

At Loma Prieta High

Students Learn 'They Can Do Something'

(Second of a two-part series
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Loma Prieta High School instructors have a special problem: Their students have failed in the regular high school system.

A teacher's job is to show his students the value of education so that they will want to get their high school diplomas.

Says Loma Prieta teacher-counselor Doug Cox, "The self-concept here is fantastically low. One girl came to the school with the attitude, 'I'm no good. What can happen to me that hasn't already happened.' Then one day she came to me and said, 'I'm a human being. I can do something.' That's what we strive for — to teach them they can do something."

From his first day of enrollment at Loma Prieta High, a student receives individual counseling and instruction. "He talks to a teacher," says Principal Charles R. Smith, "who tries to find out his interests, what his grade work level is, and what he wants to do at the school."

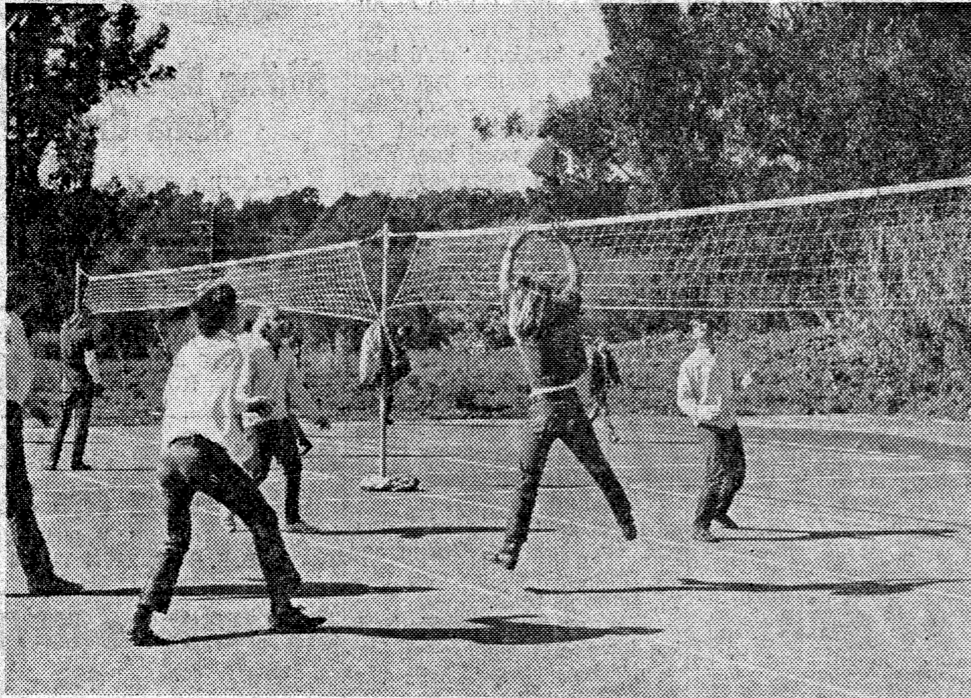
In his first week at Loma Prieta, a student is given a folder with assignments to work. After completion of each assignment, the student takes his work to the teacher who corrects it. Through this process the teacher determines the grade level at which to start the student.

Classes are kept to a maximum of 20 students to enable teachers to maintain this individualized approach, says Smith.

"At first we start them out with something very simple," says Cox. "Then we try to wear them away to more difficult lessons. Most of our students have never experienced success. We try to use a behavior modification method similar to B. F. Skinner's approach. Positive reinforcement.

"We praise a student when he's done a good job on an assignment. We don't over do it, though. Too much praise would make it commonplace and meaningless. For these youths, success, for the most part, is a very new experience."

Loma Prieta High offers all the regular state required high school subjects. Students receive a "pass grade" or "P" for completion of 15 periods.



Co-ed physical education class at Loma Prieta High School. These students who "Fs" in regular high school once were making "Ds" and organized themselves for a

This is equal to one semester of credit. Grades of "A" and "B" can be earned in special outside projects.

Teachers encourage students in these activities. For example, one boy came to the school from the California Youth Authority. He was, Cox says, "a turned-off youth." Now the boy hopes to be a veterinarian and go to UC Davis. "He has the potential to do it," Cox believes.

Teachers try to meet students' needs by varying classes to suit their interests. Home economics, family living and reading have been added to the curriculum this year.

Ken Brothers teaches crafts, science, family living, and physical education. He notes his students recently became interested in learning how to live off the land. As a result, his family living and science classes are learning how to plant crops, and they plan to put in a vegetable garden soon.

His students have almost completed building a greenhouse. Ferns and different types of foliage are being grown. Big Creek and San Lorenzo Lumber Companies donated the lumber for this project. (The school welcomes gifts from the community.) Recently, the Capitola

Lions Club presented the school with a rototiller, which will be used to cultivate the garden. Salz Tannery donates leather which is used in the arts and craft classes.

