



Curriculum & Technology

May 6, 1997

EHS Arboretum

Join the Excitement!

Dr. Hal Patton, a local dentist and graduate of EHS, is spearheading an arboretum project for the new high school. A group of teachers, administrators, and other citizens are working diligently to make this idea a reality. A lot of hard, fast work has already gone into this project, but a lot more is ahead of us. This is a long-term project and will span many years. Some of the results of this project will be seen almost immediately, while others will take much longer to come to fruition.

Community Participation

The hallmarks of this project are community and participation. We want every citizen of the community to be able to participate in this project in the manner in which they are able. If they are able to contribute financially, physically, or in-kind, we want to provide an avenue for their participation. Our high school exists for the members of our community. Everyone has a stake in it, and we want everyone to feel a part of it. Local nurseries and landscape suppliers are participating in various "wish list" projects. Some of them are matching in-kind purchases, others are offering cash donations, and others are still working out how they will implement their desire to participate. Work days are scheduled. The first one is May 17 at 8:00. Several parents have expressed desires to purchase trees and have their elementary children help to plant the tree so that by the time their student attends the high school, the trees will have grown and become firmly rooted. Placques recognizing these donation are in the works. These are the kinds of community participation that this project wants to accommodate.

Goals of the Arboretum

Several goals have been established for the project. They are:

1. Develop and maintain an educational walk-through arboretum incorporating the following:
 - a. Develop and maintain windblock/shaded areas in the sports complex,
 - b. Develop and maintain windblock/shaded areas for the athletic practice fields and tennis courts, and
 - c. Develop and maintain plantings to enhance the campus around the high school.

(Continued on back)

Curriculum

Staff Development

The district's staff development committee met recently to discuss the proposed summer and early fall staff development activities. Consent was given to proceed with the proposed activities for the summer. Those of you who will be invited to participate in the various activities should be receiving your invitations by the end of this week or the beginning of next week. Also, very shortly, everyone should be receiving a survey to indicate your needs and ideas for staff development for the 1997-1998 school year. Please take a few minutes to fill it out and return it to your staff development committee member.

Writing Issues Committee

The Writing Issues Committee will be meeting again on Thursday, May 8, from 12:45-3:45 to finalize the writing assessments for next year and to plan for the inservice in using the writing rubric. We knew this would not be an easy task, but it is proving even more complicated. One of the benefits of this whole process is a lot of good sharing of ideas and expectations by our very professional staff.

End of Year School Improvement

On Friday, May 9, our district's School Improvement Planning Committee will be meeting to evaluate the process and the assessments we used this year and to plan for next year. Our goal is to have everything ready to implement when school begins in August.

Health Teacher's Guides

Those of you who would like to have your teacher's guides for the new health curriculum will have an opportunity to pick them up before the end of the school year. Details will come later, but we are targeting the week after Memorial Day.

Technology

Teacher Buy Program

We are in the process of firming up a teacher-buy program. We hope to have the details in your hands by the first part of next week. It should be worth your wait!

New MIS System

Training on the new MIS System, Pentamation, has begun. Over the next months, hours and hours of training will take place as we make the transition to our new way of handling information.

EHS **Arboretum** *(Continued)*

2. Develop and maintain a greenhouse/nursery to be used by biology, ecology, and home economics classes for exercises and maintaining planted areas.
3. Develop an overall plan for the continued maintenance of planting by this group on the school grounds.
4. Establish a fund to receive financial contributions from memorials, individuals, business, grants, etc. to develop and maintain all planted areas by this group. [The EGHM Foundation will provide this avenue.]

Additionally, the landscaping for the new high school which had been cut from the budget will be addressed by this arboretum group. These projects will be the ones which will show immediate results. Some community groups have already "adopted" various landscaping projects. Some of these landscaping projects include the courtyard, the commons area, and the Front Circle by the entrance. These will occur while the planning for the arboretum, greenhouse, and other teaching classrooms take place. There is a lot of planning to be done in order to develop the "physical" structures and the curriculum to go along with these new teaching classrooms.

Who to Contact for Participation and Further Information

Are you ready to join in the excitement? While many more people have been and will continue to a part of this entire project, there is a core committee that you can contact if you wish more information or want to sign up to participate. Some of these people are: Hal Patton, Ken Wheat, Ed Harris, Dennis Joyce, Cathy Sawyer, Jan Bellm, John Souris, John Klepak, Norm Bohnensteil, Lisa Carrigan, Sherril Wible, Gail Mastroianni, and Faye Coffman. Any of them will be most happy to discuss the project and your participation with you.

Something to Think About...

How Will This Knowledge Impact Teaching and Learning?

"We now have evidence to illustrate the details of the anatomical changes that do occur with modification in the environment. This evidence addresses many of the questions that concerned the early sociologists and educators, including the effects of the environment on the young as well as the elderly, sex differences, and the effects of nutritional deprivation, isolation, or crowding. It is not clear that the brain is far from immutable. (Diamond 1988, p. 2)"

quoted in

Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain
by Renate Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine.

Humor is the great thing, the saving thing.
The minute it crops up, all our irritations
and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit
takes their place.

Mark Twain

Best Practices

1.3.1 Teachers Carefully Orient Students to Lessons.

Teachers:

- Communicate enthusiasm for learning.
- Help students get ready to learn. They explain lesson objectives in simple, everyday language and refer to them throughout lessons to maintain focus.
- Post or hand out learning objectives to help students keep a sense of direction and check periodically to assure that objectives are understood.
- Explain the relationship of a current lesson to previous study, calling attention to key concepts or skills previously covered.
- Arouse students' interest and curiosity about the lesson content by relating it to things or personal relevance to them.
- Challenge and inspire students to learn, particularly at the start of difficult lessons. They make certain that students know in advance what's expected and are ready to learn.
- Use techniques such as advance organizers, study questions, and prediction to prepare students for learning activities.
- Make students aware that they are expected to contribute to classroom discussions and other participatory activities.

2.2.2 Administrators and Teachers Group Students in Ways That Promote Effective Instruction.

Administrators and teachers:

- Place students in heterogeneous groups for required subjects and courses; they avoid underplacement of students.
- Make use of instructional aides and grouping strategies to keep the student/adult ratio low, especially during instruction aimed at priority objectives.
- Provide in-class instruction in small groups for low achievers whenever possible to promote academic success and avoid the stigma often associated with pull-out classes.
- Make certain that ability groups, when used, are short term and that student placement is reviewed frequently for appropriateness.
- Avoid the practice of long-term academic tracking, which research has shown to have negative effects on the achievement and attitudes of the majority of students.
- Are aware of the many social academic benefits of multi-age (nongraded) grouping, especially for primary-level children, and at least explore the possibility of implementing this structure.