

A4 CENTRAL ILLINOIS/STATE Decatur, Illinois • Monday, November 22, 1999

EXPULSIONS: Expert says high schools are too impersonal

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Chicago, on the other hand, with more than 400,000 students, expelled only 21 students as recently as 1994-95, but booted 668 three years later — nearly a quarter of the state total for 1997-98. Officials were not available for comment Friday.

Jack Wuest, executive director of the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago, said expulsion is just the final, formal way to get rid of those students who don't drop out first. He thinks high schools are too large and impersonal for teachers to be able to nurture troubled kids the way they need.

"They can't connect with those kids. There's not much continuity of relationship with the kids," Wuest said. "Many of these kids just absolutely need that relationship."

Don Moore, director of school reform watcher Designs for Change in Chicago, suggests achievement exams pressure schools into pushing low-scoring kids out.

Expulsions also might be up because school boards feel the need to send a stronger message to their constituents. Long before two students killed 12 classmates, a teacher and themselves at Columbine High School in Colorado, Joliet high schools took some unpopular security steps: in-school police officers, identification tags, cameras, even some metal detectors.

But it wasn't enough. The school board wanted to be clear that it was punishing trouble-makers, not students. So it changed its policy, no longer allowing students facing expulsion to withdraw rather than be booted.

As a result, the school board

State expulsions

The Associated Press

Year	Suspensions	Expulsions
1989-90	193,647	1,112
1990-91	171,762	969
1991-92	190,556	1,224
1992-93	214,012	1,360
1993-94	223,024	1,787
1994-95	240,590	2,077
1995-96	257,264	2,208
1996-97	277,183	2,599
1997-98	281,484	2,765

SOURCE: Illinois State Board of Education

"They can't connect with those kids. There's not much continuity of relationship with the kids. Many of these kids just absolutely need that relationship."

Jack Wuest, executive director of the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago

for the 4,300-student district expelled no one in 1989-90, but more than 30 students in each of the past three years.

"The community needed to know that the board was really

working hard to keep our schools safe," Superintendent James Clark said. "There were discipline violations by students that were serious enough that they needed to be expelled, rather than go through withdrawal route."

Clark believes Joliet is not alone. Public pressure to show that districts are keeping learning in and trouble out has mounted.

Those kids need a place to go, said Rep. Rick Winkel, R-Champaign, who sponsored a bill creating state-funded alternative schools, funded for the first time in 1997-98, a year in which expulsions jumped 6 percent.

Winkel wonders whether some of the 2,765 expelled in 1997-98 were actually transferred to alternative schools but administrators are still reporting them as being expelled.

Regardless, Winkel said the important thing is having alternative schools in place so districts have an option other than expulsion.

To others, the numbers point out that school boards must make disciplinary decisions on a case-by-case basis and carefully consider whether the students could make it in an alternative school instead of putting them on the street.

"Schools are scared right now and rightly so because of things like Columbine," said Debbie Freitag, executive director of the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention, whose "Fight Crime/Invest in Kids" runs such in-school programs as one on dating violence. "We see them coming from one end of the continuum to the other when there's probably middle ground."

CLASH: Spectators find rhetoric appalling

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victims — which included blacks, Asians and Jews — was the Rev. Stephen Anderson of Decatur, who was wounded as he walked in front of his home.

Hale said he has received many calls of support from Decatur residents in the wake of the expulsion controversy that began after six high school students were expelled for a fight at a Sept. 17 football game. Hale said many of the callers were upset with Jackson's work to get the expelled Decatur students reinstated in school, which included two marches through city streets, rallies outside two of its high schools and lawsuits filed in state and federal court.

"I'll come to any rally like this. Nobody's speaking out for the white people," Beryl Redding of Decatur said. "It's the only way the white people can be heard."

Redding attended a similar rally on Nov. 14 conducted by a Ku Klux Klan group from Butler, Ind.

"You don't see anyone from Matt Hale's group causing problems. The Klan didn't start any problems," Redding said, gesturing to the angry group of protesters. "Matt's just speaking for the white people."

In the group of protesters, Sean Mulloy of Chicago wielded a bullhorn, yelling obscenities and challenging white supremacists to further confrontation.

"They're trying to use the controversy in Joliet to polarize the situation. Their ultimate goal is a race war," Mulloy said. "They're trying to split the working class blacks and whites. They're trying to split two groups who should be working together."



Herald & Review/Kelly J. Hall

Behind much of the commotion, Claire and Ken Crouch of Decatur shook their heads quietly in the background as they watched the shouting and listened to the rhetoric.

"We wanted to hear what Hale had to say. I'm so appalled," Claire Crouch said. "It's worse than I imagined. We're obviously

not here to support these people."

At the end of the afternoon, Hale made one promise: "This is just the beginning. This is only our first rally in Decatur," Hale said to a snattering of cheers. "The Jesse Jackson of the world will go elsewhere, but we will remain here."

