

City schools parents leap at new program

BY KYLE BILLINGS
STAFF WRITER

Some of the best and brightest of the area's young minds now have another outlet for the shaping and molding of their potential, one which has delighted parents and teachers so far.

About five months after the Learning Environment for Advanced Programming was phased back into the sixth- and seventh-grades, it is being met with accolades from parents and administrators alike.

Carol Horne, gifted program curriculum coordinator for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, explained in a presentation Tuesday night at Smith Middle School the logistics of LEAP.

The program is geared toward kids who have "demonstrated extraordinary levels of intellectual potential and academic achievement found in the top 1 percent of the national population in reading and math," according to Horne's presentation.

Previously offered only to fourth- and fifth-graders, the program now is available at Smith to all eligible district students in sixth- and seventh-grades. And by the 2006-07 school year, eighth-graders will get their chance to prove their skills.

Ed Holub, whose child participates in the program, said he is pleased with the program and emphasized its necessity.

"It's hard to operate with a wide range of students in the class," he said. "It fulfills the district's mission of meeting each child's potential in every classroom."

Holub said it is almost impossible for teachers to instruct each student at his or her own proficiency level in a class, and that LEAP provides an efficient way of teaching the most talented kids.

Tuesday's information session focused on availability and which children qualify for the program. Horne explained that a committee decides entrance based on aptitude or achievement — students take the Naglieri Non-Verbal Aptitude Test as one indicator.

Only those who score in the 97th percentile or higher on both the reading and math portions of the test are eligible for the program.

Horne said many parents who have children who qualified for the program might choose not to leave their individual school, adding that each system school had a "thriving, excellent gifted program."

One concern about LEAP is that students might be isolated from the rest of the school population, which might prove detrimental.

But Valerie Reinhardt, principal at Smith, said no such problem exists.

Students in the program have homeroom and four core sections

with their LEAP classmates but attend three electives that allow them to follow an avenue of learning of their choice, she added.

"Above all, they are Smith students, not LEAP students," she said.

Boyd Blackburn, a math and social studies teacher in the program, agreed.

"In the middle school, they aren't isolated," he said. "It's a good mix. I would not describe them as isolated, and I don't think they feel isolated either."

So far, Reinhardt said the installation of the program into middle school has progressed smoothly.

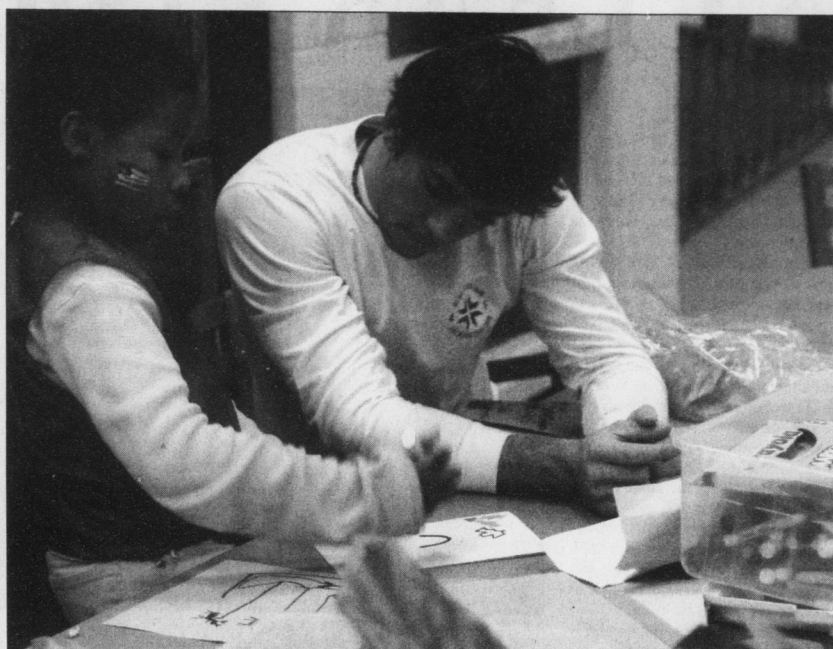
"There's a lot of healthy learning," she said. "There were a couple of bumps in the beginning, but the kids and parents are pleased."

Holub admitted how satisfied he was with the program so far.

"I think the district did an outstanding job of recruiting teachers and putting together a curriculum," he said. "They are very committed to making the entire LEAP program a success."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

HELPING HAND



DTH/LEAH GRONNING

The holiday season abounded in Carmichael Residence Hall on Thursday night as sophomore Andrew Hurd helps his "little buddy," 8-year-old Breanna Lee, make Christmas cards from construction paper and markers. Hurd's efforts are part of the Big Buddy committee of Campus Y, one of the service group's largest components, which pairs UNC students with Chapel Hill and Carrboro children in mentor relationships.

Federal research control options alarm colleges

BY SETH PEAVEY
STAFF WRITER

A government proposal to place stricter controls on international participation in university research could prove detrimental to projects at institutions in the state and across the country.

Many researchers who do not hold U.S. citizenship could soon find themselves restricted from working in university labs.

"It would reduce our ability to disseminate research as well as create new technologies," said John Gilligan, vice chancellor for research and graduate studies at N.C. State University.

"Virtually every laboratory on campus has foreign grad students working in it," he said.

The proposal by the U.S. Department of Commerce limits the ability of foreign students to use research equipment considered to be sensitive technology.

UNC leaders also are rallying against the move.

Gilligan said that the proposal lacked specifics and that it would be very time-consuming to inventory all of the equipment.

