

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATE

Mailed Dec. 10, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio - Fifteen Youngstown State University students have been involved in an education program that not only benefits their futures, but the futures of some special children as well.

This is the "Special Teacher Education Program," or STEP.

The YSU School of Education students in STEP are pursuing a program leading to their certification as teachers of children who are developmentally handicapped, learning disabled, behavior disordered and mentally retarded. Upon completion of this and all their other college courses, they will receive a degree of Bachelor of Science in Special Education.

STEP is a competency based program in which the University students enroll in four method courses: teaching of reading, math, science and behavior management, accompanied with over 160 hours supervised field experience.

Dr. Charles Smith of Youngstown, YSU professor of Special Education, and Dr. Bernadette Angle of Hubbard, associate professor of Special Education, are coordinators of the program.

Both Dr. Smith and Dr. Angle evaluate the numerous competencies which the students must master before moving on in the program.

A major competency for the future teachers is behavior management techniques through continuous behavior modification of inappropriate behavior exhibited by students. Since behavior modification involves a variety of techniques designed to reduce or eliminate obnoxious or nonadaptive behavior, the STEP students

Add One

develop a personalized system of positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior displayed by the children with whom they work.

They set up a chart for each child which lists appropriate behaviors such as: staying on task, listening to the teacher, keeping hands and feet controlled, and being polite.

The child receives a check mark next to each behavior he or she appropriately displays. For each check mark, the child earns a token which is saved to purchase an item that appeals to them at a store set up by the STEP students at Youngstown's Madison Elementary School.

Items for sale range from three to 35 tokens, and include comic and puzzle books, crayons, toys, etc.

The child is taken to the store to purchase prizes on the Friday following tutoring. Differential reinforcement is used with the intention that the student is rewarded if he or she can increase the time between displays of unacceptable behavior.

STEP students also do pre-student teaching field experiences at Youngstown Stambaugh Transitional School for severe behaviorally handicapped children in grades K-12.

Here the children earn points or tokens to receive a reward such as five minutes of free time, an edible treat or a gift item.

The program is based on the learning theorist E. F. Skinner, whose research proved that if a behavior is reinforced often enough, it will reoccur.

"The University students, as well as the children, benefit from this intensive training program," Dr. Angle reported.

Assisting in the STEP project at the two city schools are Principal Joseph Conley of Madison Elementary, and Principal Ben McGee and Assistant Principal William Esterly at Stambaugh School. Helping supervise the program is Joan Banks of Youngstown, a graduate assistant in YSU's Department of Special Education.

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FOR RELEASE:

CUTLINE

YSU future teachers Tammy Bury of Youngstown, left, and Jean Sadeckas of Warren help two pupils of the Madison Avenue School in Youngstown make choices at the Madison School Store, a project of the School of Education's STEP, or Special Teacher Education Program.

(YSU photo)

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NOTE: Madison School pupils not identified although permission obtained from parents to take photo.

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