HYDE SCHOOL REVISITED

The evangelical period is replaced by mending the wounds

WILLIAM J. MACLEAN III says he won't tamper with Hyde School's philosophy of education, which emphasizes character building more than academic achievement. However, the new headmaster intends to guide the controversial secondary school in Bath away from the personalized leadership it has had over the last 16 years. During his tenure, MacLean wants Hyde to develop team vision and management. And he said he will work at reducing the outside image of Hyde as "zealous or arrogant."

MacLean said, "Deservedly or not, its reputation in much of the private and public educational community is 'we've got a heck of a lot to tell you'," meaning Hyde has held itself above other schools.

Formerly the principal of a high school and middle school in Guilford, New Hampshire, MacLean became the top administrator at Hyde last July. He is the third headmaster in the school's colorful history. What plainly sets MacLean apart from the school's founder Joe Gauld and his successor Ed Legg is his easy-going nature. Whereas Gauld and Legg were dynamic and evangelic, MacLean comes across as relaxed, open to listening and sharing decision making. "A major issue for us is developing a sense of participatory management," MacLean said.

In an interview, he said the education experience at Hyde "can be intense without being tense." He thinks it's time that Hyde operate in a non-crisis atmosphere. And MacLean wants to recharge the support of students' parents without "laying a guilt trip on them."

MacLean's appointment resolved a leadership crisis at Hyde that went on for years and led to the resignation of Gauld, the school's founder, in 1980 and his protege Legg in 1982.

Gauld found Hyde in 1966 with 67 students. His intent was nothing short of changing the traditional way of educating children in America. Gauld believed that developing each student's "unique potential" was every school's primary calling; grades should be secondary, he said.

Gauld's students in the early years often came from checkered educational careers. They had made little headway in academics; many had flunked out. Some had been in trouble with the law or spent time under psychiatric care. "It was like a bloody revolution the first year," Gauld told *Maine Times* in an interview in 1974. "People thought we had a lot of crazy ideas, and sometimes when the kids would see what the school was doing, they would just turn around and leave." Gauld meant business, and discipline was rough by anyone's standards. He didn't hesitate to get into physical scrapes with students to teach them a point.

Gauld's unceasing effort to get the world to see things the Hyde way eventually made some headway in the late 1970's, partially because of the success of the school's musical-historical drama, *American's Spirit*." The Job Corps signed a contract to try the Hyde leadership and training method on tough, street-wise trainees. Gauld said at the time the Job Corp connection could lead to "a new beginning for American education." But the project fell through and was a significant setback for Hyde.

In 1978, Gauld called together Bath community leaders to propose that he take charge of the public schools and the entire community be used as an educational laboratory for the Hyde concept. Gauld felt it was a way for Hyde to gain a national reputation and infiltrate the public school system with its character building ideal. Bath leaders didn't think much of Gauld's plan. Shortly thereafter, when Gauld left to campaign all over the country for public schools to make a commitment to the Hyde way of education, Legg took over. Legg focused more narrowly on *America's Spirit* as the embodiment of what Hyde is about. When Gauld returned, he questioned the appropriateness of Legg's direction for Hyde, according to MacLean, prompting a battle that led to Legg's resignation. (Gauld is now in Reston, Virginia, working as a consultant in a public school to implement character education into the curriculum. Legg, a lawyer, is studying for the bar in Texas.)

MacLean was one of 80 applicants for Legg's job. He said he was fed up with 18 years in the public schools where a teacher's work was judged on how well students did on college entrance exams. "We could have been bankrupt in dealing with kids and their families and still judged as being successful [teachers] if their scores were high enough," he said. MacLean wanted a new challenge and found Hyde to offer "a real growth experience."

When MacLean was hired, 40 percent of the faculty left. He said it was "essentially to getting off to a new start." The teachers who left had worked under Gauld and Legg. "I think many felt they had lived through the crises and needed to be renewed somewhere else," he said.

MacLean said one of the changes he's making at Hyde is revamping *America's Spirit*, which is a full-fledged curriculum of its own. It was begun in 1976 during the Bicentennial celebration as an original play written and performed by the students to depict the pioneer spirit in the founding of America. Students are required to participate in the production. MacLean said he's calling in professionals to give student participants expert training in music, voice and dance. But there will be less "banner-waving about *America's Spirit*," he said. "We will be less zealous about it."

MacLean acknowledged that Hyde has run a deficit for the last three years. It overspent by $100,000 last year, he said. Some of the problem has been uncollected tuitions, MacLean explained.

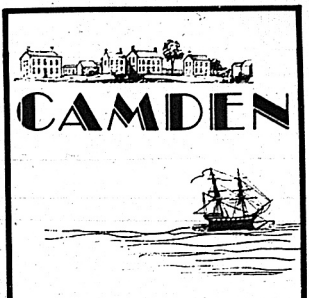
A new business manager has been hired, and MacLean said he expects it will take a couple of years to get Hyde in the black. This year Hyde has a $2.2 million operating budget. Tuition is $8,450 a year, and there are 191 students. In addition, parents give an average $2,000 tax-deductible gift based on ability to pay. MacLean thinks parents will be willing to help Hyde again if they believe the school is being well-managed. "I think we will be successful without twisting arms and laying guilt on people," he said.

Although Gauld began Hyde with underachievers, MacLean said the student body today "is just as heterogeneous as a public school. Hyde is no longer a fix-it school." He said that 98 percent of the 1982 graduating class went on to college or vocational technical schools. Hyde doesn't want to be a "holding tank for problem kids," he said.

The original tough kids also elicited strong disciplinary action. Students were slapped, publicly paddled, forced to attend self-criticism seminars and even, under Legg, made to dig large pits to bury their bad attitudes," and fill in the pits again. MacLean said major infractions of rules will cause a student to be punished, but "we're not shaving heads anymore" and jobs will be helpful, such as raking leaves, instead of pointless.

MacLean said he has never seen a place "with more creative ideas but with such a lack of follow through." He thinks the constant chaos at Hyde might have had a lot to do with its failure to implement the good ideas. "It's good to stir the pot, but it doesn't need to be boiling all the time," said MacLean.

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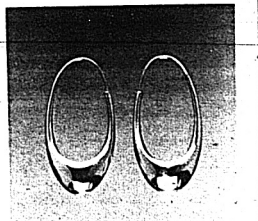




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