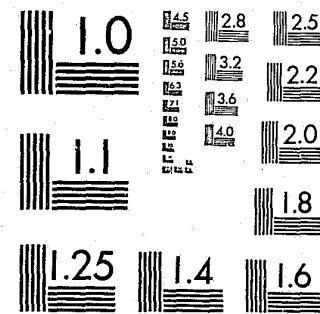


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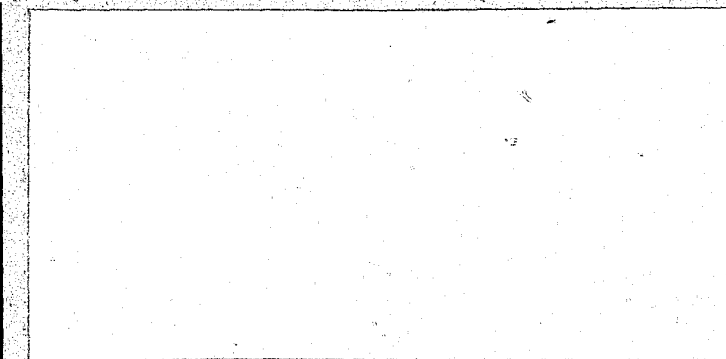
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**LOCKS AND LESSONS:  
VIRGINIA'S REFORM SCHOOLS**  
by  
**Andrew Petkofsky**  
The Richmond News Leader  
Richmond, Virginia

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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a final report of the  
**Fellows in Education Journalism**  
**Juvenile Justice Program**  
**INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

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## PREFACE

Andrew Petkofsky prepared this report on juvenile justice in Virginia as a Fellow in Education Journalism. The 1982 Fellowships provided six outstanding and competitively selected journalists with the opportunity to study and report on specific aspects of juvenile crime and justice while on six weeks leave from their newspapers. In addition to this final report, Petkofsky wrote a series of articles for The Richmond News Leader. His series and those of the other Fellows appear in the IEL monograph, Juvenile Justice: Myths and Realities. The 1982 Fellows and their topics were:

Charlotte Grimes <u>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</u>	Girls and the Law
Wiley Hall <u>Baltimore Evening Sun</u>	Getting Tough With Violent Juvenile Offenders
Leslie Henderson <u>Knoxville Journal</u>	Violent Juvenile Crime in East Tennessee: A Family Perspective
Andrew Petkofsky <u>Richmond News Leader</u>	Locks and Lessons: Virginia's Reform Schools
Woody Register <u>The Tennessean</u>	Juvenile Incarceration and Alternatives in Tennessee
Gary Strauss <u>The Idaho Statesman</u>	Juvenile Justice in Idaho
Margaret Beyer, PhD Freelance (received study grant)	Not Getting Away with Murder: Serious Juvenile Offenders in the District of Columbia

The Fellows in Education Journalism program seeks to strengthen the media's reporting and the public's understanding of education and social service issues by providing journalists with the resources and time to conduct comprehensive studies. Initiated at the Institute for Educational Leadership in 1976 by The Ford Foundation, the program is also sponsored by participating news organizations across the country and other foundations, government agencies and national organizations. The list of 1976-82 Fellows, sponsoring news organizations, and topics of study is included in this publication.

Susan C. Farkas  
Director  
Fellows in Education Journalism

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ACQUISITIONS

## Introduction

When Frank B. Bishop III first saw the "hole" at Beaumont Training School, he thought the filthy children and teen-agers locked in its 15 cells looked more like animals than people.

That was in the 1960s, when Beaumont youths who misbehaved were paddled or whipped with belts, or locked in a basement called the hole for 30 days, Bishop said.

"It was sickening," he said. "There was no way you could control the abuses . . . ."

Bishop, who began a career in Virginia's youth corrections system 22 years ago as a teacher at Beaumont, now is the chief administrator of Virginia's state-run reform schools for juvenile delinquents.

Beaumont and the other institutions changed in name from "training schools" to "learning centers" in the early 1970s, and with the name change came many changes in treatment and disciplinary practices.

Bishop speaks proudly of the dedicated staff and humane living conditions the Virginia Department of Corrections now provides for the 1,200 youths sent each year to one of the seven state learning centers.

But critics say that other, more subtle, problems than physical abuse prevent large juvenile corrections institutions



from fulfilling their dual role of rehabilitating young criminals and protecting law-abiding citizens.

"I think they just have the worst setting to work in that you can design," the Rev. George F. Ricketts said. "If you want to help the kids, they've just picked the toughest setting."

Mr. Ricketts, executive director of the Chaplain Service of the Churches of Virginia, is the boss of the clergymen who work as chaplains in Virginia's learning centers. He is also a long-time member of the Virginia State Crime Commission.

The Richmond News Leader examined the learning centers during the summer of 1982.

Visits to all seven learning centers, library research and interviews with employees, students, graduates, judges, lawyers, scholars and other experts revealed that serious questions remain about the reform schools as institutions of humane treatment and rehabilitation.

Among them:

\*Do the juveniles in the learning centers really belong in reform school?

State corrections philosophy holds that delinquents should be placed in the learning centers only if they can't be dealt with in their own communities.

But critics argue that incarcerated juveniles differ little, in many cases, from juvenile delinquents placed on probation or in the community corrections programs that already exist.

The critics often point out that many juveniles in correctional institutions were placed there for violating the terms of probation rather than threatening public safety.

Even Bill Schoof, superintendent of the corrections department's Reception and Diagnostic Center, which evaluates juveniles committed to state custody and decides where to place them, estimates that 15 percent of the young people in the learning centers belong somewhere else.

\*Do the treatment programs in the learning centers foster real changes in young criminals or simply teach them to stay out of trouble in the institutions?

Treatment for most of the juveniles centers on behavior control or "behavior management" programs designed to teach by rewarding desirable behavior and punishing undesirable behavior.

Much of the time, the behavior programs are intended only as a preparation for other treatments, such as counseling and psychotherapy. But Rose A. Herr, a former chaplain at Hanover Learning Center, argues, "So much time is spent getting control that the treatment of other problems never comes up." She is not alone in her opinion.

\*Does life in the learning centers harm, rather than help, the inmates?

Just as in prisons, inmates of juvenile institutions live under constant observation and in the constant company of one group of peers. Critics say they teach each other crime techniques and often suffer from supervision by adults whose first -- and sometimes only -- priority is keeping order.

\*Can the learning centers rehabilitate juvenile delinquents and protect society at the same time?

Juveniles are sent to the learning centers on indeterminate

sentences whose lengths are governed, in theory, by the inmates' progress through treatment programs. State corrections officials have struggled for 10 years with the criticism that juveniles who committed serious crimes and are still dangerous have been sent home too soon.

They have also received the opposite criticism that some juveniles who have committed minor crimes are sometimes kept in the centers far too long.

"It is dubious to think that the institutional environment could be the best application of treatment philosophy of the juvenile justice system; nor does it seem . . . that the forced association of adjudicated delinquents under restrictive supervision of an institution would be the best form of community protection in the long run," said a 1981 report about juvenile delinquency prepared for the U.S. Department of Justice.

"The constant issue of how much harm is caused by institutionalizing the delinquent is really only rhetorical," the report continued. "Both sides of the issue accept that harm is unavoidable. The only contest is how much of it is unnecessary."

To some extent, state lawmakers and juvenile justice officials support this view.

By the late 1960s, Virginia corrections officials set out to reduce the population of juveniles sent to the learning centers and increase the number of delinquents placed in community corrections programs.

A network of group homes, private schools, court-supervised probation and public service programs grew.

Partly as a result, the state's training school population dropped from about 1,400 in the early 1960s to 700 to 900 by the early 1970s.

Officials hoped for a further decline in the learning center populations when the juvenile crime rate, which had increased steadily for half a decade, leveled off in the mid-1970s. About the same time, Virginia adopted new laws prohibiting the imprisonment of certain types of juvenile offenders.

Nonetheless, the learning center population stopped shrinking and has remained nearly constant since at least 1977.

Officials most often lay the blame on a tendency of law enforcement officials to use community programs for youths who otherwise might be sent home with a scolding or given probation rather than as an alternative to the institutions.

Meanwhile, the learning center system flourishes.

Virginia has spent millions in recent years to renovate old buildings and erect new ones. A new learning center for aggressive delinquents who are mentally retarded opened last spring.

And, although debate about the centers' usefulness continues, no one doubts the institutions will continue to play a large role in the juvenile justice system.

### The Scene

Appalachian Learning Center comes at the beginning of guidebooks to Virginia's reform school system, but it's really the end of the line.

"You drive up to the gate and you say, 'Lord, what have I done to get here,'" said Preston T. Buchanan, the superintendent. "We are the Mecklenburg of the juvenile system."

The comparison is apt. Just as Mecklenburg Correctional Center is reserved for the toughest adult prisoners in the state, Appalachian is for the juvenile delinquents who have committed particularly serious crimes or failed to behave in less secure reform schools.

It looks like what it is.

Appalachian sits on a side road on a hilltop between the towns of Lebanon and Honaker in southwestern Virginia's Russell County. Just before the blacktop surface turns to gravel and drops sharply down toward the Clinch River, the high barb-wire-topped fence comes into view.

The reform school used to be an adult prison camp, and the bars and gates remain. Appalachian is small by Virginia reform school standards, with 40 to 50 students housed in dormitories or single rooms in the old brick prison building. A cafeteria is on the same floor as the dorms and a small library and infirmary are downstairs.

