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# **‘Untrained’ Pupil Influx Brings Old Rules Back to ‘Unstructured’ School**

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Old rules will replace new freedom at University City High School next Tuesday.

The school has been experimenting since it opened in December with an unstructured system in which no bells are used to signal class time, classes are ungraded and pupils can select their own schedules.

But an unexpected influx of pupils unprepared for such freedom has forced the new \$14-million school at 36<sup>th</sup> and Filbert sts. to revert to the traditional structured program for all but about 25 percent of its projected 1,373 pupils.

Original plans for University City High provided for the screening of all its pupils according to their ability to handle the increased freedom of the new system followed by special training.

These plans also called for a gradual buildup to the maximum enrollment of 3,000 to give the new system an opportunity to succeed.

However, overcrowding at another West Philadelphia high school drastically changed these plans.

With John Bartram High School, 67<sup>th</sup> st. and Elmwood ave., running double shifts in the same district, the prospect of empty seats at University City, the city's first new high school in nine years, proved a luxury the school district could not afford.

Last September it assigned 600 graduates of Shaw Junior High, (a Bartram feeder) to University City High. In contrast to the core of 300 specially trained pupils, the Shaw graduates neither wanted the new system, nor were prepared for it.

Derek Carroll, a Shaw graduate in his first year at University City High, said he does not like the new system and he hopes to return to the old one.

“Sometimes I forget what time it is,” he said, “and with no bells, I miss class.”

Next week 494 more pupils will be assigned to University City High from 14 other schools.

In addition to pupils, the new school has received some of the overflow of the district's teachers.

Davis B. Martin, principal of the school, said that as a result of teacher reassignments last year, his school could hire only nine of 50 teachers trained in the new system.

Other openings were filled by regular teachers whose contracts had to be honored, he added, and who were untrained in the system and disliked it.

University City High is also a magnet school in science and mathematics, drawing 25 percent of its enrollment from throughout the city to study those subjects.

As a result of pupil and parent dissatisfaction with the unstructured approach, last month Martin gave pupils their choice between four alternatives: college prep, business prep, vocational skills and the magnet program.

The only one of the four alternatives using the unstructured approach, the magnet program, was selected by fewer than 25 percent of the pupils.

The school's return to educational normalcy raises another question: Can a school function successfully using two different systems?

Martin says yes.

“Sometimes you can prepare for guests and have filet mignon and you find out that some would prefer hot dogs,” he said. “We are shifting back to the traditional, highly structured program because the parents and pupils wanted it.”

“There is no conflict in operating the two systems, it's just a matter of reorganization,” he added.

Miss Bert Arnold, a reading teacher at the school who trained its first group of pupils in 1970, disagrees.

“Those 600 new students killed us,” she said, “the old students who can handle the freedom are distracted by the large number who cannot.”

“The new system needs a special kind of student and trained teachers,” she said.

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By CHARLES F. THOMSON

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