clumsy instrument that gives us no more than a broad group measurement and rough individual comparisons. If we are among the lucky schools, it also gives us a pacifier for public criticism.

No matter which test our district chooses, we won't get any more than that. As one teacher said during the frustrating deliberations, "Let's choose the test that will make the fewest kids cry." Not a bad criterion, that.□

Joanne Yatvin is Principal, Crestwood School, 5930 Old Sauk Rd., Madison, WI 53705-2599.

Trends

Social Studies

WALTER C. PARKER

An Interdisciplinary Bicentennial Curriculum

This past summer Tarry Lindquist, an elementary school teacher in Mercer Island, and Jane Brem, a museum educator in Seattle, hosted 50 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders for an overnight stay in Seattle's Museum of Flight. Their quarters were the museum's new gallery—a huge, glass structure—that had not yet been opened to the public. So, like astronauts, the children were exploring an unknown space. And each of the 50 students came as a representative of his or her class; so, like the framers of the U.S. Constitution, their coming together was an auspicious event. Their task was to frame an intergalactic bill of rights.

The convention in the new gallery was the culmination of an extraordinary integrated curriculum unit designed by Lindquist. As local coordinator of the bicentennial celebration organization called "Today's Constitution and You," she had gathered elementary teachers from around the state at a weekend planning retreat. What had emerged was an interdisciplinary curriculum that these teachers implemented during the 1986–87 school year. Their goal was to have students simulate the decision making that occurred at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, while planning ahead for something very real: the likelihood of space colonization in these students' lifetimes.

Assumptions. The assumptions underlying the curriculum are intriguing. For example, the colonization of near space by humans is not a vague possibility but rather a likelihood. Consequently, these students were not *pretending*. They were preparing and practicing. Second, students were not warranted in suggesting that the norms and values of their earthly society would transfer to space. Consequently, they had to forecast and then project themselves into a set of conditions and parameters for which their bill of rights would be appropriate. Consider these:

- Light bends differently in space than it does on earth, so the notion of eyewitness account, which is taken for granted in our present system of jurisprudence, may not transfer to civic life in space.
- As a result of prolonged breathing of pure oxygen in controlled environments, humans will likely evolve into a different species, which Lindquist calls *homo spatialis*. These beings will likely perceive, touch, taste, react, and evaluate in ways quite different from their earthbound counterparts.
- The trend toward multicultural crews of both sexes will continue and probably predicts future populations of space colonies.
- High-density populations will be commonplace because establishing permanent colonies in space will be so expensive.[1]

Classroom activities. Working with these assumptions, the 50 classrooms that were to send representatives to the intergalactic convention had engaged in research and decision making to develop a space colony. They identified the size of their colony, its location (some are space stations, others are on moons or planets), population size and ethnic composition, climate (both controlled and uncontrolled), natural resources, and products. Moreover, they wrestled with the development of a space colony culture—political life and economic relations, food and costume, holidays and traditions. Their work took them forward to *homo spatialis* and back to Plato's ideas of good and bad government.

After developing their colony, the settlers learned that their new government had signed an intergalactic constitution that would regulate relations among and within the 50 colonies. Further, the signing had been contingent on the framing of a bill of rights that would protect the colonies and the individuals within them against the specter of an oppressive central government and an overbearing majority. The next task for students in each colony had been to frame a draft bill of rights that their representative would take to the intergalactic event at the Museum of Flight.

The Convention. Each of the 50 representatives brought his or her draft to the museum. Their chief task once there was the same one the representatives in Philadelphia had faced. They had to balance individual with community interests, and the various colonies' interests with some sense of the intergalactic *common good*. And; their decision making was confounded by conditions of life in space that could hardly be ignored. Many factors had to be considered. As they returned to their colonies, new Intergalactic Bill of Rights in hand, perhaps bearing little resemblance to the draft they brought with them, there would be some justifying to do.

At the convention, children were first assigned to "pods" of five with one high school student (a "senior counselor") and an adult supervisor. Eventually, two pods merged to a basic unit of ten, then reformed to another group of ten, and so on, jigsaw style—sharing, prioritizing, defending, rethinking, and compromising. At the last assembly, final agreements were formed.

Collaboration. This bicentennial curriculum has a number of exemplary features. Among them are an integrated approach, an attempt to plan peak experiences, and a sort of collaboration that seems to make a difference, not just on paper, but in practice: Lindquist, the other 49 teachers, and Brem are not the managers of their various organizations. Indeed, the managers were drawn in for support well after the planning had progressed. This is grass roots collaboration among highly inventive and knowledgeable, rank-and-file educators—the worker bees, not the queen bees. The former had the initiative; the latter knew when to provide support and when to get out of the way.□

1. Lindquist drew on the work of George S. Robinson, author of *Living in Outer Space* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1975).

Walter C. Parker is Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195.

English

CHARLES SUHOR

Exemplary State- and District-Level Programs for Teacher Improvements Sought

Widespread interest in career development programs and innovative in-service designs for classroom teachers has prompted a search for model state- and district-level programs of teacher improvement.

Acting on recommendations from its Task Force on Teacher Competency Issues, the Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English is seeking information about K-12 programs geared toward teachers of all subjects in four categories:

1. programs of help for beginning teachers in which experienced classroom teachers (i.e., teachers currently teaching at least part-time) are used as consultants;

2. programs that provide inservice or other staff support specifically for minority teachers;

3. career development programs for teachers in which advancement includes continued classroom teaching; and

4. teacher evaluation programs in which teacher competency is determined to some extent through direct participation of other classroom teachers.

John C. Maxwell, Executive Director of NCTE, in an interview emphasized three major components in the search.

Teacher participation is at the center of things. We hope to identify and disseminate information about programs that make significant use of teacher talent but don't define career development in terms of leaving the classroom. A second concern is for staff development of minority teachers, who are by all indications diminishing in number. Finally, we're looking for programs that cut across all subject areas, not just focusing on the language arts.

If programs in any of these categories exist in your district or state, write a brief description (minimum three double-spaced pages) of the main features of the program, attaching any appropriate supplementary documents. Send the materials not later than 15 December to Lori Alfe, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801.□

Keyboarding as a Curriculum Issue in Writing Instruction

Teaching writing with word processors is a clear trend at all educational levels. But without keyboarding skills, students are likely to be seriously hampered in learning to write with a word processor. Karl Koenke, Associate Director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills in Urbana, Illinois[1], recently reviewed research and practice in the teaching of keyboarding and concluded that "keyboard instruction is gaining in popularity, especially in the elementary language arts." Koenke identified several key questions and commented on each.

When should keyboarding be learned? Young children are "developmentally ready" for keyboarding instruction by third grade, and programs in upper elementary grades have indeed produced "keyboard-proficient students." But *can* does not imply *must*. Teaching of keyboarding should be carried out, Koenke notes, when students have an actual need to communicate via word processors in their personal lives or in their school assignments.

How much keyboarding skill is required? Students' keyboarding skills should be sufficiently developed that they are not distracted from the act of composing as they type. Students who

Copyright © 1987 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.