The cells once used for solitary confinement of adults still get used to isolate troublemakers among the students, who range in age from 14 to 18. Some of the cells have been brightened with new paint and toilet fixtures since Appalachian became a reform school in 1967.

There is a frame administration building in front of the dormitories, a row of industrial shops behind them, and a recently-built gym at the rear of the fenced compound.

The entire compound is dwarfed by surrounding rock-spiked hilltops and high meadows.

"That's a different world," one corrections department official in Richmond said when describing Appalachian.

Indeed, the toughest reform school is also the most remote. Except for Natural Bridge Learning Center in Rockbridge County, the other six reform schools and the Reception and Diagnostic Center are clustered in the central Virginia counties surrounding Richmond.

And, in appearance, the unfenced institutions more resemble boarding schools or summer camps than prisons.

Like Appalachian, each of the other learning centers is meant for a certain category of delinquent. Age and sex are the main qualities that determine who goes where, but other factors like education and treatment needs and physical size also affect placement decisions.

Frank B. Bishop III, the top administrator of the learning center system, said officials would like treatment to become more important, but overcrowding in the entire system frequently cuts down the placement options.

He said the department tries to limit the populations at Appalachian, Natural Bridge and Oak Ridge learning centers, which have less room and highly specialized programs. But students kept out of those centers add to overcrowding at Beaumont, Hanover, Bon Air and Barrett learning centers, he said.

Here, briefly, are descriptions of each of the institutions:

\*Natural Bridge Learning Center is a former forestry camp of frame buildings that nestles along a back road in a cleared area of the Jefferson National Forest. Two long dormitory buildings house about 30 students each and a cluster of other buildings hold the dining hall, administration and other offices, a gym, vocational shops and classrooms.

Sports fields stretch back from the buildings to the forest edge, where eight students in a special program live in a log cabin.

Natural Bridge gets the best-behaved male students in the reform school system, and frequent roll calls take the place of locked doors.

"We're open here," one 15-year-old inmate said. "Everybody's just about free."

\*Beaumont Learning Center is the largest reform school in Virginia. It has a budgeted population of 200 male inmates between 16½ and 18, but the population is usually higher by at least 15 or 20 inmates.

Beaumont straddles the crest of a rolling hilltop overlooking the James River about 25 miles west of Richmond in Powhatan County. Its approximately 30 buildings, some of them built in the 1800s,

are in various stages of renovation. The campus has acres of well-kept lawn.

Most of Beaumont's inmates are allowed to walk to meals and classes. But some of them live under strict guard in a cottage where meals, classes and recreation all take place within the cottage or fenced yard.

The campus boasts a separate school building with one wing of classrooms and another wing of vocational shops. Hanover, Barrett and Bon Air learning centers also have separate school buildings.

\*Hanover Learning Center was built in 1897 as a reform school for blacks. It was segregated and kept its students occupied doing farm work until 1964.

The campus, about 15 miles north of Richmond in Hanover County, now has a modern dining hall and swimming pool alongside the old buildings that surround a central park area. Many of the buildings have been renovated in recent years, but others are quite shabby.

Like Beaumont, Hanover has one heavily-locked building for its most troublesome students. It also has a special cottage for mildly retarded students.

Farmland adjacent to the campus is now worked by adult prisoners from a nearby prison camp, but officials say the adults have no contact with the learning center students.

Hanover has a budgeted capacity of 110 students, all males, but on a recent day there were actually 150 students living on



campus. The students mostly are 15 or 16 years old, slightly younger than those at Beaumont.

Barrett Learning Center, a mile or so south of Hanover, gets the youngest male delinquents. It has about 90 students housed in cottages around an open park area. The school has a gym and students are taken to swim at Hanover Learning Center in the summer.

Bon Air Learning Center, Oak Ridge Learning Center, and the Reception and Diagnostic Center all are near each other on a large piece of land just outside Richmond in the Bon Air section of Chesterfield County.

Bon Air has been a girls' reform school since 1906. It now has a budgeted population of 135 girls, ages 11 to 18, but the population is usually a bit higher. There were 153 girls at Bon Air on a recent day.

The Bon Air campus has many buildings, including a central infirmary that conducts examinations of all the delinquents at the reception and diagnostic center. The infirmary also serves as a central medical facility for all the learning centers in the Richmond area.

There are special treatment programs at Bon Air for girls with serious emotional problems and those who behave violently.

Across some fields and woods from Bon Air is Oak Ridge Learning Center, a one-building institution that opened this summer.

The Reception and Diagnostic Center is a cluster of relatively modern buildings where psychologists, teachers and counselors evaluate all the male and female juveniles sent to the custody of

the Virginia Department of Corrections. The team of evaluators decides where to send each youth.

About 110 students at a time live at the reception and diagnostic center for approximately four weeks each. About 85 percent of them get sent to one of the seven learning centers.

### The Kids

As a youngster, Bill would jump on moving trains, steal bicycles, and break into houses. He didn't consider himself a criminal.

"Those were just the things we did in my neighborhood for fun," he explained.

Often, he said, a group of friends would break into a house, eat big bowls of cereal, watch television as long as they dared, and then slip out before the owner returned.

His father, with whom he lived, and his mother, who lived in another state but visited occasionally, threatened to take him to court and send him to reform school if he didn't behave. But the prospect didn't worry their adventurous son.

"It was something I hadn't explored yet, so I was game to try it," said Bill, whose even features, blue eyes and shoulder-length blond hair make him look younger than his 19 years.

Bill was 12 when his parents carried out their threat. He spent most of the next four years in the state-run reform schools that Virginia calls "learning centers."

Now he is serving time in a state prison for assault with a deadly weapon.

Bill may not be typical in all ways of the children and teenagers in the learning centers, but he certainly isn't unique either;

nearly a third of the 9,000 adult prisoners in Virginia are state reform school graduates.

Like Bill, many youths locked in the reform schools come from broken families and had poor supervision as children. They have often skipped many days of school and dropped far behind their classmates in book knowledge.

Judge Willard H. Douglas Jr. of the Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court says the youths he sends to the corrections department are the "difficult ones."

They often share a cocky adventurousness or belligerence and a premature wisdom about the ways of the street.

They also share a resistance to changing as a result of scoldings, counseling, probation or any several other ways juvenile judges generally try to cure juvenile delinquents of their unlawful ways.

Where the reform school inmates differ widely is in the amount of crime they have committed. Some of the youths have raped or robbed. Some have cursed or shoplifted. A quarter of them have merely violated probation.

William G. Schoof, the superintendent of the Reception and Diagnostic Center, where the corrections department evaluates juvenile delinquents committed to the state's care and the learning centers, said he feels that "maybe 15 percent" of the youths placed in the learning centers don't belong in reform school.

State law reserves the learning centers for juveniles between 11 and 20 whose freedom would endanger their community and those

who can't be placed on probation or given some sort of sanction in their community.

Judges decide who fits those definitions.

According to Schoof, each juvenile court sends the state different sorts of youths depending on the nature of the community and what sort of local programs such as probation and court-ordered community service work exist in the area.

Judges in rural areas, for instance, commit a higher percentage of the youths they see in court because they have few local programs beyond probation.

In more urban areas, such as Fairfax County in northern Virginia, juvenile judges have so many alternatives to reform school that they seem to commit only "cutters and slashers" -- bona fide criminals -- to the corrections department, Schoof said.

"They had arsons on down," said one 16-year-old who spent time in Hanover Learning Center for marijuana possession. "Everybody had different cases. Some were too wild to believe."

In all, only about two percent of all the juveniles brought before Virginia's juvenile courts on criminal complaints are sent to the learning centers. In fiscal 1980, that number was about 1,250, according to Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services figures.

The population of the learning centers has hovered between 700 and 900 students since at least 1977.

According to the corrections department, the population in fiscal 1981 was 58 percent white and 42 percent black. Females

accounted for only 13.9 percent of the learning center population.

Most of the juveniles are committed for burglary and other crimes against property, but some are committed for crimes as serious as murder and as minor as cursing.

The corrections department reported that in fiscal 1981 35.8 percent of the commitments were for breaking and entering.

In a breakdown of general offense categories, the department reported that offenses against persons accounted for 14.2 percent of the commitments, and offenses against property accounted for 52.4 percent of the commitments. Other categories in the report were: offenses against morality, decency and peace, 4.5 percent; offenses against public justice and decency (including obstructing a police officer), 1.3 percent; traffic and vehicle offense, .05 percent; alcohol and drug offenses, 2.1 percent; and miscellaneous offenses, 25 percent.

A corrections department spokesman said the miscellaneous category is made up almost entirely of students committed for violating probation.

The fact that a quarter of the learning center inmates in Virginia have been placed there for violating probation terms has fueled criticism.

In a 1981 report about juvenile offenders, the National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention stated, "The characteristics of juvenile offenders who have been placed on probation are not often enough different than those institutionalized."

Officials in Virginia and other states have tried to cut down

the number of improper placements, but with questionable success.

In 1977, the Virginia General Assembly joined in a national trend encouraged by the U.S. Department of Justice and made it illegal for judges to commit youths to the corrections department who had been found guilty of "status offenses." Until then, the status offenses, or laws that can be broken only by juveniles -- running away from home, truancy, being out after curfew, etc. -- could be punished as severely as any other crime.

Juvenile justice critics had long complained that runaways should not be placed in the same institutions and given the same treatment as youths who had exhibited serious criminal behavior.

When Virginia banned imprisonment of status offenders for periods longer than 72 hours, corrections officials predicted the learning center population would shrink dramatically.

It didn't.

