

Editorials

An Ounce Of Prevention . . .

Schools systems throughout the state would do well to follow the example of Iredell County School Superintendent Don Williams who is making an effort to crack down on alcohol and drug abuse in the 10,300 pupil Iredell system (See story on Page 3).

Williams will present a policy recommendation before the Iredell school board Sept. 14 in the hopes that a favorable vote will allow him to send a letter to parents of all students saying that any student caught with alcohol or drugs on school grounds or at school activities may be expelled for the rest of the year. Williams' new policy would "clear up confusing and inconsistent punishment standards" now existent in the school system.

Under current policy, Williams said, individual school principals decide how to punish students caught breaking the rules pertaining to having drugs or alcohol at school. The new policy would set uniform punishment procedures throughout the system.

We think the uniform rule policy is a good idea, and the fact that Williams is taking a firm stand against having alcohol and drugs at school is encouraging.

Even though there seems to be a trend statewide toward increased beer and liquor usage among teen-agers, and a slight decrease in illegal drug use, the problem of drug abuse is still very real in the state's public schools. Virtually no school system is immune, whether it likes to admit it or not.

And, locally and nationally, parents and educators have voiced deep concern over drug trafficking in the schools according to public school opinion survey returns.

The horrid stories about a child or teenager getting strung out on drugs become nightmares for parents when it happens to their own or to a relative or to a child of a close friend. We've seen it happen to kids as young as 11 and watched them get shuffled through the multi-agency "system" until there was nowhere else to go. Many of them wound up at the other end little better off than they started, and along the way they were still able to get dope in the public and private hospitals, detention homes and other facilities provided by the "system." It's not a pretty picture, and any experience of that sort will convince you that risking a child to drug involvement can be as dangerous as playing a freindly game of Russian roulette.

So we applaud Superintendent Williams for taking a firm stand in Iredell County. Taking a strong, no-nonsense approach to discouraging the presence of drugs and alcohol in the schools — along with reminding parents of their role in preventing drug abuse — should make illegal drugs less accessible to the kids there. If the school board adopts the policy, and we think it should, and it prevents even one student from becoming involved with drugs, then it will have been well worth the minute effort to vote "yes." An ounce of prevention...

Other Editors Say

Sen. Clarke Wrong To Close Meeting

State Sen. James McClure Clarke's ought to have known better than to exclude reporters from a Monday Meeting concerning the Orthopedic School at Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital. Clarke's decision played fast and loose with the state Open Meetings Law.

Under the Open Meetings Law, a gathering of a school board committee is considered a meeting of the board, and meetings of the board, under the letter and spirit of the statute, are to be open.

The meeting at issue concerned public business — the return of classrooms recently taken by Thoms for hospital space. (A compromise was reached behind closed doors.) Public money is involved in operating the Orthopedic School. And while the hospital may be considered a private institution, the presence of the school committee discussing a very public matter placed the meeting into the category of public business. Even the status of the hospital under the law has to be questioned, too, because it receives public funds.

Senator Clarke's conduct is a bit mysti-

fyng, but it may be explained by the fact that he was caught between competing interests. He is a member of the Thoms' board of trustees and chairman of the special hospital committee, and that role won out over his position as a representative of the people. Of all local politicians, Jamie Clarke, a former newspaperman, should appreciate the importance of open meetings when the public's business is at issue.

In sum, the senator, who is running hard for the Democratic nomination for Congress, has disappointed his friends and admirers by calling a closed meeting.

This is only the latest in a series of closed meetings by governmental groups across the state. If the Open Meetings Law is to have any clout, Tar Heels are going to have to stand up and demand that public officials abide by the letter and spirit of the law. For more is involved in all of this than the media's interest. The public's interest is at stake, and Tar Heels should tell their officials as much.

—The Asheville Citizen



Heard and Seen

By POP STORY



I've often written about how fast kudzu grows, covering ground, trees, and anything else in its path. This is especially true up at my house. In past years I've been able to keep it pretty well under control but this past spring and summer I've been handicapped by physical ailments. Fortunately, Joe Eads let his horses graze on part of the kudzu-covered property and the horses did a fine job.

I'm not the only person, however, who has been plagued by the ever-growing kudzu which grows so fast you can almost hear it grow. The above picture is indicative of the way the stuff grows. The once inhabited house located on Frisby Branch is almost completely engulfed by kudzu. Fortunately, no one lives in the house as can be attested by the picture I made a few days ago. If

anyone has a simple remedy of how to get rid of the weed, I'd appreciate it if you would let me know.

One of the most interesting displays I've ever seen is now in the library window on Main Street here. The title of the display is "The Forgotten Leisure Town Of The Rich" — Hot Springs. The display includes numerous historical pictures and awards won by Hot Springs. Hot Springs, once nationally known for the hot springs, the magnificent hotel, the beautiful hotel grounds, etc., is still a natural location for development and growth.

