

## Introduction

# Are desks and bells and passes and lectures and tardy slips and school lunches GETTING YOU DOWN?

There must be a better way to get an education. Aren't there things going on outside school that are more profitable than what's happening inside? Wouldn't it be nice to go to the art gallery every day for a course? Or to go to the Smithsonian? Or to Capitol Hill? Or the Library of Congress? Or the Kennedy Center?

Isn't there any school in Arlington that will let you sit down and decide for yourself what you're going to do?

No. NOT YET. But it could happen - next year!

## NEW SCHOOL IS COMING!

The NEW SCHOOL Committee is an ad-hoc citizen's group which has presented the School Board a proposal for a NEW SCHOOL in Arlington, to be centered in one of the six elementary schools soon to be abandoned by the County. Some of the features of the NEW SCHOOL will be:

- Courses will be taken into the community, instead of bringing the community into the school.
- Independent work will be emphasized, almost all courses will be on a credit-no credit basis, interdisciplinary courses will cut across traditional lines, and many methods will be tried which are unfeasible in the old structure, including total-immersion language study and one-to-one classes.
- All decisions will be made by the students and teachers together. They are the administration.

## HELP!

None of this can happen if the School Board doesn't designate one of the elementary schools for use by the NEW SCHOOL. YOU CAN HELP! Come to the School Board meeting Thurs., May 6, in the Administration Building next to W-L at 1426 N. Quincy, and tell the School Board by your presence that you are interested and that we need a NEW SCHOOL. The meeting is at 7:30 on the first floor. Nothing can happen without YOUR help!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Flyer, printed and distributed by the Citizen's Committee for the New School, Arlington, Virginia, Spring 1971.

In the Spring of 1971, students, teachers, and parents of Arlington County, Virginia sought an alternative to their traditional system of public education. They wanted a high school that would bring relevance to the classroom. They wanted a curriculum that would extend the learning process beyond school doors and out into the community. They wanted a choice, and they wanted a change.

This flyer is one of the advertisements that the Citizen's Committee for the New School distributed throughout Arlington County that Spring. Through grassroots organization the activists proposed an alternative to the system. They galvanized the community, lobbied and petitioned the school board, and effectively made use of the political strategies of the day. On May 21, 1971, the Arlington County School Board approved the proposal for the New School. The Woodlawn Program, as it was called, first opened its doors in the fall of the 1971-1972 school year. It was the first year of alternative education in Arlington.

The second year was marked by the establishment of an alternative junior high school. The Hoffman-Boston Program extended educational options available to the Arlington community. The two programs operated independent of one another until they merged in the 1978-1979 school year. The new H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program was designed to provide students with more control over their education than was permitted in the traditional schools. The alternative focused on students who needed less restriction and more freedom to be successful in their academic endeavors. The flexibility, informality, and individuality of the atmosphere at H-B Woodlawn encouraged students to design and implement their own programs, and it continues to do so today.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>H-B Woodlawn Program, School Statement, Arlington, Virginia, 1994.

This June, Arlington will celebrate twenty-five years of alternative education in the County, and the H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program will graduate its twenty-fifth "experimental" class.

Alternative Education was the trend in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In 1971 the Woodlawn Program was not revolutionary, for experiments in education were going on all over the country. Yet in 1996, the H-B Woodlawn Program is still operational, and this can be viewed as exceptional. How is it that this school has survived while other such similar experiments have failed? What strategic lessons can be learned from the studying the quarter century of change which the school has endured? What are the losses and what are the trade-offs of maintaining an institution of liberal reform through conservative times and up to the present day?