Instead, as commitments for status offenses dropped off, commitments for other crimes increased.

The corrections department said in a 1980 report that a possible explanation is that juvenile courts were finding criminal charges for youths who might have been charged as status offenders before the law changed.

Today, few people dispute that explanation for what has come to be called "relabeling."

W. Raymond Minnix, a juvenile judge in rural Bedford and Campbell counties, reflects the sentiments of many judicial colleagues when he explains that current laws give him too few options in dealing with status offenders and too little power to

see that his orders are followed. Thus, he and other judges acknowledge, he might find a child "not innocent" of a delinquent act rather than a status offense in cases where he has a choice.

"If you have to define a kid to be a juvenile delinquent in order to get him treatment services, that's a pretty sad commentary," said Robert E. Shepherd Jr., a law professor who represented children in juvenile court and who also represented the learning center system for four years as an assistant attorney general. "A lot of those kids, in my judgement, don't belong in a correctional setting."

The learning centers offer some treatment programs for emotional and learning problems, but officials say they can accommodate only a small portion of the youths who need them.

"A child should never be committed (to the learning centers) for purposes of rehabilitation," said Peter W. D. Wright, once a learning center employee and now a lawyer who often works to keep his juvenile clients out of the learning centers.

"I will always fight a commitment if one of the thoughts behind it is for the purpose of rehabilitation," Wright said. "There are far better resources in the community."

Wright said children who need treatment, but not a corrections setting, often are brought to juvenile court by their parents on such status offenses as being out of parental control or running away. In such cases, a court intake worker may tell the parent the judge can't exercise much control without a criminal charge. A parent convinced of this might then file a criminal petition

charging the child with theft for taking a few dollars from a purse when the child ran away from home.

Patrick B. Bell, a juvenile court prosecutor in Richmond, said she feels that mislabeling of a different kind happened before the change in the status offender laws. She said judges sent the corrections department delinquent youths under status offense charges out of sympathy.

"What we were doing was branding criminals as status offenders. Now we're calling them what they are," she said. She stressed that many youths sent to the learning centers from Richmond would be dangerous if they were allowed to keep their freedom.

Mrs. Bell's assessment would make at least some reform school inmates feel proud.

One 17-year-old being evaluated at the Reception and Diagnostic Center told a visitor he had been committed for breaking probation that he received for destroying private property, petty theft and assault while a member of several gangs in Tidewater.

"They were afraid I was going to hurt somebody if they let me out on the street," the thin, crewcut youth said.

Would he?

He answered without hesitation:

"I would."

### More Kids: A Story of Two Troubled Brothers

Charles and Paul became juvenile delinquents in order to get help their parents couldn't afford.

"These aren't bad kids," their mother said one Sunday as she and her husband visited Charles in Hanover Learning Center. "These are kids with bad problems that need more help than we can give them. We had to press charges against them to get the service they need."

The boys, close in age and just entering their teens now, were diagnosed years ago as hyperactive, their mother said.

A doctor prescribed a drug to help calm them, but neither boy could adjust to classes in the public schools of their rural community near Roanoke.

Their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds (not their real names), placed them in a church-run boarding school, but the boys had to be taken out when school officials stopped the medication and the boys became uncontrollably wild.

Charles had put his arm through a glass door panel at the school while chasing a girl who teased him, Mrs. Reynolds said.

When the boys came home and went back to public school, the Reynolds' problems grew.



"I would drop them off (at school) in the morning. By the time I got home seven miles away, I'd get a call to pick up one or the other," Mrs. Reynolds said. The boys would have fits of giggling in class and fight other children at slight provocation, she said.

Mr. Reynolds, 50, suffers from a chronic debilitating disease and lives on a disability pension, and Mrs. Reynolds, 48, suffers back problems. They didn't have the strength to control their children.

The Reynolds searched for private schools, but they found they would have to pay tuition of \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year for each boy, Mrs. Reynolds said.

At one expensive school, an administrator advised them to seek help through juvenile court.

"We went into court for Children In Need Of Services, but they said . . . 'We cannot help you in any way unless you come up with some charges.'"

Children In Need Of Services is a designation given to juveniles in Virginia who have committed so-called status offenses, or crimes -- like being beyond parental control -- that only minors can commit.

When the Reynolds boys became Children In Need Of Services, the family was assigned a probation officer. Mrs. Reynolds said workers from other social service agencies also became involved, and that everyone told her to charge her sons with some crime in order to get help.

One day when the probation officer was visiting, the boys got into a row. Charles was chasing Paul with a letter opener and Paul was holding some sort of small knife.

"That's how they decided on the charge," Mrs. Reynolds said.

Both boys were found not innocent of assault and other offenses.

The judge in the case said he upheld criminal charges against the boys partly so he could take them out of their parents' home and send them to the corrections department's Reception and Diagnostic Center for tests.

Judges may order certain tests and treatment for Children In Need Of Services, or CHINS, but they don't have as much discretion as they do with delinquents.

"Any way you look on a CHINS petition, it is a big problem," the judge said.

He said the boys could have been placed in a private school directly from the court, but they would have to remain at home during a lengthy application process. With the delinquent charge, the boys could be placed in the custody of the corrections department while they waited.

The judge said his decision was influenced by the father's infirmity and both parents' repeated denials that they could control the boys.

"There's hardly anything the court can do but listen to that," the judge continued. "I think the charges against the boys by the parents were well-taken and I think the boys were certainly treated as well as they could be within the system."

After a month of evaluation at the Reception and Diagnostic Center, the boys were sent to learning centers in the Richmond area to await space in the special schools. Both were told they could expect to be in the reform school for a month or two.

Corrections officials said 20 to 25 youths usually are in the learning centers at any time while waiting for acceptance into the private placements prescribed at the diagnostic center.

Frank B. Bishop III, the top administrator of the learning center system, said the delays usually take place as officials decide how to pay for the place -- private insurance money is used as well as state funds -- and convince the private institution to accept the youth.

"It's kind of a drawn-out process to get him in," Bishop said.

Charles, a chubby, articulate boy, said he felt his parents didn't love him any more when he was first sent to the locked and regimented environment of the reception and diagnostic center.

Wearing a Pac-Man T-shirt and puffing on, but not inhaling, a cigarette as he sat with his parents at a picnic table on the Hanover Learning Center campus, Charles said that he finds life in the institution pleasant enough.

Some of Charles' clothes were stolen from a bag in the center's gym the day he arrived at Hanover, and he said he had some trouble accepting that they're gone for good.

He said most of his cottage-mates boast of criminal exploits, drinking and taking drugs, but he has found out that three of the approximately 30 boys in his cottage are also waiting for special

placement. He said he looks forward to moving on to the private school.

Before they left to visit Paul at nearby Barrett Learning Center, the Reynolds said that charging their children as criminals was unpleasant but necessary.

Said Mrs. Reynolds: "I feel like they're going to get the help they need and the education that they need."

### Life Inside

Fred's mood was blacker than his discolored, swollen eye.

"Here I am, supposed to be going home soon. And I got written up over something that should have been looked into," he fumed as he picked at his lunch in the dull green cafeteria of Appalachian Learning Center. "It shouldn't have happened."

The fight took place the day before, but it had been building for some time.

Fred, 17, had been in Appalachian more than 13 months when he finally earned enough privileges through good behavior and diligent schoolwork to leave the fenced compound during the day and work in a park in nearby Lebanon.

About the time Fred got his job, another inmate named Sonny began picking a fight. He said he was angry because Fred had borrowed a pair of his sneakers three months before and gotten them dirty.

Every time Sonny taunted him, Fred walked away. The staff stayed out of it.

Then, one day, Fred was walking down the stairs from the dormitories to the showers. Sonny came down behind him with his mouth going. More inmates came down behind him.

In a moment, Fred and Sonny were going toe to toe in the showers.

Staff members stopped the scrap before much physical damage was done, but they docked both youths valuable hours in the system of increasing privileges that helps determine when the students are ready to leave Appalachian.

Now Fred wondered aloud why no staff members had intervened during the days a fight was clearly brewing. And he worried that his "write-up" would lengthen his stay in Virginia's toughest reform school.

"Boosting" is the name that staff and students in Virginia's reform schools give to what happened between Fred and Sonny.

"You know about boosting?" a teen-ager sitting with Fred in the cafeteria asked. "That's setting a man back."

Life in reform school has a quality all its own. Fighting and discipline are only part of it. The students eat, sleep, study and play with the same people day after day and they are under relentless observation by adults. They are told what to do and they do it -- or else.

Loss of privileges, extra work details, or isolation in locked rooms or cells await those who disobey.

Adult supervisors work hard to keep order, and their relationship with the inmates often centers on enforcing strict rules of conduct, especially when one adult may be responsible for up to 30 inmates.

That is the case especially in the cottages and dorms where the youths' activities are less structured than in classes or at meals.

"It's just a very crowded area that just doesn't allow the students to have personal problems or issues very easily," said

Nancy L. Stone, the psychologist at Natural Bridge Learning Center, one of the state's seven reform schools. All the reform schools are called learning centers.

Fred said that when he first arrived at Appalachian, which takes the toughest delinquents and keeps them longest (13 months, on average) and under the strictest security, other inmates stole his clothes and harassed him constantly.

"I couldn't get along with them unless they wanted something from my locker," he said. Finally, at the advice of a staff member, he said, he gained acceptance of the other inmates by getting into a fight.

Rose A. Herr, a former chaplain at Hanover Learning Center, said reform school inmates frequently face situations in which they must fight or disobey institutional rules just to keep their peers from making their lives miserable. She said she has advised youths who are being pressured to fight that "you may stay a little longer (as punishment for breaking the rules), but it might be more pleasant."

