

# COMMUNITY SCHOOL: New Thrust in Education

BARRY E. HERMAN

**T**HE community school concept is a movement and not an establishment. What is a community school? Ezra Cornell described the community school concept when he said, "I would found a school where any person could find instruction in any subject."

Community school education is a comprehensive and dynamic approach to public education. It is a philosophy that pervades all segments of the school and directs attention to the needs of the community. The community school serves as a catalytic agent by providing leadership to mobilize community resources to solve identified community problems. This marshaling of all forces in the community helps to bring about change as the school extends its services to all people.

How does a community school differ from a traditional type of school? The community school is:

1. *An educational center*—a place where children and adults have opportunities for study, learning, and cultural enrichment.
2. *A neighborhood community center*—

a place where citizens of all ages may participate, for example, in sports, physical fitness programs, informal recreation, arts and crafts, musical programs, civic meetings, adult education, home economics, tutoring, and leisure-time activities.

3. *A center for community services*—a place where individuals and families may obtain health services, counseling services, legal aid, employment services, and home-making help.

4. *A center of neighborhood and community life*—the school as a place that can assist citizens in the study and solution of significant neighborhood problems.

An effort has been made to achieve a feedback between the educational programs during the day and the after-school programs. In order to do this the teachers and the after-school staff are being encouraged to view the various services and programs as coordinated with a single purpose—that of providing more adequate and better integrated services to the total community school population, preschool, regular school, after-school, and adult.



Children prepare for instruction in use of the trampoline.

Shooting courtesy of the author

Photos courtesy of the author

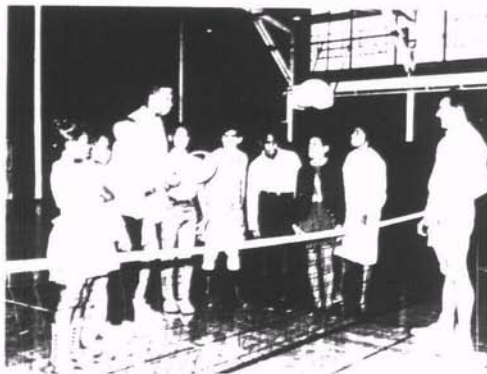
## Satellite Schools

New Haven now has seven full community schools operating, with an eighth to be added soon. In addition to these seven, there are many schools that have programs and activities going on like full community schools. These are called satellite schools. These schools do not have full-time community coordinators but are affiliated with

the larger full community schools. The seven community schools in New Haven are: Sheridan, Fair Haven, Troup, Winchester, Conte, Prince, and Lincoln-Bassett. Some of the satellite schools include: West Hills, Katherine Brennan, Clinton, Scranton, Nathan Hale, Grant, Dwight, and Betsy Ross.

The community schools were established by the Board of Education in 1962 when Conte School was built. The first Director of Community Schools was Ralph Goglia, who is now an Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools. Prior to Conte, Winchester was the first school in Connecticut and perhaps New England to be built as a community school. Isadore Wexler, its first principal, had a dream and the dream became a reality in 1952 when the new Winchester School was built. Mr. Wexler is now Supervisor of Careers and Work-Study Programs.

The community school concept has produced a new breed of educator. Community school people are not afraid to do the impossible; their work day can begin at 8 a.m. and end at 10 p.m. Included are occasional Saturday and Sunday programs as well as



A black tennis star gives instruction to interested youngsters.



summer and holiday programs. Most of New Haven's top administrators owe their experience and start to the community school. These educators include: Gerald Barbaresi, Superintendent of Schools; John Doyle, Assistant Superintendent-Operations; George Harris, Assistant Superintendent-Supportive Services; Gerald Tirozzi, Director of Community Schools; and Charles Twyman, Supervisor of In-Service Education. The seven community school principals and two high school principals all started their administrative careers as community school assistant principals-community coordinators. New Haven's community schools are laboratories for new ideas and creative approaches in educating young people and in solving urban problems.

### Special Activities

What is happening inside a community school? From 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. each community school is a beehive of excitement and activity. Using Winchester Community School as an example, the physical plant includes 32 classrooms; a full-size gymnasium with bleachers, locker rooms, and showers; a 540-seat auditorium; a large cafeteria; a 100-seat little theater; a 9,000-book library; the city's department of audio-visual education;



Teachers and community members examine materials at a city-wide reading exhibition.



