

# The after-school job: problem or

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** More and more students are working after school, not because of monetary necessity but for extra spending cash. In the final portion of a series, the Daily News talks with educators about their perceptions.

By CAROL LUKER

Well, she's got her own car and she cruises to the hamburger stand now...to work. She hasn't forgotten all about the library like she

told her old man now; she simply doesn't have time.

Critics of after-school employment for the teenager will argue there's nothing inherently wrong with working, but parents should moderate their children's responsibilities after discussing with them the feasibility of employment.

Richardson High School math teacher Karen Murphree's study on the effects of work on students' academic performance excluded vocational students because they receive credit and grades for working, which she said would have dis-

torted the survey.

Educators have promoted vocational education in recent years after realizing a student who is not college-bound should receive equal time while in high school.

Vocational education is emerging from the Dark Ages in this country, where students are participating in work-study programs without being subjected to old stigmas.

**BATTLE LINES** have been drawn over the merits of vocational education as opposed to adherence

to the three Rs, but for those who work outside work-study programs, most educators will concede they reap some advantages as well.

Weighing the experience against the sacrifice — if one be made — requires a case-by-case examination.

"Many educators tend to believe there is some value in the work experience, and students frequently learn things that are not measured academically," RISD Supt. Dr. John Roberts said.

Dr. Richard Warshak, UTD research scientist, said many stu-

## Job control up to parents

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She keeps a student index file that includes information about her students' employment. Having approached numerous parents about their children's declining scores, she attested most parents' reaction borders on apologetic.

During the telephone conference, she asks the parent if work could be contributing to the drop in grades.

"They are usually quick to say, 'Yes, Johnny is working. I realize he's working too many hours,'" she said.

MRS. MURPHREE'S own daughter, a senior at Richardson High School, began working part time this year, but only after guidelines were established. Her mother described her daughter's employment as a "holdover summer job," a situation she believes frequently occurs when the teenager convinces the parent he/she should keep working after summer's end.

Parents harbor a tendency to view their teenager as an adult capable of making decisions in his/her best interest, she believes. Without disparaging parents' motives, Mrs. Murphree said she thinks parents are unwittingly tempted by the extra income as their teenagers' requests for money dwindle.

In addition to increased cognizance of the situation, "teachers should develop an alertness to possible indicators of adverse effects of employment on working students. Observations of signals such as fatigue, sleeping in class, or a drop in school performance should be communicated to parents so that negative effects of working can be avoided whenever possible," Mrs. Murphree suggested.

The math teacher recommended control in the issuance of work permits for students who desire a shortened school day in favor of a longer work day. Educators should discourage students from working more than 30 hours per week, she added.

## condition?

dents may derive greater self-esteem among other positive aspects such as increased responsibility and better management of time.

"One of the tasks of adolescents is separating from parents. Increasing the sense of autonomy and independence is accomplished through work for many. Adolescents sometimes take drastic action to establish they are not under their parents' thumb ... this (working) may make them more cooperative with their parents in other areas," he said.

WARSHAK STRESS: teenagers appreciate an authentic parental stance even though they may orally rebel. Children of permissive parents suffer from lack of parental involvement. Adolescents view the exercising of autonomy as a demonstration of caring, said.

Mrs. Murphree noted many parents consulted perceive the potential problem but wait to respond until it materializes.

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RECENTLY, the board of trustees of the Richardson school district voted to raise the graduation requirements from 19 to 21 credits, in part to arrest the large numbers of seniors leaving school early. The amendment, decided by a split vote, passed in the wake of trustee elections, when the issue surfaced several times.

"We have an obligation to see the student gets a good education," said school board president Bob Warner, commenting on the delineation of responsibility of the district and the parent.

Warner added he was working on a draft resolution that would restrict the option available on the additional two credits. The board president suggested little good would be accomplished under the new policy if students enroll in easier elective classes rather than heavier academic courses.

In the final analysis, parents possess the greatest influence in directing their teenagers' pursuits, all agreed.

"As parents, they, as well as their children, should carefully weigh the costs and benefits of working in view of values the parents wish to instill within the children," Mrs. Murphree wrote in her thesis.

Educators and parents have a joint responsibility for its study, she continued, to ensure the physical, psychological and educational needs of adolescents are met.