All the learning centers permit students who have reached a certain level of privilege to go on off-campus field trips to movies, sporting events and recreational establishments such as bowling alleys or skating rinks. They also permit students nearing the end of their stay to visit home or relatives for weekends and longer periods.

On the campus, life for youths in most of the learning centers consists of attending school on weekday mornings, with academic classes half the day and vocational or "pre-vocational" shop

classes the other half.

When school lets out about 2:30 p.m., inmates may play games or watch television in their cottages until bedtime with breaks for an hour or so of outdoor recreation, dinner, work details, and, for some inmates, counseling or other forms of special treatment.

Cardwell Cottage at Hanover Learning Center is a big brick building with an open dormitory, one room for playing pool and other games, and another for watching television.

On a recent afternoon, the 27 teenaged inmates spent the three hours after school in the sunlit gameroom playing billiards and spades, listening to funk music blare from a radio or sitting in clusters of bright plastic chairs and talking. A few boys lounged in twos and threes on small pieces of carpet beneath the game tables, and a few others were stretched out sleeping on the tile floor.

Two days later, the scene was the same.

"It's the same every day -- boring," said a thin, short 16-year-old whose hand was in a cast decorated with the legends "LSD," "party on forever," and "toke." He said the routine varies a little because on alternating days the radio is tuned to funk stations preferred by the black kids and a hard rock station preferred by the white ones.

The youth said he hurt his hand by beating the head of someone who had snitched to the staff about something he had done. Superintendent James H. Ball later verified the story.

Peaks of excitement during the afternoon in Cardwell Cottage came when the lone adult supervisor, John "Trapper" Setelin, a former prison guard with a military background, called smoke breaks.

Hanover had recently begun allowing students to smoke cigarettes as long as their parents permitted. But at the time of this visit, the packs were kept in a locker and doled out cigarette by cigarette, and lit by the adult supervisor. A few days later, students began carrying their own cigarettes but not matches.

During the afternoon, Setelin periodically gave students permission to use the bathroom in the corner of the game room. He also wrote out a few "categories" for students who got ram-bunctious or into arguments.

Category is the students' name for a citation handed to the students by staff members for violations of rules from the "Youth Code of Conduct" used as a discipline code in all the learning centers. The violations are in three categories that carry different punishments.

Punishments are mainly temporary loss of privileges, but a serious infraction, or "category three," can lead to 72 hours in an isolation room. The isolation rooms are cells, empty bedrooms, or bathrooms, depending on the learning center.

Staff can also place students in isolation rooms for brief periods without writing a category. This is considered treatment rather than discipline and is called "personal control" in Cardwell Cottage.

At one point in the afternoon, the youth who had been beaten for snitching came over to Setelin's table near the door and complained that someone was picking on him. Although 17, and older than most inmates in the cottage, the youth was also the shortest and most childish-looking.

Setelin told the youth -- always called by his last name, McAdoo -- to stop being so sensitive about little slights.

"One day a staff is going to get deaf on you," he warned.

Other youths frequently snapped at McAdoo and called him a liar and a snitch. McAdoo took the criticisms without any response.

One of the youths, a 16-year-old with near-shoulder-length hair and the words "Stone Head" stencilled on his T-shirt, complained to a visitor that he didn't like most of the others in the cottage. He pointed out one newcomer he felt was weird because he smoked cigarettes but didn't inhale them.

Harold, who stayed in Cardwell Cottage for six months before he was released from Hanover last May, said he, too, found it hard to get along with his cottage-mates.

"My honest opinion, I didn't feel open with no one. I didn't trust them," he said. "They try to be your friend and then try to steal something the next minute."

Staff and inmates said that theft of clothes and personal possessions is commonplace in most of the learning centers. On two occasions during recent visits to Hanover by The Richmond News Leader, staff members had to help students come to grips with the probability that clothing that had been stolen from them



probably would not be recovered.

One student said he knew who stole several pairs of his pants on his first day in the institution, but a rumor had it the robber had simply destroyed the garments to avoid getting caught.

Harold said he had been able to free himself from the constant togetherness of the cottage life by earning enough privileges for good behavior to get a job cleaning the administration building at Hanover. There, he said, he could work unsupervised and even manage to smoke an occasional cigarette. At the time, Hanover students were not allowed to smoke.

Inmates in the learning centers live under so many rules that breaking them is almost a way of life. In Cardwell Cottage, youths who didn't have permission to smoke or who had their smoking privileges temporarily revoked took furtive drags off others' cigarettes when Setelin wasn't looking.

Inmates said some of them invented ways to get high by spraying deodorant or smearing toothpaste on a cigarette.

A girl who had spent a year in Bon Air Learning Center said she and a friend once stole glue from an art class and sniffed it with some other friends in their cottage.

In his office in the remote mountain-top compound of Appalachian Learning Center, Superintendent Preston T. Buchanan took from his desk drawer a clanking assortment of "shanks," or homemade knives, metal knuckle guards and other weapons confiscated from the students who had made them in welding shop.

Besides breaking rules, a popular activity of some learning

center students is boasting of crimes they've committed.

Wesley, who was released from Natural Bridge Learning Center in May, said students would compare notes on how to break into cars or houses.

"One boy up there, he could pick just about any lock they had up there with a bobby pin. He would pick the locks in the gym," Wesley said.

Like several other learning center graduates, Wesley said he thought that someone who made an effort to follow the rules, and was serious about learning, could benefit from the experience. Youths from Natural Bridge talked proudly of the skills they had acquired and the things they had made in shop classes.

Lonnie, another Natural Bridge graduate, said he got better food and recreational opportunities at reform school than he did at home.

"I don't see a day when you've got to go bored," he said. "If you got a radio. You're either in the gym playing ball or in the cottage playing cards. . . . If there was girls up there it would be fun."

Although Natural Bridge Learning Center may become co-educational before the end of the year, the learning centers at present (except for the Reception and Diagnostic Center in Richmond, where youths spend a month being evaluated when they're committed to the corrections department) are segregated by sex.

Girls from Bon Air Learning Center have socials with boys from most of the institutions, but day-to-day life is segregated.

Corrections officials and staff in most of the institutions say some homosexual experimentation is inevitable among adolescents without other sexual outlets.

The staff at Appalachian Learning Center, the remotest outpost of the learning center system and also the institution that holds students the longest, was frank about the problem.

Buchanan, the superintendent, said students are caught periodically in various sorts of sexual involvement.

Most often, he said, a stronger student will force a weaker student to perform some sexual act.

"I don't think it's a matter of sexual relief in these cases. I think it's a matter of intimidation and supremacy."

Henry K. DeLoatche, the psychologist at Appalachian, later said the students who do the intimidating are not looked on by others as homosexuals. Other students look down only on the student forced to submit, he said.

Several young inmates freely admitted they find sexual release through masturbation, often in groups.

"You ain't seeing no woman for a long time, you go beat your meat on the TV, them Solid Gold dancers," one youth said.

"Everybody be back there shoulder to shoulder," another inmate confirmed. The youths said opportunities come when staff members are seated at the far end of their living area, away from the television room.

Because Appalachian is so remote, girls from Bon Air are never sent for socials.

At Hanover Learning Center, most of the inmates in Cardwell Cottage were in a joking mood after John Setelin told them he would let them take their showers quickly so they could get back upstairs in time to watch a horror movie on television before bed.

As groups of 10 went down the hall to the shower room, the other inmates sat in the dormitory, where each had a bed, a locker for possessions and a section of wall decorated with drawings, rock group posters and homemade collages.

Sleeping quarters vary from learning center to learning center, and even within one institution. Open dormitories are gradually being replaced in most institutions with private rooms that hold one or several inmates. The rooms give each student a little privacy and permit easier supervision and security.

In Cardwell, Setelin hovered in the hallway between the shower and the dormitory so he could keep an eye on everyone.

When he looked into the dorm and saw two boys pretending to fist fight, he awarded them each a category one citation.

"We weren't serious or nothin', Trap," one boy complained.

"If you were serious, I would have given you a category two," Setelin responded gently.

"Aw," the boy groaned.

"Deal with it now," Setelin added as the boy moped back to his area and picked up his towel. "Show me how big you are and deal with it."

"I can deal with it, Trapper," the boy said.

"I know you can," Setelin said, and walked the boy to the showers.

Setelin, who, like many other cottage supervisors in the learning centers, describes himself as a father figure to the inmates, said he wasn't certain what effect learning center life had on young delinquents.

He said he fears there is some truth to what he described as the "crab theory," in which one or another of a dozen crabs in a basket will reach out and pull down any of their number that tries to climb over the side and escape.

"You're in the crab theory right here," Setelin said. "You could have 27 good ones. The bad one will pull them down."

### Staff

"If you're wrong, you get burnt. If you're right, you've got no problems."

James Baylor says the "kids" in his cottage at Hanover Learning Center for juvenile delinquents obey him because they know exactly how he'll react to anything they do.

"Me and the kids, we communicate together real well," he said one Sunday afternoon. He kept watch, as he talked, over 26 teenage boys playing cards, reading or watching television in the cottage's day room.

Of all the adults working in Virginia's state reform school system -- counselors, teachers, psychologist, therapists among them -- the lay supervisors who work in the cottages have the most contact with the young inmates.

Baylor and the other members of the cottage staff at Hanover and the state's six other reform schools wake the youths in the morning, supervise their work and relaxation, deal with their fights and problems and put them to bed at night.

