

STATE

Educators work to create N.C. social studies school

By Beth McNichol
Staff Writer

Concerned that too much emphasis is being placed on building mathematical and science skills to improve education in North Carolina, a group of parents and professionals are working to create a new N.C. High School of Social Studies.

John Rimberg, a social sciences professor at Pembroke State University, said he proposed the nation's first residential public high school devoted to specialized social studies courses in 1987.

The school, which would resemble the N.C. School of the Arts in Winston-Salem and the N.C. School of Science and Math in Durham, would take a critical step forward in placing N.C. students back among the best and brightest in the nation, Rimberg said.

"All of North Carolina is behind when you compare the state on a national level," Rimberg said. "Even our A stu-

dents and so-called 'honor students' are not on a par with students in Minnesota or Wisconsin."

The school would be open to about 300 high school juniors and seniors and would offer courses in international relations, political science, business, law and foreign language, he said.

Rimberg said these concentrations would better prepare high school students for cooperation with foreign nations and leadership on the world front. For example, a student with experience in French at the freshman/sophomore level would continue to study it as a junior and senior while beginning to learn a "diplomatic" language such as Swahili or Japanese, he said.

"The goal would be to have that student be able to carry on a conversation with a 5-year-old of those regions who speak the language," Rimberg said. "We're trying to teach languages in the same way that native children of all countries learn language: by hearing and speaking it first."

The present talk of intensifying math and science studies overlooks the true key to building leaders for the future, said Martha McKee-Sharpe, president of the fund-raising arm of the N.C. High School of Social Studies Foundation.

"We're concerned a lot about math and science in preparing children to compete with other nations, but we seem to forget that we need to understand multiculturalism perspectives in order to communicate effectively with other countries," McKee-Sharpe said.

Rimberg agreed. "We can't afford to shift the emphasis away from social studies because it is the underpinning of our American way of life, even more so than science and math," he said. "You can't run a democratic society unless we have an understanding of all the things involved."

But the school's program will not be limited to social studies, Rimberg said. Juniors at the school will follow much the same curriculum as those in the present public education system, with

courses in advanced level sciences like physics and trigonometry. As the students enter their senior year, even more emphasis will be placed on the social studies curriculum, he said.

The 35-member Committee to Establish the N.C. High School of Social Studies is working to establish the school on five university campuses across the state, sharing university facilities such as laboratories and libraries.

The satellite campuses would each house about 60 students in dormitories, equally divided across gender lines.

Tentative sites for the school include: Elizabeth City State University or East Carolina University in the northeast; UNC-Wilmington, Pembroke State, or Fayetteville State University in the southeast; UNC-Asheville or UNC-Charlotte in the southwest; Appalachian State, Winston-Salem State or the N.C. School of the Arts in the northwest; and a location in the Research Triangle Park.

Although the committee has received support from those in the educational

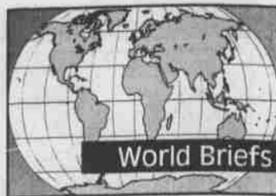
community, it has also met its share of criticism. Don Stedman, dean of the UNC School of Education, said he was opposed to residential high schools which cater to "fast-track students."

"It generally provides a highly specialized experience for gifted students, but it doesn't have many benefits for other high school students," he said.

Stedman said that unless the school encompassed the "whole spectrum of educational performances," a school such as the N.C. High School of Social Studies would not be in the public's interest.

"That probably makes me the muggump of the week, but these things appear kind of glitzy sometimes, and we must ultimately decide if it's in the public interest," he said.

But Rimberg said the committee was sensitive about telling students "they are not good enough." The only restriction upon entrance would be "deviants" who hold convictions and histories of disruptive natures.



German youths killed Jewish man, Israel says

BERLIN — German authorities refused comment Sunday on a report in Israel that skinheads beat a Jewish man, set him afire and dumped his body.

Israel radio reported Sunday that the attack took place nine days ago in Wuppertal, north of Bonn.