He added that the proposal could even mean universities would have to create new paperwork, put locks on laboratory doors and install surveillance systems, which could cost millions.

It would also be much more expensive to hire U.S. researchers to fill the vacancies, Gilligan said.

Foreign graduate students are generally more willing to accept low-paying research positions.

But Michael Steer, an electrical and computer engineering professor at N.C. State who is working on a \$5 million research project for the U.S. Army, said there were legitimate national security concerns.

Steer, a former Australian citizen,

works with researchers from India, Egypt and South Korea. But he argued that the United States should try to reduce its dependency on foreign students.

"There are a lot of technologies that are potentially military sensitive," Steer said. "We have to get more U.S. citizens and nationals into the grad program and pay above the poverty rate."

But Steer said that his project, which involves developing technology to detect electronics from a long distance, was much better funded than most and that many other researchers couldn't afford to pay enough to hire U.S. citizens.

Not everyone agrees that hiring fewer international students is the answer.

Mark Clemens, vice chairman of UNC-Charlotte's biology department, said the presence of international students and faculty helps create a better learning environment for students.

"It really broadens their outlook to give them a much more global outlook on life," Clemens said.

The department includes professors from Russia, England, China, France and India and post-doctoral students from Tunisia and Korea.

"The benefits of science permeate every part of our lives," Clemens said. "Almost at every level, somewhere along the way, an advance has occurred because of collaboration across national boundaries."

Staff writer John Wulsin contributed to this article. Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

N.C. School of Arts seeking chancellor

BY ASHLEY CHRISTIAN
STAFF WRITER

The chancellor search committee for the N.C. School of the Arts has begun looking for a replacement to head the 40-year-old conservatory, and a potential candidate could be interim chancellor Gretchen Bataille.

The committee, led by Sam Neill, who also serves as the chairman of the NCSA Board of Trustees, is composed of 22 members and four subcommittees.

The subcommittees are search and recruitment, mission statement and job criteria, community input and public forums, and process management and finance.

The committee met for the first time Nov. 30, when UNC-system President Molly Broad and President-elect Erskine Bowles

gave the charge to the committee.

Broad called the search process "a complicated dance" to solicit and ultimately hire the best candidate.

She also requested that the committee present three unranked finalists to Bowles, who will make his recommendation to the UNC-system Board of Governors.

Bowles advised the committee to take its time finding a replacement for former chancellor Wade Hobgood, who stepped down in June.

Bataille, senior vice president for academic affairs for the UNC system, took the chancellor position July 1, following an auditing scandal that found that the school had misappropriated almost \$1 million.

Bowles stated in a press release that the school is lucky to have Bataille "moving the ship forward."

Bataille has so impressed university officials that Neill said he anticipates her as a strong candidate for the official position.

"Gretchen Bataille has done a wonderful job as interim chancellor," Neill said. "She brings a wealth of knowledge and high management skills."

Bataille said that she has not yet decided her plans but did say that the new chancellor should understand the uniqueness of the school.

"I think the new chancellor needs to certainly appreciate the incredible talents of the students and faculty that are here and understand that it is a conservatory and makes it very different from the other 15 campuses," she said.

To fill the opening, Neill said he has received many suggestions and interest, but the committee is still

early in the process.

"We're looking for one who has passion, understanding and knowledge of performing arts," he said.

Neill added that the chancellor should be able to raise money in a time of limited resources.

"Our goal is to find a chancellor to meet our potential and exceed our expectations," he said.

The goal of the committee is to make its selection in May and have a new chancellor in place by July.

Neill said the goal is realistic, but the committee isn't in a rush.

"We're going to take whatever time is necessary to find the very best chancellor," he said.

"(The timeline) is a goal, but not an ultimatum."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

County pays mind to human rights for week

BY KAYLA CARRICK
STAFF WRITER

The Orange County Board of Commissioners declared next week human rights week on Tuesday, taking an inaugural step to acknowledge global issues that infringe people's rights.

The week will begin Saturday with Human Rights Day, the 57-year anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The county also dubbed next Thursday Bill of Rights Day. And the area has a history of recognizing and uplifting human rights.

"We are a forward-thinking county," said Milan Pham, human rights and relations director. "Unlike other places, most in the county recognize that to have a good quality of life in the county, it's going to have to be good for everyone."

The 17-member human relations commission originally was created by the county commissioners to hold public hearings about discrimination, but now its main role is to advise the board.

"Historically the commission has dealt with everything," said Barry Jacobs, chairman of the

county board. "Issues have ranged from slavery and segregation to the exploitation of workers to the discrimination of women and minorities in the workplace."

The commission noted inequalities that weren't protected under law, and in 1990 Orange County adopted a civil rights ordinance to give all people equal protection in housing, public accommodations, physical assault, property damage and employment.

Jacobs said issues of inequality in the workplace persist today.

"We live in a world where people don't get the same things because of their background or personal characteristics," he said. "A government has to try to make sure nobody is left behind."

This year, the goal was just to have the week acknowledged, Pham said. Plans for activities and events to recognize the week are in the works for next year.

"First we just want everyone to know that this is what's going on in the global community," Pham said. "It's our first step toward acknowledging it."

One key issue in Orange County is that some jobs don't pay a liv-

ing wage, said James Spivey, civil rights specialist for community relations. "Just because one is employed doesn't mean their salary allows them to enjoy all aspects of life," he said.

The human rights commission also is working with the community to establish a social justice goal.

Former commission chairwoman Barbara Holland Chapman said

people support human rights until it's pointed out that they're violating them. "Those of us who are fortunate enough to have access to tremendous resources should understand that everything we take from the economy is what could be available to someone else."

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