It's tough work.

The Virginia Department of Corrections requires the supervisors to train for the job at the department's staff academy before starting work, and to take about 40 hours additional training each year.

But many supervisors working in the reform schools said they never took their basic training because they were needed in the cottages as soon as they were hired. Some said they went years between classes because schedules were too tight to spare them.

Frank B. Bishop III, the top administrator in the reform school system, said the rules requiring training have been enforced more strictly this year than in the past, and that the basic training courses have been rewritten and lengthened from one week to two weeks.

Wendell Fitz, 29, has been a supervisor at Natural Bridge Learning Center for seven years. His training that year consisted of working one midnight shift with another supervisor, he said. The next night he was on his own.

Fitz said he finally got time to take the basic training course last year.

Baylor, who is a veteran supervisor and a cottage manager at Hanover Learning Center, said he has had formal training in supervising youths, restraining them when they "snap out." He also took courses about drug and alcohol abuse by adolescents, he said.

All Baylor's skill in talking with the reform school inmates about their problems comes from his own job experience and the experience of raising two children, he said.

Baylor and other supervisors in the reform schools said they feel the youths in their cottages talk more openly with them than they do to the counselors and other treatment professionals.

Dealing with the youths' problems can be a demanding job.

"They'll burn out your staff in six months," Ramon E. Pardue said about the reform school inmates. "They'll absorb all the energy you've got, then they'll need some more."

Pardue, a former reform school counselor and later a corrections department official, now is assistant executive director at St. Joseph's Villa, a private home for adolescents.

Frank Bishop acknowledged that supervisors do burn out on the job, and frequently move on to other jobs within a few years. The supervisors with college degrees can become counselors or administrators, and supervisors with only high school diplomas can go into food service, maintenance or transportation services.

Besides being difficult, the work pays relatively little.

As in any other job, some people make better supervisors than others.

Only 10 years ago, the programs in the reform schools centered on hard work and harsh discipline, including spanking and whipping. Some supervisors remember those days and miss them.

Dennis Waite, chief of the 22 psychologists who work in the reform schools, said he was teaching a class some supervision techniques when one supervisor interrupted him and recalled how "we really taught them in those days" when an inmate who caused trouble would be forced to haul rocks from one place to another until his hands were bloody.

At the newly-opened Oak Ridge Learning Center, Superintendent Dr. Gayle Y. Browne said she felt some reform schools in

the state had a high percentage of supervisors who use "macho, punitive techniques" and were overly hard on the inmates.

"It's almost as if they were looking for punitive people," she said.

C. R. Rotenberry was an adult prison guard for 12 years before he became a supervisor at Appalachian Learning Center. He said he would like more freedom to follow his own instincts about discipline, but nonetheless follows the latest rules.

"You have to take a lot from these kids," he said.

"You feel sometimes as if you have just as many rules and regulations to follow as the boys who are locked up," said a supervisor in another state reform school.

All the reform schools have college-educated counselors who meet periodically with each inmate and act in some ways as an advocate.

"The kid and I are kind of like in the hub of a many-spoked wheel. And I try to run in and out of the spokes with him," said H. Allen Davis, a counselor at Natural Bridge Learning Center.

While many of the counselors, Davis among them, have degrees in sociology or psychology, a college degree of any kind will fill the job's educational requirement. In some cases, counselors began as part-time summer supervisors while in college and stayed with the job until they were promoted to counselor.

"They drift into this type of work," said Dr. John F. Mesinger, a University of Virginia special education professor

whose students sometimes work in the state reform schools. He said some of the counselors are very good, but others really don't have the proper training.

"They're really on the line with some really emotionally challenging kids," Mesinger said. ". . . They don't know their own personalities well enough to know what's bugging them about the kids."

Psychologists work for the central Behavioral Services Unit rather than the individual reform schools, but each reform school has one or two psychologists on campus. Beaumont Learning Center was to get a third resident psychologist this month.

All but five of the 22 psychologists who work in the learning center system have master's degrees rather than doctor of philosophy degrees. A psychologist with a master's degree can't get a license to practice, but psychologists who work for the state government are not required to have licenses.

Waite, who supervises the psychologists, said he is working to get better-qualified staff, but he said his staff is competent despite its comparatively low level of training.

The main problem the psychologists face is their inability, because of time limitations, to do therapy with more than small numbers of the juveniles in any reform school, Waite said. Each psychologist in the reform schools has a waiting list of potential clients.

Meanwhile, the major responsibility of dealing with the young inmates and their problems rests with supervisors like James Baylor.

"I'll probably stay right where I am because I like working with kids," he said.



### Treatment

Making your day is good.

Meeting criteria is good.

Acting out is bad. So is being manipulative, disruptive or assaultive.

Virginia treats rather than punishes its juvenile delinquents, and youths sent to the state's reform schools soon learn the language and rules of treatment.

The "learning centers," as the reform schools are called, offer school and shop classes, counseling and various kinds of therapy. They also teach manners by rewarding students for being good and punishing them for being bad.

"Once their behavior is under control, then you do the real work," said Gayle L. Turner, a counselor at Bon Air Learning Center.

But many observers question whether behavior control programs, in which young inmates earn privileges, points or play money for good behavior and lose them for bad behavior, have become too important in the overcrowded and understaffed reform schools.

"So much time is spent getting control that the treatment of other problems never comes up," said Rose A. Herr, a former chaplain at Hanover Learning Center.

To an outsider, the jargon of behavior control can sound bizarre. Inmates and staff talk about "meeting criteria," in

one program or "making your day" in another program that requires students to "earn" each day through good behavior or repeat it before eventually reaching a new "level" of greater privilege.

One of the behavior control programs at Hanover Learning Center requires staff in cottages, classes and recreational activities to rate the students on a series of "adaptive," or desirable, and "maladaptive," or undesirable behaviors.

On a recent afternoon and evening there, supervisor John Setelin, a bearded, balding 38-year-old Vietnam veteran who worked previously as a respiratory therapist and a prison guard, was the lone adult supervising 27 teenaged boys living in Cardwell Cottage.

Setelin, whom everyone calls Trapper, said two supervisors were supposed to work in the cottage between the time the boys returned from school about 2:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. bedtime. But he said scheduling problems often required "single coverage" during the summer months.

As the boys took their showers that night, Setelin had to keep track of them in the dormitory, a hallway and shower room all at once. He stood in the hall outside the showers, watched everyone and also played referee to a growing squabble between a new inmate and another boy who was threatening him because he felt the new kid had insulted his grandmother.

When the boys eventually were dressed in pajamas and settled before a movie or writing letters in the television room, Setelin pulled out the forms used to record behaviors.

"I did adaptive during the shower," he said. "You do it so much it's second nature. You don't need that sheet sitting in front of you."

Setelin began listing whether each of the 27 boys brushed his teeth, washed and dressed properly. He said he would monitor maladaptive behavior as the boys watched television, wrote their letters or played cards that night.

Maladaptive behavior includes being disruptive, annoying, abusive to property, self abusive. It also includes various inappropriate sexual behaviors and such "stereotyped behavior" as rocking, pacing and fidgeting.

One recent graduate of Hanover said he didn't mind being rated for adaptive behavior, "but that maladaptive . . ."

The graduate said he can remember being cited for self-abuse because he scratched his head with his finger instead of a comb. He said he was cited for disrupting because he called out encouragement to his teammates during a game.

James H. Ball Jr., Hanover's superintendent, acknowledged that staff members sometimes give a student bad grades for behavior out of personal animosity.

An inmate at Appalachian Learning Center, which has a strict behavior program, was more blunt:

"They burn you when they want to burn you," he said.

At all the learning centers, students meet periodically with a "treatment team" that consists of the cottage manager, school

teacher, a counselor and occasionally a probation officer from a student's home community.

The treatment team is partly responsible for determining when the inmates, who are placed in the learning centers on indeterminate sentences, have met their treatment objectives and are ready to leave. The team members consider progress in classes, obedience and performance in the behavior control programs.

Only in 1973 did the Virginia Department of Corrections begin treatment programs that followed the inmates from the classroom and vocational shops back into the cottage.

The new treatment focus of the learning centers was christened the Learning Environment Action Plan and commonly called LEAP.

Under LEAP, cottage populations were to be reduced to 15 or 20 youths who would be classified according to behavioral and educational types.

LEAP died a quiet death because, for one thing, some 95 percent of the juveniles coming into the learning center system fit into the same classification.

"LEAP was, I think theoretically ill-founded from day one," said Dennis Waite, the chief psychologist in the learning center system. He stressed, however, that he believes a system founded on solid treatment concepts could really help rehabilitate juvenile delinquents if the state corrections department had more staff, more money, and less-crowded reform schools.

Waite acknowledged that, except for some treatment programs for some students with certain types of behavioral, emotional and learning problems, treatment for most of the inmates is a

euphemism for behavioral control.

Waite is not alone among Virginia's criminal justice officials in his frank attitude about the weaknesses of treatment programs in the learning centers.

In an August, 1981, report entitled, "Crime and the Justice System in Virginia," the state Division of Justice and Crime Prevention (now the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services) listed as a problem that some learning centers have treatment programs to serve the individual needs of its students, but others did not.

In a lengthy study of the learning center system released in 1977, "Children and Youth in Trouble in Virginia," the Virginia State Crime Commission said flatly: "While treatment is reported to be the primary objective of the learning centers, this objective is not being met in most cases."

The crime commission study said that learning center staff members often confused treatment with discipline.