The radio report, citing German police, said two youths beat the man, doused his body with alcohol and set him on fire, then dumped the body over the Dutch border, where it was found in the city of Venlo the next day.

It said the two youth, and a friend whose truck was used to carry the corpse, were arrested. The victim was not identified.

A police official in Wuppertal Sunday night would not confirm the incident, which was not reported in Germany. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, referred inquiries to the prosecutor's office today.

Wuppertal is the site of a century-old Jewish cemetery where nearly half of the 190 graves were vandalized Nov. 2, one of several recent anti-Semitic acts in Germany.

Irish abortion plan criticized from all sides

DUBLIN, Ireland — The government's plan to redefine Ireland's abortion law has brought both sides of the debate into rare agreement.

For very different reasons, they're urging rejection of a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow the procedure to save the mother's life.

However, opinion polls suggest that voters will affirm a woman's right to have an abortion in another country and allow access to information about abortion available outside Ireland.

Ireland's abortion law is the most restrictive in Europe, allowing only a "morning-after" pill that terminates pregnancies in the first 72 hours. More than 4,000 women travel to Britain for abortions every year.

In Wednesday's vote, three questions on abortion will be decided, in the form of three constitutional amendments. The "no" campaign focuses on an amendment that would permit abortion to save the life, "as distinct from the health," of the mother.

—The Associated Press

Grading plan for N.C. public schools creates controversy

By Paul Garber
Staff Writer

Although the N.C. General Assembly passed a measure that will grade public schools individually to keep track of their progress, some education officials worry that the grades will be used by the public to compare the schools.

The grades will be issued in the form of report cards and will be implemented March 15 to evaluate the 1993-94 school year, said John Hawes, chief consultant for accreditation at the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

Hawes said the report cards would be

broken down into three categories: school characteristics, such as attendance and student-teacher ratio; student performance, such as SAT scores and post-graduation performance; and school performance, such as dropout rates and participation in Advanced Placement classes. "The report cards will be a report to the public for how well improvement plans are working," Hawes said.

N.C. Rep. Anne Barnes, D-Orange, said that each school would have a three-year improvement plan and that the report cards would help to evaluate those plans.

"Improvements will be made at the building level, so it's natural that the report cards be done at the school level," she said.

Barnes said the report-card system would ensure more involvement from parents and teachers at the school level. "The system is a different style of leadership," she said. "It lets them share in the decision-making."

But some education officials warn that the statewide report cards have the possibility for abuse if they were used to compare schools.

"I would think that there's a potential

for considerable abuse," said Neil Pedersen, superintendent of Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. "If the grades or results are higher at one school than another, the public is inclined to believe one school is better than another," he said. "That may not be true."

Pederson said the backgrounds of students should be considered in the evaluation of the schools. "The methodology used should factor in demographics so we don't make comparisons," he said.

Barnes said that comparisons between schools were not the purpose of

the grading but that such comparisons would not necessarily be negative. Comparisons might help schools focus on their problems and allocate educational resources to needed areas, she said.

David Thaden, assistant principal at Chapel Hill High School, said that when comparisons between schools were made, the schools tended to be in the same socio-economic categories, which would minimize the differences.

Thaden said that since CHHS usually ranked high in educational statistics, he did not think the report cards would have a large effect on the school.

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Council

Committee hoped to receive the money. Committee Co-chairwoman Betty Caldwell said the committee needed the support of the town before it could ask

for help from other sources. Preston said she hoped that local utility companies would provide free lighting and local advertising compa-

nies would provide free advertising.

Preston said the committee was working in coordination with the University. But Caldwell said the University and the town had different agendas for their bicentennial celebrations.

"The University has its own entirely separate activities and a lot more of them," Caldwell said.

The celebration will consist of a drama presentation spotlighting important events and people in Chapel Hill's history with drama, song and dance.

A book about Chapel Hill residents, which now is being compiled, will be the background of the day's celebration. Tentative plans include tours of historic areas, and a Franklin Street parade.

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