

## School's move makes sense

By William C. Kashatus

piscopal Academy's decision to relocate from Merion to Newtown Square was based more on the changing demographics of enrollment and the competitive market of independent education rather than the need to expand its campus.

Though I certainly sympathize with the feelings of those who believe that Episcopal belongs in Merion, closer to its historic commitment to educate the more socially and economically diverse population of Philadelphia, the decision to relocate is part of the reality of contemporary independent education.

Since the 1960s, Episcopal has had to compete for students with the Haverford School, William Penn Charter, Germantown Friends School, Germantown Academy, and Chestnut Hill Academy/ growing constellation of elementary feeder schools. Hoping to capitalize on a growing suburban community, Episcopal in 1974 established a satellite lower school at Devon for students too young to travel to the Merion campus on their

brought an increasing number of students from the upper Main Line and Chester and Delaware Counties. The demographics of enrollment and the competition dictated the move to the outer suburbs, where Episcopal now finds itself in the enviable position of being one of the very few coeducational K-12 day schools.

The move to the western suburbs is not a new phenomenon for Episcopal. When the Rev. William White founded the school in 1785, it was situated at Second and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Over the next 136 years, Episcopal

The 1980s and '90s

men for the Episcopalian ministry"; and to "lay the foundation for a col-

legiate education for those who intend to take it."

My experience as a teacher at Episcopal in the late 1980s revealed that the school had adapted that mission quite nicely to the so-

were school officials, alumni

and parents who were just

as distraught about the last

move to "suburban" Merion

in 1921 because they felt

Episcopal was abandoning a

commitment to educate the

Episcopal bishop of Pennsyl-

vania, had a genuine philan-

thropic commitment to edu-

cating the city's poor chil-

dren. In addition, the Vestry

of Christ Church stipulated

that the head of the school

and the trustees

had to be Episcopa-

lians who lived in

It was believed

that such steward-

ship was neces-

sary to ensure the

threefold mission

of the school: to

"dispense reli-

gious doctrine"

along with the aca-

demic curriculum;

to "train young

the city.

To be sure, White, the first

city's children.

of the late 20th century.

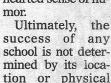
Enrollment reflected the same religious diversity of most private schools. Religious education was grounded in ecumenical chapel programs, an exemplary community-service program. and in a religion curriculum that encouraged students to examine their relationship to a supreme being through critical reading, writing and thinking.

Essentially, Episcopal was not so different from most of the Philadelphia area's other private schools, though it was more successful than most in educating the mind, body and spirit of the student. What impressed me more was the quality of the faculty.

As a young teacher, I was blessed with a department chair who taught me how to balance a rigorous course load with the demands of coaching and graduate studies. Another veteran teacher taught me the importance of consistency in disciplining students.

The athletic director inspired me to write and publish on sports-related educational issues. And the leaders of the community-service program gave me a remarkable

model that I later used in developing a service-learning program at another school. All of those things were done with compassion, a firm sense of integrity, and a lighthearted sense of hu-



plant, but by the quality of human beings who compose it. By that measure, Episcopal Academy has been, is, and will continue to be one of the finest schools in our region.



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