The commission also said that goals set out in the inmates' treatment plans were not specific enough to be helpful and that students viewed the treatment teams as being more oriented toward discipline than treatment.

Other problems noted in the crime commission study were insufficient staff in the cottages, too much staff turnover and absenteeism in some learning centers, and too few counselors, psychologists and other treatment professionals to meet the needs of the inmates.

The study also noted critically that statistics were not kept and evaluations were not done on many of the treatment programs.

Crime commission staff members said that many of the problems outlined in their study still exist.

Some changes have been made, however. William E. Weddington, the corrections department's assistant director for program development and evaluation, said the department has begun building an evaluation system into each new program.

Even now, though, treatment programs in the learning centers are often begun or abandoned with little help from the psychologists, who have offices in the learning centers but work for Dennis Waite's Behavioral Service Unit.

It's not that the psychologists don't want to be involved; often, they're not invited.

"We're like in a sense consultants to our own department," Waite said. "I don't have any authority in any of the institutions."

Nancy L. Stone, the psychologist at Natural Bridge Learning Center, said the behavior control program at Natural Bridge was never meant to be a behavior control program.

Ms. Stone said she designed a behavioral check list for staff members to fill out so she could monitor how students acted in their cottages. Staff members began telling the students when they were awarding a "bad check" so the survey came to be a behavior control tool.

Waite and other treatment experts caution that even good programs may fail unless staff members are trained how to administer them.

Dr. John Mesinger, a University of Virginia special education professor, trains college students to teach delinquents. He sends his students to work in the learning centers and other institutions for problem children.

Mesinger said he has seen some theoretically sound programs suffer because they're not administered properly.

"Labels change but many of the practices remain," he said. "You don't change the quality of the program just by renaming it and putting someone who's not trained (in) to run the program."

George Ricketts calls the tendency to scrap one program and replace it with another the "modality game."

Ricketts is the executive director of the Chaplain Service of the Churches of Virginia, which provides chaplains to the learning centers, and also a long-time member of the state crime commission. He said treatment methods go in and out of style and that some learning centers seem to adopt the latest one that comes along.

For all its problems with treatment, the learning center system does have a number of programs that are widely praised. What they have in common are small numbers of participants who receive a lot of attention from a relatively large staff.

A good example is the Bridge Program at Natural Bridge Learning Center. In it, eight youths live for an average of four months in a log cabin that inmates built on the outskirts of the campus.

Instead of attending classes, the youths, who are overseen by a staff of seven, perform wilderness work projects and the day-to-day tasks of living without modern conveniences.

The purpose of the program, according to Natural Bridge Superintendent William E. Hepler, is to teach the inmates to work for the common good by doing work that affects the well-being of the entire group.

Another widely-praised program is Camp New Hope, which adjoins the Natural Bridge campus and provides wilderness camping, recreation and adventure programs of varying lengths for youths from all the learning centers and other organizations that deal with children.

Oak Ridge Learning Center, which opened this year, will eventually treat youths who are "mildly to moderately" retarded as well as "aggressive and assaultive," according to superintendent Dr. Gail Y. Browne.

Dr. Browne said the Oak Ridge program will use a higher staff-student ratio than most other learning centers, and concentrate on preparing the students to live outside an institution.

She said most of the youths have been in mental health and corrections institutions for most of their lives, and have become so "institutionalized" that they may not even be able to tell time, let alone make a decision about when to eat.

At Oak Ridge, the 40 students will be served by a staff of 59, Dr. Browne said. The cost of running the program will be more than \$28,000 a year per student, or nearly twice the cost of running the main programs at nearby Bon Air Learning Center.

A similarly intensive program for girls with serious emotional and behavioral problems began at Bon Air in 1980 after the

corrections department and the Virginia Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation to determine if residential mental health services could be provided in a corrections institution.

A study published this summer found the Keller Hall Pilot Project succeeded in several ways. The 34 girls who began the program had, on average, been in five institutions before placement in Keller Hall. Twelve girls completed the program and only one of them was back in a learning center or jail six months later. The rest were living independently, in group homes, foster homes or with their parents.

Information about the girls who, for one reason or another, did not complete the program was incomplete because nearly half could not be located by the authors of the study. But of six who were found, one was in a group or foster home. The rest were either back in Bon Air, in jail or in a psychiatric ward.

Keller Hall treatment was so intensive that staff and resources had to be taken from other programs in the learning center system. The staff members were given extra training, at least two staff members were on duty 24 hours a day, a psychiatrist and psychologist visited regularly and each girl had private counseling sessions twice a week.

The cost per girl was about double that of the other cottages at Bon Air, which cost about \$17,000 per girl per year.

Cottage costs do not include the costs of schooling.

Dennis Waite said Keller Hall's program probably could be modified to be beneficial to many more students in the learning centers.

But it was a pilot project that succeeded, in part, by taking services away from other programs. Without more money, he said, the methods used successfully in Keller Hall won't lead to any large-scale improvements in the system.

"I kind of wonder what we did prove," Waite said.



### Conflict

Dennis Waite says Virginia's reform school system doesn't work and he knows the reason why.

"It's this confusion about whether we're in the rehabilitation business or the punishment business," he says.

Waite, chief of the 22 psychologists who work with juvenile delinquents in Virginia's seven reform schools, believes that young lawbreakers could benefit from treatment programs in publicly-run reform schools if lawmakers, judges and corrections officials shared the same goals.

The "confusion" he complained about in a recent interview starts with state laws that give the reform schools the dual purpose of rehabilitating delinquents who can't be handled in their own communities and protecting society.

Judges are responsible for deciding who to commit to state custody, Waite said, and judges often hamper treatment efforts in several ways.

In the case of juveniles who have committed serious crimes, he said, judges often interfere with treatment in the name of public safety by contesting or even overruling corrections department decisions that a juvenile is ready to return to his community.

Even though the law gives corrections officials the power to determine when a reform school student is ready to return to society, some judges tell the department to hold a juvenile for a

certain time, or threaten to resurrect suspended charges if the youth is released before the judge feels enough time has been served.

Waite said judges also create another problem by sending the corrections department juvenile delinquents who probably won't endanger their communities by staying free. He said the judges commit these children and teenagers for treatment and sometimes specify the programs in which they want youths.

"Juvenile judges really don't play by the rules. They do things illegally. They fancy themselves as social workers," Waite said. "They want to send us a kid to punish this kid... and they want to send us another one to rehabilitate him -- under the same code" of laws.

William F. Thomas Jr., a juvenile judge from Pulaski County and president of the Virginia Council of Juvenile Court Judges, acknowledged that judges often stay actively interested in juvenile delinquents they send to the reform schools out of concern for the youths and their own communities.

"If the judge has no interest in the children that come in front of him, maybe he should be doing something else," Thomas said.

Thomas denied that judges break any laws; they simply convince corrections officials to take the course of action they feel is best, he said.

Thomas said Virginia has 70 juvenile judges, and each has a different way of operating.

"I feel the judges get a bad rap," said Frank B. Bishop III.

Bishop, the top administrator of the reform school system, said judges have the tough job of representing communities that say, in effect, "Yes, we want the child treated, but we want him in a secure setting until he gets himself together."

Bishop said corrections officials often meet with judges and work with them in designing a treatment plan and timetable that will be acceptable.

As an example, Bishop said he recently met with a judge who ordered that two juveniles found guilty of several armed robberies would be held in the learning centers until they turned 21.

"The judge said if we send them home, he had outstanding charges all ready," Bishop said.

But the judge eventually said he might relent if the corrections officials kept him informed of the juveniles' progress in treatment and consulted with him about a release date."

"I have yet to find a judge who wasn't workable," Bishop said.

The conflict between rehabilitation and punishment goes much further, however, than the relationship between learning centers and the judges.

Bishop said the goal of treating delinquents in their own communities is hampered by a scarcity of community corrections programs beyond probation.

Urban communities sometimes sentence juveniles to work in public service jobs or to pay back people from whom they've stolen, but many rural judges have no options beyond probation or reform school.

"If everything worked perfect, it could be that our business would be very small," Bishop said.

Even within the reform school system, he said, the dual demands of treatment and public safety constantly battle for dominance.

Ten years ago, the corrections department made a strong commitment to treating the behavior problems that lead to delinquency. Officials began classifying the students according to their personalities and educational needs and prescribing individual treatment.

But that system "only took into account the treatment need -- and that was the void in it," Bishop said.

A subsequent classification system based only on security factors -- seriousness of the crime and history of violent acts -- was scrapped because it was too similar to adult prison classification and ignored individual treatment needs.

At present, corrections officials are trying to design a new classification system that will take account of treatment and security needs.

The new system will probably also specify a minimum and a maximum length of stay for each classification category, Bishop said.

He said students currently are placed in treatment programs that may run from about three months to a little over a year. But the students in any of the programs can become bogged down for months if they fail to fulfill the requirements of the program.

"There's fairness involved in it," Bishop said.

For the moment, classification consists of individual treatment plans. But to protect public safety, certain students carry a "precautionary case service alert" in their files.

The alert was devised after a young rapist was released in less than a year to the dismay of the judge who found him guilty. It requires that a special committee, certain community representatives and the judge all have some say in determining the release date.

But even when corrections officials can convince judges to let them send juveniles home, they can't do anything about slowing down a commitment rate that keeps the learning centers overcrowded.

Dennis Waite said the population of Beaumont Learning Center in Powhatan County briefly outgrew its budgeted 200-student population by nearly 100 students about two years ago.

"I can guarantee you they weren't doing any treatment," Waite said. "If you can keep the kids from killing each other (when populations run that high), you're doing a good job."

