

Texas lawmaker fights for funds to boost program

AUSTIN (AP) — The state should continue extra funding for a junior high school program that combines academics with vocational classes because it keeps potential dropouts in school, a state representative told the Legislative Education Board on Wednesday.

And if students in the Coordinated Vocational Academic Education program do drop out, they at least will have marketable skills, Rep. Bill Carter, R-Fort Worth, told the board.

State Education Commissioner W.N. Kirby said the State Board of Education proposes not providing extra funds for the programs after this year.

Other funds could continue current programs, Kirby said.

But CVAE supporters said such money is committed elsewhere.

Carter said potential dropouts generally are at least a year behind in school academically; have characteristics including low reading ability, short attention span and low self-image; and need the special incentive CVAE provides to stay in school.

"We are dealing with a special class of students in this program," Carter said.

"This is potentially the last chance that we have to either get them interested in completing their education, or at the very least build their self-esteem and teach marketable job skills, if they decide to drop out of the educational system," he said.

But board member Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby said it is wrong that students in the seventh and eighth grade program can spend two hours a day in vocational classes.

"I'm simply appalled that almost half the school day at some schools is devoted to something other than basic education," Hobby said after testimony from Carter, who was backed by CVAE teachers in construction and home economics, as well as others.

Rep. Bill Haley, who sponsored the sweeping 1984 education reform bill, said as a teacher in 1970 he taught CVAE biology and "any student who came regularly got a C."

Just keeping students in school is "not a good primary purpose of a program," Haley, D-Center, said.

Hobby also questioned whether the program, which some supporters agreed needs a stronger academic component, circumvents reform laws' commitment to providing a solid basic education.

"Are you not deluding the students by saying, 'You don't have to really learn the basics. All you have to learn is CVAE?'" Hobby asked.

Betty Peace of East Texas State University said she has taught both academic and vocational education in public school, and students "have to know the basics for vocational education. . . I taught them how to apply the basics."

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The Battalion

Drug charge dropped due to lack of evidence

HOUSTON (AP) — A drug possession charge filed against a woman after her 11-year-old son led police to a cache of marijuana was dismissed after a judge suppressed the evidence.

Judge Mark Atkinson of the Harris County Criminal Court at Law said James Beszborn Jr. lacked his mother's permission to enter her bedroom April 4 when he found about half an ounce of marijuana inside a box in her bedside table. The child reported the find to his father, who has divorced the woman and remarried.

Beszborn and his 10-year-old sister, who want to live with their father, admitted police into the home of their mother, Diana Maria Daleo, after the father told officers of the discovery.

Ms. Daleo, 38, who was charged with possession of marijuana, had instructed the children to stay out of her bedroom without permission, and they had no authority to allow the police to enter, said her attorney, Richard Bax.

"Since the marijuana was suppressed we don't have any evidence so we have no choice but to dismiss the case," prosecutor Denise Palmer said Tuesday. An appeal is not likely, she said.

Bax said no case in Texas has given children the right to have police search areas reserved for parents.

James Beszborn Sr. said he and his current wife were not necessarily looking to put Ms. Daleo in jail, but wanted only to remove the children from her custody. Beszborn said the ruling leaves the custody question in limbo.

Beszborn and Ms. Daleo have temporary joint custody of their children.

Tuesday's ruling differed from State District Judge A.D. Azios' decision in a similar case in which the 12-year-old son of Netta Dealva Reynolds turned her into police after finding drugs in her bathroom closet last August.

Ms. Reynolds' attorneys argued she had told her children to stay out of her bedroom and that their leading police to the closet constituted illegal search and seizure.

Ms. Reynolds pleaded no contest last March and Azios placed her on two-year deferred adjudication and fined her \$1,000. If she completes the probation, she will not have a criminal record.

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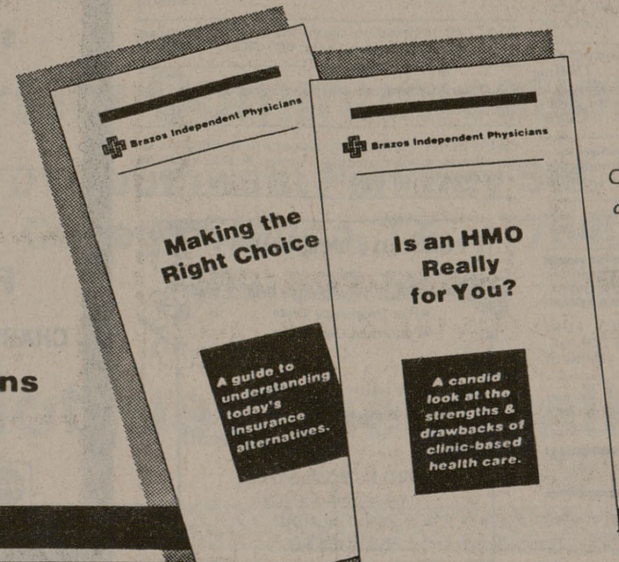
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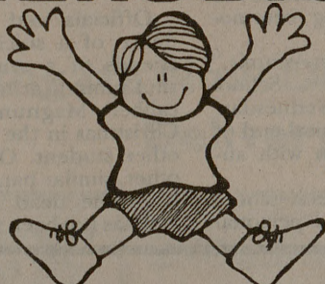
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