IGUANAS: Web sites offer information on care and feeding of reptilian pets

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husbandry. "There are irresponsible pet owners out there," said Hensley, 31. "But, generally, people mean well but just don't have the right information."

Basically, a five-star iguana hotel suite feels like this, a humid atmosphere of around 70-80 degrees with an additional heat source like a 60-watt light bulb. Lisa likes overhead heat because the cold-blooded critters have a sensory organ on top of their head that tells them when they are hot enough, she says ground-level heat sources can cook them alive.

"Iguanas also need a special kind of light bulb that produces UVB rays," Hensley says. "UVB bulbs are expensive, like \$30 each, but they prevent crippling diseases."

Hensley has heard of people feeding these rain forest creatures anything from cat food to crickets but, basically, the menu needs to be stacked with fruits and veggies, get the full picture by clicking on www.iguana.net or www.niaad.org, where there are pages of information.

Club Chub, named for a lizard with a similar-sounding title in an episode of "The Simpsons," has starred in public service announcements on iguana care that Hensley has produced for public access cable channels around the country. She also churns out news releases on the subject and looks for any opportunity to spread the word.

"I guess I've always been a kind of champion for the underdog," says Hensley, a woman of many talents who does freelance Web page design. "And iguanas need someone to defend them."

Club Chub was purchased as a 16-inch-long defenseless juvenile lizard two years ago, the heart's desire of Hensley's son Brandon, 15. At the time, Mom was as ignorant as anyone else about iguana lifestyles. "I had no idea what I was in for until I started going on the Internet and reading and learning all these new things," Hensley says.

"You soon find out that iguanas are fascinating creatures, and they really grow on you as pets."

Which brings us to the other iguana dilemma: SIZE. They might not reach movie monster proportions, but they do get big. Dr. Brian Norton of the Northgate Pet Clinic, an expert on iguana care, said growth rates catch owners unaware.

"People will go to the pet store and buy this cute little 6-inch-long lizard and a 10-gallon aquarium to put it in," he explains. "Within six months, it's already outgrown that and is on its way to reaching a maximum size of 4 to 6 feet."

Norton warned families to think carefully about where their lizard will live for the long term as, kept healthy, owners report life spans of 20-plus years. "Iguanas must have somewhere where there is room for them to turn round without injuring themselves," said the doctor, who has written a pamphlet on iguana care available at Northgate.

"A lot of people dedicate a whole room just for their iguanas."

Club Chub pretty much has the run of the house and all his reptilian whims are catered to. Iguanas,



PET REPTILE: Lisa Hensley of Decatur gently strokes her pet iguana, Chub Chub, after feeding it a portion of a banana. Hensley is the Illinois coordinator for National Iguana Awareness Day, the second of which will fall on Sept. 9, 2000.

for instance, like to relieve themselves in water and Chub Chub is "tub-trained," Hensley explains: "I put him in bathtub full of water in the evening, and he'll go. I then just scrape that right off and sit on the toilet. I've heard that some people's iguanas even use the toilet."

So, once your iguana is well-fed, well-housed and otherwise satisfied, there's just one other little pointer you have to watch out for — passion.

Information on the iguanas Web site warns female owners that macho male iguanas can sense that certain time of the month for women and get all aggressive. Iguanas say rampant males with attitude in rutting season develop a splash of orange color and can inflict some nasty bites as well as lashing you with their whip-like tails.

"They'll also try to mate with you like when a dog tries to wrap itself around your leg," she says with an embarrassed smile. "And iguanas have a very strong grip."

Tony Reid roams Central Illinois on Mondays for the Herald & Review.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Here is the week's schedule of government meetings and other activities of interest to the public in Decatur and Macon County.

Today

Macon County Mental Health Board, noon, Milliken Court Building, 122 S. Water St., Suite 314, Decatur.

Argentine Orange Public Library Board, 4 p.m., South North Street, Orleans.

Decatur City Council study session, 6:30 p.m., council chamber room, third floor, Decatur Civic Center, 1 Gary K. Anderson Plaza, Decatur.

Long Creek Township Board, 6:30 p.m., Long Creek Community Building, 230 S. 70th St., Decatur.

Macon City Council meeting and budget hearing, 4:30 p.m., 99 E. Main St., Macon. The budget hearing will be held at 6:30 p.m.

with the regularly scheduled meeting beginning at 7 p.m.

Harristown Village Board, 7 p.m., Village Hall, 185 N. Kember St., Harristown.

Mount Zion Board of Education, 7 p.m., Junior High School, 315 S. Henderson St., Mount Zion.

Tuesday

Decatur Township Board, 8:30 a.m., Teen Center's Office, 141 S. Main St., Room 412, Decatur.

Mount Zion Park & Recreation Commission, 7 p.m., Village Hall, 400 Main St., Mount Zion.

Decatur Board of Education, closed session begins at 6 p.m., public session at 7:30 p.m., Mill Building, 161 W. Cerro Gordo St., Decatur.