The overcrowding might get worse if state judges can win legislative approval of a proposed law that would let them lock up status offenders who have violated court orders, Bishop said.

Status offenders, or juveniles who commit crimes that only minors can commit -- like running away from home or skipping school -- were routinely sent to the reform schools until 1977. That year, the state banned imprisonment of status offenders.

Since the law change, however, judges have complained they no longer have enough power to see that status offenders obey court orders.

Corrections officials hope the lawmakers will vote down that proposal.

In fact, Bishop said, the corrections department plans to ask the General Assembly to set a limit on reform school populations.

He said such legislation might prompt communities to develop more local corrections programs.

### Afterward

"I used to break in all around here," Lonnie said with a smile that flashed his gold front tooth. "We was putting (a nearby business district) out of business. They was losing \$2,000 worth of merchandise a week."

That was last year. That was before Lonnie, a skinny 16-year-old from a public housing project in one of Virginia's largest cities, was arrested with several young friends for breaking into a jewelry store. That was before he spent nearly seven months in a state-run reform school called Natural Bridge Learning Center.

"I won't touch nothing that don't belong to me now," he said. "I ain't about getting locked up no more. It ain't no fun."

No one can say for sure what Lonnie's chances are of keeping his promise.

Of more than 1,000 juvenile delinquents sent to Virginia's seven reform schools each year, nearly a quarter get into trouble again and are sent back a second time before they reach adulthood.

No records are kept of those who later get into trouble in other states, but there is evidence that many reform school graduates apparently become adult criminals. In 1981, nearly a

third of the inmates in Virginia's adult prisons had been in a state reform school when they were younger.

The reform schools are optimistically called "learning centers," and their two-fold purpose is to protect society from harm by dangerous juvenile delinquents and to turn young law-breakers into peaceable citizens.

In fact, after four months to a year or so of strict discipline, enforced class attendance, counseling and various forms of therapy, students like Lonnie often leave reform school with a new attitude.

But old attitudes and old ways of life often return when the youths go home to a real world that remains as it was.

"Nothing has happened to change the environment," said Robert E. Shepherd Jr., a law professor who spent four years representing the state reform schools as an assistant attorney general. "Probably the only change that has taken place is that everyone in the family has been relieved that he's not there."

Like many who work in the reform schools, Henry K. DeLoatche, the psychologist at Appalachian Learning Center, has similar reservations.

"I'm afraid that what we get are surface changes," DeLoatche said.

Fred, a 28-year-old inmate at Southampton Corrections Center, a Virginia adult prison, said he worked hard to stay out of trouble when he was released from Beaumont Learning Center (then Beaumont Training School) in 1970. He had been committed for burglary.

"I tried everything I could to avoid it," he said. But Beaumont left Fred with what he calls his "label." His old friends back home in one of Virginia's coastal cities knew he had been to the "boy's home," so they kept testing to see whether he was as tough as his reputation.

"I think I got into more fights getting out of Beaumont than I ever had to deal with," he said. "Just behind the label."

He says he spent most of his energy immediately after his release from Beaumont staying away from his old friends and from heroin. He kicked his drug habit in Beaumont and never went back to it, he said.

Fred, a lean and intense man who sprinkles his conversation with terms usually associated with psychologists and criminal justice experts, said he worked at a number of jobs and stayed out of serious trouble for five years after Beaumont.

In 1975, he got drunk and robbed a store at gunpoint. He was arrested about a week later and has been locked up since then.

For 16-year-old Harold, who has been home from a six-month stay at Hanover Learning Center since mid-May, staying free is tied closely to behaving in a way that pleases his parents.

Harold was placed on probation after his father found a pipeful of marijuana at home and called in police.

He violated the probation by staying out too late at night, so the judge in his central Virginia county placed him under house arrest. When he walked out of the house during a disagreement with his parents, Harold was sent to reform school.

Now, to keep from going back to Hanover, Harold says he makes an effort to get home early in the evening and to stay away from his marijuana-smoking former friends.

"I gave it up because it's not worth it," he said.

Harold's mother, who had been preparing chitlins in the kitchen while her son talked in the living room of their modern townhouse apartment, said Harold has changed "to a degree" since Hanover but still has habits -- smoking cigarettes among them -- that she doesn't like.

His father, a truck driver, said he won't hesitate to bring his son back into court if he misbehaves.

"When I find out he's too far out for me to handle, or his mother to handle . . .," Harold's father said and left the consequences unspoken. "Anything for Harold," he added. "Anything for Harold."

Harold's mother, who works in a cigarette factory, said some friends and relatives have chastised her and her husband for turning their son over to police, but she feels the court acted in Harold's best interests.

"Nobody was trying to punish him; we were just trying to get to the bottom," she said.

"They got a beautiful program up there (at Hanover)," Harold's father continued. "It's just counseling. That's the way I look at it."

Another graduate of Virginia's reform school system is Darla, whose year-long stay at Bon Air Learning Center in 1979 and 1980 was merely one episode in the cycle of trouble and treatment that

has continued through about half of her 17 years.

She said she resumed her habits of staying out late, drinking and using drugs -- which led to numerous charges of being drunk in public and violating probation -- almost as soon as she was released.

After Bon Air, Darla was to live under strict supervision in a group home in the same central Virginia city where her mother lives. She ran home after one day in the group home, and her probation officer agreed to let her stay there.

She has been through several private drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs since then. But she has calmed down lately simply because she's getting older and tired of being in constant trouble, she said.

Her plan now is to begin working for a living, she said.

"If the courts would have just let me alone, I think I would have been better off," she said with a mischievous smile. Her mother, a youthful woman sitting nearby in the living room of their small house in a working class neighborhood, shrugged.

"I don't think it helped her or hurt her," Darla's mother said. "At least I didn't have to worry about her getting picked up and killed" while hitchhiking.

Darla's mother has worked rotating shifts as a hospital nursing assistant since her divorce about seven years ago. She said she has never been strict enough with her three children.

"I think I would rather live on welfare and know that they was home if they was small again," she said.

Lonnie, the 16-year-old who insisted his stay at Natural Bridge Learning Center cured him of stealing, said his main goal

now is to make the school football team. He said his friends won't distract him because they still commit burglaries and now treat him as an enemy.

"They want to punch out my gold" tooth, he said as he sat on the front steps of his mother's apartment and watched some little girls play hopscotch on the sidewalk.

As he talked, three teen-agers walked up the sidewalk toward the group of little girls, glanced briefly at Lonnie and hopped through the chalked-on hopscotch diagram without a word.

"There are some of my old friends coming down the street now," Lonnie said.



### Politics

A few states have closed most of their reform schools and experimented with other ways of dealing with juvenile delinquents.

Massachusetts sentences some juvenile delinquents to live with adults who are paid to supervise one youth. Pennsylvania sends some urban delinquents to inner-city group homes run by former gang members.

But a majority of states maintain large reform school systems and use them for most delinquents who aren't good enough for probation or bad enough for adult prisons.

When it comes to the numbers, Virginia falls about in the middle.

In 1977, for instance, Virginia ranked 21st in the rate at which it sent youths to reform school, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

That year, the state sent 208 residents between the ages of 10 and 18 for every 100,000 in the same age group.

Delaware, by contrast, sent juveniles to reform school at the rate of 605 per 100,000. Vermont, which closed all its reform schools, sent none. Massachusetts placed juveniles in reform schools at the rate of two per 100,000, and New York locked them up at the rate of 38 per 100,000.

"It sounds . . . that Virginia is fairly conservative in handling delinquent kids," said Paul DeMuro. "It's relying mainly on the institutions. They're with the majority of states, unfortunately."

DeMuro, director of the Office of Social Justice of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, is an opponent of large institutions for juvenile delinquents.

He praises such states as Massachusetts, which closed its reform schools 10 years ago and switched to a system of placing delinquents in small, privately run programs designed for youths who previously had been sent to reform schools.

DeMuro, along with other experts interviewed for this report, said every reputable study of youth corrections has found that large reform schools with more than 10 to 15 inmates inevitably fail to rehabilitate delinquents or protect society.

Virginia officials and lawmakers who have read the same studies as DeMuro tend to agree. But the officials argue that closing the reform schools suddenly is too radical a move for a conservative state. They point out that Virginia is slowly developing a network of private alternative facilities they believe eventually will reduce the number of inmates in the reform schools.

Frank Bishop is the top administrator in the state reform school system. He favors placing fewer delinquents in the reform schools, he said, but not hastily.

"Virginia's approach to it has been much more level-headed and moderate," Bishop said.

Ira M. Schwartz, former administrator of the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and now a fellow at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs in Minnesota, said research shows a conservative approach doesn't work in changing youth corrections systems.

As long as reform schools stay the same size, he said, they will remain full. The alternative programs also will be filled but with youths who otherwise would have been placed on probation or sent home with a scolding, he said.

"Those who argue that you can just simply develop alternatives and take a rational approach -- it just doesn't work that way," Schwartz said.

He also pointed out that while Virginia is moderate in the number of youths it sends to reform school, it ranked 13th in a 1979 census bureau survey of the total number of juveniles locked up in reform schools, detention homes, adult jails and prisons.

In the mid-1970s, Schwartz helped conduct a study of the state reform school system for the Virginia State Crime Commission and a committee of the General Assembly.

He has watched the system informally since then, he said, and agrees with state officials that conditions and treatment programs in the institutions have improved.

However, Frank Bishop said Virginia will have a tough time maintaining the progress made in the reform schools during the past 10 years.

