

LEARNING THE SYSTEM

CAUGHT IN THE CRUNCH OF EXPLOSIVE POPULATION growth in the Sacramento area—one of the fastest growing regions in the country—the county's schools are scrambling to expand facilities while at the same time meet the needs of a rapidly changing school population.

Generally, local school administrators say, they are doing a laudable job under increasingly difficult circumstances.

Challenges include youth gangs, which are becoming a problem in Sacramento schools as Los Angeles cocaine dealers look for ripe markets to the north. In addition, many young people, unable to keep pace with academic demands and/or personal problems, are dropping out at younger ages and in numbers that alarm parents and administrators. The percentage of ethnic minorities is also increasing in Sacramento as elsewhere in the state, and bilingual education is essential in many schools.

Unlike their counterparts of yesteryear, schools today are expected to provide a broad range of services, from child care and drug abuse education to bilingual instruction and family crisis intervention—in addition to a “regular” academic curriculum. That’s a tall order in a state where less than average is spent on schools, and class sizes are among the largest in the country.

But despite overcrowding and curricular and social demands, Sacramento schools generally compare well with those in other parts of the country. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores for high school students in Sacramento County, for example, were higher—sometimes much higher—than state and national averages, according to Sacramento County Office of Education figures (1985-86 figures were the most recent available).

And, with two major universities, a prominent law school and a community college system ranked as one of the best in the state, Sacramento offers a rare mix of educational quality and extracurricular variety. After all, where else could you find a community college (Sierra College in nearby Rocklin) which serves as summer host to the San Francisco '49ers and is listed in *SKI* magazine as one of the top “ski schools” in the country?

All this plus an environmental setting which—de-

spite the explosive growth and attendant pollution, pollution and transportation dilemmas—remains a bucolic wonder when compared to its overwhelmed and congested urban neighbors to the south.

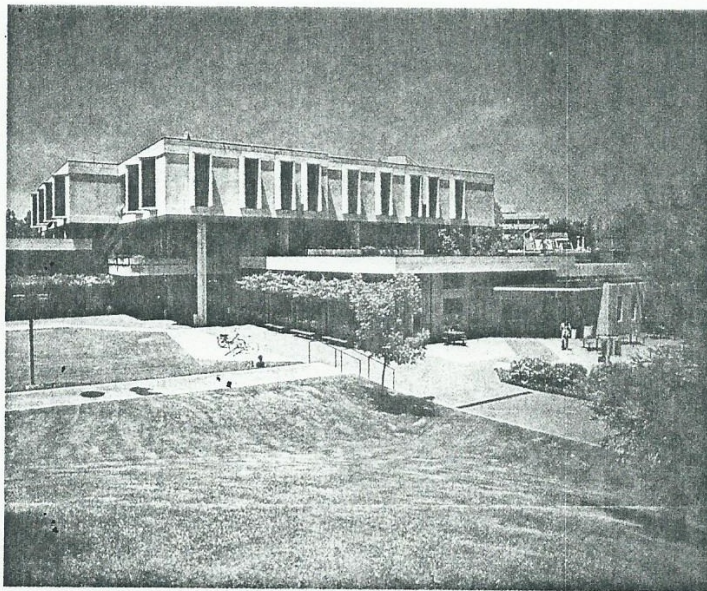
SACRAMENTO school administrators would like to keep it that way. Learning tough lessons from their counterparts in Los Angeles, local school officials are taking strong moves to deal effectively with dropouts, drugs and gangs.

“If anybody had told me 10 years ago we would be concerned about gangs, I’d have told them they were crazy,” says Sacramento County Schools

Overcrowding and a lack of funds are providing challenges for Sacramento schools.

■ ■ ■

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, CSUS (right) is one of the area's fast-growing campuses.



TOM MYERS

Superintendent Nick Floratos, a veteran Sacramento school administrator who served in top administrative positions in the San Juan and Rio Linda districts before accepting the chief county schools job four years ago. “The gang problem is spreading, and spreading dramatically. It’s important that we not just react.”

“Not just reacting” means taking an aggressive approach in the schools, local administrators say—and trying to halt gang and drug activity and keep it from spreading.

The Sacramento County Sheriff’s Department and the San Juan Unified School District, one of the county’s largest districts and the one ranked highest historically in terms of test scores, recently announced a proposal to patrol the district’s high

B. Y S I G R I D B A T H E N

school campuses, in a preemptive effort to deter nonstudent "intruders" and future possible gang activity.

In addition, says Floratos, "there are a lot of societal events happening" to affect the schools. "The single issue to most profoundly affect education is the dropout rate," he says, "and we haven't done a good job meeting the needs of our poor and minority kids."

