. Understanding emotional maturity
8. Understanding choices and consequences

The DUSO program is

invaluable. We help the children pass through these stages successfully to limit problems they might meet later in life. Basis of all elementary guidance is PREVENTION!

Other strategies used are small group counseling for special problems or concerns. These may include groups to enhance self esteem, or groups dealing with how to make friends.

Individual counseling is ongoing at all times. Children may be self-referred, teacher-principal referred or parent referred. This gives the children individual help with immediate concerns.

The most important people in a good guidance program are those significant people in the children's lives, teachers and parents. One person cannot run a successful program alone, and we are

fortunate here to have supportive personnel. Together we consult about different ways to deal with children, classroom management skills, and ways to continue guidance activities in their own classrooms. Parents at White Oak expressed a need for guidance themselves and so a parent program was set up.

S.T.E.P., (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) which was developed to help parents and others who want their relationships with children to be more satisfying.

The elementary guidance program is needed not only at White Oak School but in every elementary school. Our main goal is to prevent academic, social, and emotional problems. The more we do at the elementary level the less problems and money will be

needed at the secondary level when the problems become more serious, through years of habit and neglect.

Children at White Oak are learning to feel good about themselves and they take more pride in their school work. They are awarded for their academic achievements — not failures, so they are striving to do better. They are learning to share ideas and are learning from each other. They are being given chances to succeed, so they risk trying new tasks more frequently. They are learning to have confidence in themselves and are opening up to new experiences. It is wonderful to see these changes, but it is only a beginning and we have a long way to go. What we would like is an opportunity to continue with

these programs so these children are given every chance to succeed in this world.

The purpose of this letter is to give you a better understanding of our programs and the need for them. We realize that this may appear as an appeal for nothing but the renewal of our jobs but it is also an appeal for the children so that they can continue to receive these special experiences that they are now getting.

As you are our local Congressman we would appreciate any support that you can give our programs in the manner of renewal.

We understand that you are an extremely busy Congressman, but we would like to extend an invitation to you to come out to White Oak School and see these things we have written down

on paper come to life.

If you would like to come out to White Oak please give us a call at your convenience. The number is 221-4078. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Ginny Summers
Jo Wheeler

Fashion Show Set

The Perquimans County Jayettes are sponsoring a fashion show — "Fashions A'Flutter" on March 19 at 8 P.M. to be held at the Hertford Grammar School in Hertford.

Tickets are \$2 — anyone under 12 will be admitted free. Proceeds go into a recreation fund for Perquimans County. The winner of a School Clock is to be chosen at that time and door prizes will be given away.

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