Students in Andy Lachman's reading classes started a school newspaper this year. It is called "The Times They Are A-Changin'." It is a first in the school's history, and is written entirely by students. It features articles, poems and student interviews. Lachman and Cox stress the point that the students are "very aware of what's happening."

A constant effort is made, says Smith, to maintain good relations between students and teachers. He says students are very open about their feelings in meetings with faculty to discuss improvement of the school. In one of the recent meetings, students suggested more vocational training classes be offered.

One of the early problems solved by these faculty-student meetings was the tense relations created by dress of the men teachers in suit and ties, and the requirement to address teachers formally. They said they could not identify with them with a formal atmosphere.

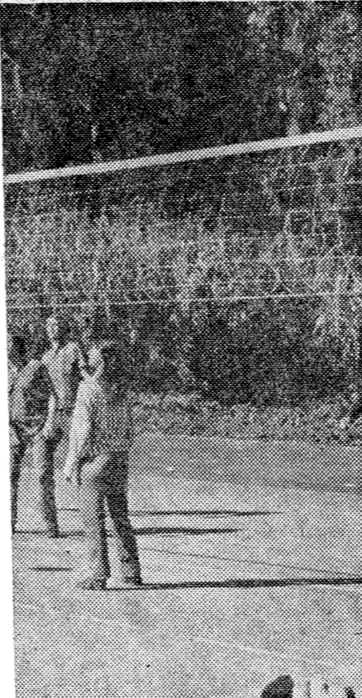
The name problem was, says Smith, not a question of students wanting to call teachers by first names but having this right which helped them to relate better. As a result, teachers are only required to wear clothes suitable for the work. Teachers are addressed either by their first name or proper title. A few teachers, always formally addressed.

Both teachers and students seem to feel a positive program has developed at Loma Prieta High.

Says Harriet Slakey, who counsels and teaches English and home economics: "The faculty has great rapport. The students are people and the teachers are people. We are to treat each other as human beings. I like small classes because the most important thing with these students is communication, closeness."

A boy comments, "It's right. It's quiet. Better than a public school. You get more done here, at least I do. Materials could be improved but the school doesn't have much money. They do pre good with what they have."

Instructor Toni McElrath, who teaches art, English and social studies, says, "I enjoy teach-



game of volleyball.

ing here a great deal. The school does a lot of things that other schools are turning to such as giving individual instruction. Also the informality is nicer for teachers' too. You can be your real self."

A girl enthuses, "I think it's better than any school I've ever been to. Before I came here I wasn't interested in anything. Now I'm involved in lots of things. I helped teach at Delaveaga School. Teachers are a lot cooler. You have a closer relationship."

Says instructor Brothers, "There is less formal division between students and teachers which is good. Students are responsive. Some are withdrawn for a lot of different reasons. You just have to let that wear off and let them know they won't have the same pressures here."

"We treat students basically as they want to be treated. They set the pace. But they all respond to individual attention which is something they have not had in the regular school system. The rapport between the students and teachers is better than any school I've ever been in. As one kid put it, 'We're not hassled,'" says Smith.



Individualized instruction is success in reaching students. Cox explains lesson to two Loma Prieta High's key to Here, teacher-counselor Doug students.

UNIT WINS AWARD

Senior Master Sergeant Leslie Waltrip, son of T.B. Waltrip of Santa Cruz, is a member of a unit that has earned the Military Airlift Command "Blue Pride" award. Waltrip is an aircraft maintenance superintendent at McClellan AFB, Calif., with the 55th Weather Reconnaissance Sq. which provides weather information for military flight operations. He served in the Korean and Vietnam wars.

DEMONSTRATION

WASHINGTON (AP). — About 3,000 radical youths, proclaiming a grab bag of leftist causes in two languages, rallied on the grassy expanse south of the White House Saturday in the first big gathering of the spring demonstration season.

Santa Cruz Cross Country Relays Set For April 14

The first annual Santa Cruz Cross Country Relay Race, sponsored by the Spring Fair Committee, is being planned for Saturday, April 14.

It will cover 20 miles from the center of Watsonville, along secondary roads and beaches, to the Pacific Avenue Mall.

TAKES COURSE

Army Pfc. Jeffrey P. Edge, 18, son of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Edge, 112 Dimond St., Santa Cruz, recently completed an eight-weeks veterinary specialist course at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The course provides basic techniques of animal care and treatment in order to assist veterinary officers.

AT TEXAS BASE

U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant Melvin E. Alves, son of Tony Alves of Santa Cruz, is on duty at Sheppard AFB, Texas. He is an education and training supervisor and previously served at Chanute AFB, Ill. Sgt. Alves holds a BA in political science from the University of Nebraska, from which he was graduated in 1970.