Like all state government agencies, the reform school system administration has been instructed to reduce its budget by 5 percent.

"We're in the process of cutting it, if you want to know the truth," Bishop said. "Bad news on the horizon. Bad news."

Jerome Miller is president of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives and a critic of most reform school systems. He is the former government official who closed reform schools in Massachusetts.

Miller said that good programs that appear from time to time in reform schools inevitably disappear when "bureaucratic needs," such as the current budget crunch, take over.

"The tradition is that you can't sustain good programs in institutions; they're unreformable," Miller said. "It's a contradiction in terms to think that you could treat a kid individually in a large institution where he's a captive."

Cost, according to Miller, is another reason reform schools should be closed. He pointed out that the best preparatory schools currently charge about \$6,000 a year for room, board and tuition.

A coalition of private agencies that provide residential care for some delinquents in Virginia published a study this year that found the average cost for keeping youths in the state reform schools was about \$25,000.

That figure came from analysis of the budgets of the corrections department, which runs the reform schools, and the state Rehabilitative School Authority, which runs the academic and vocational education programs in the reform schools.

"When the sons or daughters of police and legislators get in trouble, they move heaven and earth" to keep the children out of reform schools, Miller said. "We're spending much more to destroy the sons and daughters of the poor than the middle class."

spends to save its own."

He said the cost of reform schools would be much lower if they were reserved for the few juvenile delinquents who are violent and pose a physical threat to society.

"There are alot of very lightweight kids that they're spending \$16,000 a year on that could do very well for three or four thousand in their own community," Miller said.

Del. Frank M. Slayton, D-South Boston, is chairman of the state House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Corrections and has been instrumental for years in the fate of legislation affecting the corrections department.

He acknowledged that Virginia's alternative youth corrections programs haven't really been used as alternatives, but said that's largely because communities don't want to divert juveniles from the learning centers.

"I just simply don't feel that the time is right to try and impose any larger responsibilities on the localities because they simply don't have the dollars to do it," Slayton said.

He said Virginia lawmakers have not formally considered the radical measure of closing reform schools and making that money available for the development of real alternatives.

"It very well may be that we should take a look at that. We're putting out \$25,000 per child per year" in the learning centers, Slayton said.

Such a move, however, would take considerable determination on the part of the legislators.

The General Assembly once decided to close Appalachian Learning Center in remote Russell County and open a similar

institution in Roanoke, which is much closer to the homes most of the youths sent there.

Even though money was appropriated for the move, political forces -- including pressure from Russell County residents dependent on Appalachian for jobs -- killed the plan.

The money was eventually used for renovations in the learning centers.



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**1976**

DAVID BEDNAREK	<i>The Milwaukee Journal</i> Milwaukee, WI	Desegregation
MICHAEL BOWLER	<i>The Sun</i> Baltimore, MD	Textbook Selection
HELEN CARRINGER	<i>The Beacon Journal</i> Akron, OH	Parent Power
JAMES A. KILLACKY	<i>The Daily Oklahoman</i> Oklahoma City, OK	Teacher Unions
JACQUELYN KING	<i>WRR News Radio</i> Dallas, TX	Testing
ANDREW MILLER	<i>The Kansas City Star</i> Kansas City, KS	Testing
LAEL MORGAN	<i>Tundra Times</i> Fairbanks, AK	Bilingual Education
LINDA STAHL	<i>The Courier-Journal</i> Louisville, KY	Basic Skills
STANLEY WELLBORN	<i>U.S. News &amp; World Report</i> Washington, DC	Federal Education Policy

**1977**

CONSTANTINE ANGELOS	<i>The Seattle Times</i> Seattle, WA	Basic Skills
MURIEL COHEN	<i>The Boston Globe</i> Boston, MA	Teacher Education
REBECCA KUZINS	<i>The Muskegon Chronicle</i> Muskegon, MI	Special Education
LORENZO MIDDLETON	<i>The Washington Star</i> Washington, DC	Desegregation
CYNTHIA PARSONS	<i>The Christian Science Monitor</i> Boston, MA	School Finance
WAYNE F. REILLY	<i>The Bangor Daily News</i> Bangor, ME	Competency Based Testing
DALE ALAN RICE	<i>The Post-Standard</i> Syracuse, NY	Magnet Schools

# 1978

HUNTLY COLLINS	<i>The Oregonian</i> Portland, OR	Gifted & Talented Education
JIMMIE COVINGTON	<i>The Commercial Appeal</i> Memphis, TN	Competency Based Testing
JOE DONOVAN	<i>KYW News Radio</i> Philadelphia, PA	Basic Skills
GARY FIFE	<i>United Indian Planners News</i> Washington, DC	Indian Education
ROBERT FRAHM	<i>The Journal Times</i> Racine, WI	Competency Based Testing
DIANE GRANAT	<i>Chicago Daily Herald</i> Arlington Heights, IL	Parent Power
SAUNDRA IVEY	<i>The Tennessean</i> Nashville, TN	School Finance: Tax Revolt Issues
RICK JANKA	<i>The Milwaukee Sentinel</i> Milwaukee, WI	Achieving Quality Education
ROSA MORALES	<i>KCET Television</i> Los Angeles, CA	Desegregation
ETHEL PAYNE	<i>St. Louis Sentinel</i> St. Louis, MO	Black Colleges
DONALD SPEICH	<i>Los Angeles Times</i> Los Angeles, CA	Effect of Proposition 13
MONTE TRAMMER	<i>The Sun</i> Baltimore, MD	Declining Enrollments and School Closing
LINDA WILLIAMS	<i>Daily Herald/South</i> Mississippi Sun Biloxi, MS	School Finance Patterns in the South

# 1979\*

ROBERT BENJAMIN	<i>Cincinnati Post</i> Cincinnati, OH	Educating Low-Income Students
JOHN CUMMINS	<i>The Salt Lake Tribune</i> Salt Lake City, UT	Education in High-Growth Areas
CHRISTIE DUNPHY	<i>The Evening Gazette</i> Worcester, MA	Declining Enrollment in High Schools
CHARLES HARDY	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i> Charlotte, NC	Black Achievement/Operation Push
WISTA JOHNSON	<i>The New York Amsterdam News</i> New York, NY	Health Education in Urban Schools
MARK LIFF	<i>New York Daily News</i> New York, NY	Education of Indochinese Refugees
BETTE ORSINI	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i> St. Petersburg, FL	Suicide/Depression on College Campuses
BARBARA REINHARDT	<i>Options in Education</i> National Public Radio Washington, DC	Teenage Pregnancy and the Schools
LINDA WERTSCH	<i>Chicago Sun-Times</i> Chicago, IL	Teacher Accountability

FRAN ZUPAN	<i>The Columbia Record</i> Columbia, SC	Sex Barriers in Job Preparation
JANE EISNER	<i>The Virginia-Pilot</i> Norfolk, VA	What's Effective in Virginia's Integrated Schools
JACK KENNEDY	<i>The Lincoln Journal</i> Lincoln, NE	Rural vs. Consolidated Districts: What's Effective in Nebraska
JANET KOLODZY	<i>Arkansas Democrat</i> Little Rock, AR	What's Effective in Arkansas Schools
MARGO POPE	<i>The Florida Times-Union</i> Jacksonville, FL	What's Effective in Florida's Suburban Schools
WAYNE REILLY	<i>Bangor Daily News</i> Bangor, ME	What's Effective in the Rural Schools of Maine
M. WILLIAM SALGANIK	<i>The Sun</i> Baltimore, MD	Academic Achievement in Urban Schools: What Works in Baltimore
ROBERT BENJAMIN	<i>The Cincinnati Post</i> Cincinnati, OH	Towards Effective Urban Schools: A National Study

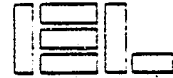
\* In 1979, one group of Fellows looked at general education issues; a second group focused on "What Makes Effective Schools?"

# 1980-81

MEA ANDREWS	<i>Missoulian</i> Missoula, MT	Middle Schools in Montana
LINDA AUSTIN	<i>Dallas Times Herald</i> Dallas, TX	How High Schools Serve Minorities in Texas
JOHN MCMANUS	<i>The Ledger-Star</i> Norfolk, VA	How Inner City Schools Work for Minority Children
ELIZABETH OLDER	<i>Charleston Daily Mail</i> Charleston, WV	From Coal Mines to Gifted Education
CAROL RUBENSTEIN	<i>Oregon Journal</i> Portland, OR	How Elementary Schools Work for Four Different Minority Groups
STEPHANIE SEVICK	<i>The Hartford Courant</i> Hartford, CT	Schools That Work in "Gold Coast" Towns
PATRICIA SULLIVAN	<i>Sun Sentinel</i> Fort Lauderdale, FL	Schools That Serve the Gifted in Florida

# 1982

CHARLOTTE GRIMES	<i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</i> St. Louis, MO	Girls and the Law
WILEY HALL	<i>The Evening Sun</i> Baltimore, MD	Getting Tough with Violent Juvenile Offenders
LESLIE HENDERSON	<i>The Knoxville Journal</i> Knoxville, TN	Violent Juvenile Crime in East Tennessee: A Family Perspective
ANDREW PETKOFISKY	<i>The Richmond News Leader</i> Richmond, VA	Locks and Lessons: Virginia's Reform Schools
WOODY REGISTER	<i>The Tennessean</i> Nashville, TN	Juvenile Incarceration and Alternatives in Tennessee
GARY STRAUSS	<i>The Idaho Statesman</i> Boise, ID	Juvenile Justice in Idaho



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