Floratos and other local school administrators say massive infusions of time and money are needed to effectively reduce the dropout rate, which last year hit 32 percent in the Sacramento City Unified School District and 22 percent statewide for 10th through 12th graders (a decrease from 1986).

Under a new counseling program in the city district, counselors are making home visits to families of potential dropouts. The district has also begun an intensive, multifaceted program to curb the tide of dropouts, including a new Master Plan for Compensatory Education to assist failing students.

ETHNIC MINORITIES now comprise a majority (60 percent) of Sacramento City Unified District students. To address concerns over segregated schools, the district plans to establish or expand so-called "magnet" programs in many schools, to attract students by offering a strong academic program in specific

fields—at the same time reducing segregation by attracting students outside the immediate area.

K-12 districts in the Sacramento area also address growing non- or limited-English-speaking students with a variety of programs. Some 60 languages are spoken in Sacramento County homes, and county education officials observe, with some understatement, that "many of the languages [including Gujarati, Punjabi, Tagalog, Urdu and Bisaya] are unfamiliar to most people in the Sacramento community."

In Sacramento City Unified, the district's Newcomer School serves kindergarten through eighth-grade students, who are refugees or immigrants from 18 countries, speaking 23 different languages. The school's 300 students are later "mainstreamed" into neighborhood schools.

Haunting virtually all programs—innovative and otherwise—in the county's 16 K-12 districts is the specter of overcrowding. The statistics are overwhelming. Any discussion of educational quality in Sacramento County schools—or any schools in California, for that matter—returns to the demand for additional classrooms, more teachers and smaller class size. While pondering the social and cultural dilemmas and the changing demographics of the schools, administrators must also deal with schools that

are—potentially and actually—so overcrowded that learning is compromised by sheer physical numbers.

Consider these examples:

● In the sprawling, 320-square-mile Elk Grove Unified School District south of Sacramento, two new schools must be built every year in the coming decade to accommodate the glut of new students enrolling there.

● Folsom-Cordova Unified School District is expected to require at least 10 schools in the next 10 to 15 years, mainly to accommodate explosive suburban housing growth which has followed major industrial, high-tech and business expansion in the Folsom area.

● In Sacramento City Unified, meanwhile, district officials expect a total of 60,000 students by 1997—a 20-percent increase over 1987—and the board of education says the district will need 520 new classrooms by 1995-96.

● Enrollment in the suburban San Juan district is expected to jump to more than 55,000 students by 1997—up from 46,381 in 1987—with the bulk of the growth in the newer eastern area of the huge, 81-school district.

Floratos believes passage of this year's two major school bond issues is critically important to Sacramento area schools, but says that even those funds will be merely a "stopgap measure." California, he says, allocates less space to its school-

**WHEN YOU
CHOOSE
YOUR
COLLEGE,
CHOOSE
THE BEST.**

LOS RIOS COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

- Transfer to a four-year college or university - the colleges offer you a state-acclaimed transfer program.
- Upgrade your career skills - the colleges offer more than 75 vocational certificate or degree programs.
- Improve employee skills - the Institute For Business, Government & Industry offers employers on-site, customized classes.
- Enroll now—classes begin August 29.

LOS RIOS COMMUNITY COLLEGES, the place to go for people who are going places. You know you'll be choosing the best.

**AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE
COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE
SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE**

children than any other state (55 square feet per child, compared to 110 in other states). And, in terms of annual spending per pupil, California is \$2,000 below New York and \$500 below other states.

SIMILAR ENROLLMENT increases are projected at the four community colleges in the area and at the University of California at Davis (UCD) and California State University, Sacramento (CSUS).

At the end of the fall 1987 term, enrollment at UCD had reached 20,858 students—an increase of 5.5 percent over the previous fall. Students flocked from all 50 states as well as 76 foreign countries, enrolling in a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, including the law, medical and veterinary schools on the Yolo County campus.

Encircled as it is by some of the best agricultural land in the state, the huge university was originally known as an "Ag" school and grew out of 1905 legislation that established a "university farm" where young men and women could learn about agriculture. Long known for its excellence in the agricultural sciences, the campus has advanced its reputation into many other professional endeavors and is ranked among the top 20 general research universities in the United States.

UCD now ranks third in enrollment among the UC campuses, after UCLA and Berkeley. With 4,613 acres (3,600 in Davis and the remainder at other satellite facilities for special study in Tulare, Bodega Bay, Livermore and at the UCD Medical Center in Sacramento), it is geographically the largest of the nine UC campuses.

In addition to a thorough undergraduate program, UCD also offers comprehensive, highly regarded advanced degree programs in medicine, law and veterinary medicine.