Original works are displayed at a children's art fair.

a medical and dental suite; rooms for home economics, arts and crafts, music, and recreation; a community social agency office (C.P.I.) and many small offices and meeting rooms. Some specific activities have included:

*A Paperback Book Fair.* This was held on two days and one evening when children and parents had the opportunity to browse among new books and magazines, to make purchases, and to be stimulated to read all kinds of reading materials. A special emphasis was placed on books by Negro authors and books about famous American Negroes. A committee of parents and teachers planned and ran the book fair. Another book fair is being planned for next year.

*A Community Variety Show Benefit.* This affair was a variety show benefit made up of local bands, singing groups, and dance groups from the community. The program was initiated by high school work-study students who work in the community school

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program. Teen committees were organized, and the teen-agers signed up the local talent who performed free of charge and handled publicity, making posters, and selling tickets. Many parents helped as ushers and chaperones.

### *An Eight-Week Course in Negro History.*

This course for parents, teachers, and adults in the community began after interest was aroused in a PTA meeting in which multi-ethnic and Negro History materials used in classrooms were exhibited and discussed. A Yale American History major was hired to

teach the course; each session had a high percentage of parents.

*Junior Advancement Program.* This unique program is held four days a week after school for above average fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students. An enrichment-supplementary program offers courses in literature, grammar, creative writing, geography, and French. This program is conducted by a group of dedicated volunteers.

*School Vacation Programs.* One feature of a community school is that its doors never close. There are three twelve-month administrators (a principal and two assistant principals) who organize not only the regular instructional program but programs after school and during evenings, summers, and vacation periods. Vacation programs include sports, camping, summer school, storytelling, recreational activities, trips, films, a tiny tot program for ages 4-6, and many other opportunities for varied experiences geared to the weather and the interests of the groups being served. A program director at Winchester assists in the planning and supervising of all community school programs.

*A School Band.* A committee of parents working closely with school people has helped to start a school band. There are 40 fifth- and sixth-grade students taking instrumental music lessons. The parents, through different fund raising projects, were able to buy many instruments for the children to use. These helped supplement instruments bought for the school by the Board of Education.



Pupils show appreciation for work done by black artists.

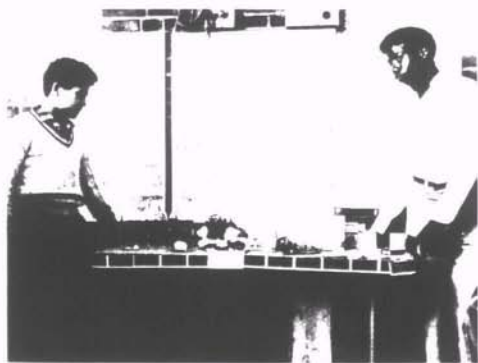


The parents also started an instrument bank where people in the community who have musical instruments they no longer use can donate them to the school. About 16 instruments have been donated to Winchester's instrument bank. The band, along with the fifth- and sixth-grade chorus, has put on concerts and assembly programs for the school and for the community. This year the band led the annual Halloween parade through the neighborhood.

*Creative Arts and Science Fair.* Inner city children, as part of their classroom work, joined with the work of after-school clubs to put on a giant arts and science fair that was held in the school gymnasium. Visitors came from all over the city to see the exhibits and projects.

*Youth Serving Youth Tutorial Program.* The Black Educators Organization sponsored a new assistance program. Selected inner city high school students were paid to tutor elementary students needing help in reading and mathematics and in developing good self-images and self-pride. The program was very successful and helped both the tutor and those tutored. Additional volunteer tutoring programs are being carried out as part of the regular academic school program and as part of the after-school program.

*Exhibits of Negro Achievement Materials.* Permanent lobby exhibits of Cinque



A science fair gives recognition to the efforts of gifted students.



New Haven fire chief participates in installing new junior fire marshals.

and the Amistad, paintings done by black artists and of black subjects, are proudly displayed for children, the community, and visitors to see. Periodic shows of Negro history and biographical materials are displayed in the halls and classrooms. These materials have done much to develop in each student racial self-pride and a good self-image to foster better learning and study habits.

The success of a community school depends on the cooperation and involvement of the people it serves. The principal and the two assistant principals work closely with a nucleus of neighborhood professionals and parents who constitute the "Team." The "Team's" main job is to promote a positive image of the community school as a friendly place for all neighborhood people regardless of age, interests, or educational achievement and to provide programs geared to the needs and concerns of all citizens in the neighborhood. The need for constant evaluation of community school programs, dropping those not successful and adding those that fill neighborhood needs, is an ongoing job for the "Team."

Since the school cannot remain an isolated part of neighborhood life, a community school may be one answer to the many problems facing education in our urban centers.

—BARRY E. HERMAN, *Principal, Winchester Community School, New Haven, Connecticut.*

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