As far as I know, the hot springs which originate in the French Broad River, are still productive but must be repiped from the river as it was in years past. The once world-known resort can again be a reality with enough money, vision, rebuilding, and interest. The natural beauty, terrain, and scenery still lends itself to development.

Labor Day — Monday — was one of the quietest days I've ever experienced in Marshall. Very few places were open for business. The only "activity" noticed around here was that of a number of campers on the island which surrounded the outfield. "French Broad River Week," which is being observed here this week, did create some interest. Without this, Labor Day could have certainly been a Non-Labor Day.

Deadline for submitting Memorials, Cards of Thanks, Personal Notes, Hospital Notes, Church News and Special Announcements to THE NEWS-RECORD is Noon on Fridays.

Copy Deadline

Clean Up Efforts Begin Sept. 14

In a continuing effort to help cut the costs of maintaining the state's highways, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is inviting city and county officials and other interested organizations to join with the department in a concentrated campaign to clean up litter along the highways of the state.

teaching was noted whenever a person was found teaching a subject without a certificate in that area.

About 37.3 percent of mathematics teachers are teaching out-of-field while 30.4 percent of science teachers were affected; 23.8 percent of the health teachers; 16.6 percent of the social studies teachers; and 8.8 percent of the foreign language teachers.

Although there was low percentage of out-of-field teaching in foreign languages, the report noted a "disturbing practice" in assigning out-of-field in those areas. The study found 22.5 percent of English instructors and 15.8 percent of their time teaching outside their specialty, the study found.

"A very poor foundation may increase a student's difficulties in mastering a foreign language," the report said.

Out-of-field teaching was found to be common in physical education and English, despite a surplus of teachers.

Gov. Jim Hunt proclaimed Sept. 14-18 as "Clean Up Litter Week in North Carolina" to bring to the attention of the public the need to keep the state's highways litter free.

"With the public's cooperation, we will be able to divert some of the \$2.4 million in annual litter pick up costs to the higher priority items such as patching and resurfacing our

highway system," said W.R. "Bill" Roberson Jr., state secretary of transportation. Roberson added that during the last spring campaign (April 11-17) 191 citizens' groups cleaned up 7300 miles of highways.

Local groups may contact Earl McIntire, district engineer, for assistance. His number is 258-6170.

Parents Fight School Laws

Concord — Fred and Ann Cato have removed her 13-year-old daughter from school, saying the atmosphere there was not "conducive to a good education or to sound moral upbringing."

Instead, the Catos say they'll teach Lori Van Der Meid her eighth-grade classes at home.

The state already has informed them that such home instruction is illegal. But the Catos are promising to fight the local system in Cabarrus County and, if they must, the state system too.

"She was bothered by boys putting their hands on her. We reported it to the teachers and the principal, and they didn't do a thing," Cato said.

"She went from being an average student to an all but

failing student," he said. "She was not being taught what she should have been taught."

In a walled-off corner of their recreation room, the Catos have prepared a classroom consisting of two student desks, a teacher's desk, a blackboard, world maps and an American flag.

The Catos applied to the state for private school status but were turned down.

Cato said they begin each school day with a devotional

and pledging allegiance to the flag. The average class day runs from 8 to 1 p.m.

Her 15-year-old brother, Darren, wanted to return to school and he enrolled Monday in Central Cabarrus High School.

This is not the Catos' first confrontation with school officials. In Miami, Mrs. Cato said she twice transferred her three children by a former marriage to other schools.

LETTERS WELCOMED

We welcome letters to the editor. All we ask is that they be reasonably brief, in good taste and contain no libelous statements. Letters must be signed in handwriting by one or more individuals. Please include your return address and phone number. Letters will not be published if they can not be verified.

Recent Independent Study Shows School Teaching Can Be 'Dangerous'

RALEIGH (AP) — Many North Carolina public school teachers lack adequate training in the courses which they teach and, as a result, present "a danger to the physical and mental development of

students," concludes an independent study.

The study by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research shows, for example, that more than 60 percent of the instructors for

grades 7 through 12 who teach reading are not certified to teach that subject.

The center found that out-of-field teaching plagues all subject areas in all parts of the state. The report warned the

problem could worsen with anticipated federal and state budget cuts that force administrators to limit the number of teachers they may hire.

In North Carolina, all teachers, principals and other professional education personnel employed in the public schools must hold certificates and have them renewed every five years.

A certificate tells the state and local school board what subjects, based on college training, a person is qualified to teach.

There is no strict policy restricting teachers to those areas. Superintendents and principals, faced with a lack of appropriate personnel or applicants, often assign instructors to out-of-field areas.

The center's report recommended the state apply sanctions ranging from warnings to withholding funds in an effort to curtail out-of-field teaching.

The research center analyzed teaching assignments in grades 7 through 12 in all state public schools. Out-of-field



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