Enrollment at CSUS, which recently celebrated its 40th birthday, grew 10 percent from 1983-87 (topping out at 24,128), with upper division students accounting for nearly 60 percent of the growth, and graduate enrollment rising by 20 percent. The campus is targeted for a major expansion project, an ambitious \$214 million plan to build 21 new structures to help accommodate projected enrollment of 33,000 by 2010.

Under the leadership of President Donald Gerth, the university has expanded its outreach into Sacramento area communities and strengthened ties with the burgeoning regional business community as well. Through its Center for Professional Advancement, opened last year in the Stanford Ranch business-residential development in Rocklin, the university offers engineering and computer courses. And an ambitious, 13-county Commission on the Regional University made up of 75 community and business leaders appointed by Gerth has been named to conduct surveys, hold "town

*Distinctive jewelry,
handbags, scarves,
belts, and knitwear
for today's woman.*

Irresistible Put-On's

*Town & Country Village
Fulton & Marconi*

481-3354

Open Sundays 12-5



CALIFORNIA
STATE
UNIVERSITY,
SACRAMENTO



*Enjoyable
Education
is here!*

*We offer courses and
programs in photography,
travel, business, chemical
dependency, management,
computers, housebuilding
and more.*

CLASSES ARE OPEN TO EVERYONE
CALL FOR FREE CATALOG

(916) 923-9833

Extended Learning Programs
650 University Ave., Suite 101A
Sacramento, CA 95825

**IF YOU LIKE
COUNTRY,
YOU'LL LOVE THE
OAK GALLERY**

For the finest country
furniture and country decor!

**The
Oak Gallery**

Crestview Shopping Center
Manzanita and Winding Way, Carmichael
972-7995



hall" meetings and develop new programs to serve those regional needs.

The university also operates the prestigious Center for California Studies, which offers government study and research opportunities that CSUS officials say are "unparalleled in the state university system." Included are Executive Fellowship programs and summer internships in the state Legislature and state government offices.

At the community college level, the Los Rios District, which oversees the three community colleges in the county—Sacramento City, American River and Cosumnes—is widely regarded as one of the best in the state. It ranks as California's third largest community college district, with 45,000 students taking courses for credit and another 20,000 enrolled in noncredit community courses. The district offers 76 two-year vocational programs and 63 technical certificate programs.

Los Rios Chancellor Davis Mertes was recently named to head the entire California Community College system, which is the largest system of higher education in the country. He is widely credited with major improvements locally, including developing the "transfer guarantee" for two-year students planning to go on to four-year universities.

Originally founded as Placer Junior College in Auburn in 1914, Sierra College

in nearby Rocklin (Placer County) now serves more than 12,000 students on the Rocklin campus as well as at satellite centers in the Grass Valley/Nevada City and Tahoe/Truckee areas.

With many ski areas only an hour away, the college features an extensive racing program and both the men's and women's ski teams regularly win top regional contests. Sierra also offers two-year degrees and course work in 56 majors for students who transfer to four-year colleges.

In addition, several other advanced degree programs are offered by out-of-county-based universities in Sacramento. Under the leadership of former Presiding Superior Court Judge Gordon Schaber, McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento, which is connected with the University of the Pacific in Stockton, has emerged as a prestigious, internationally recognized law school whose students have long enjoyed one of the highest rates of passage on the notoriously grueling California Bar Exam. It also counted among its faculty, until very recently, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, a longtime Sacramentan who returned to McGeorge in May to deliver the commencement address.

Two other law schools operate in Sacramento as well—Lincoln Law School and the University of Northern California Lorenzo Patiño School of Law, the

dream and brainchild of the late Judge Patiño. Both are in downtown Sacramento.

Other local private institutions and satellite campuses include Golden Gate University, offering classes in Sacramento since 1968. Special and advanced degree programs there focus primarily on management and public education. University of San Francisco, a Jesuit university, also offers evening graduate and undergraduate classes in public administration and management, and University of Southern California offers daytime graduate courses toward advanced degrees in public administration and health management. Another major player is National University, a large, independent, nonprofit university geared toward the needs of working adults. A teaching credential program is available, and undergraduate and graduate degree programs in business administration cover everything from computers and education to accounting, real estate and software engineering. A directory of accredited college and university programs in the Sacramento area is available at many of these institutions or the Central Library. ■

Sigrid Bathen, who was press secretary to former California Superintendent of Public Instruction Wilson Riles, is the capital correspondent for The Recorder of San Francisco.

YOU WANT A BANK YOU CAN WORK WITH.

Real Estate Loans • Home Equity Loans •
Equity Lines of Credit Loans • Deposit Accounts

Over 30 Branches in the Sacramento Area to serve you.

Call today!

1-800-447-2424

Bank of America NT&SA • Member FDIC



Bank of America
Doing the job for more Californians.™

