

HOWARD

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Please don't call it 'school'

Learning: An HCC program teaches youngsters while forgoing tests and homework traditionally used in classes.

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SUN STAFF

The scene looked like any other day at school. Kids sitting in classrooms, teachers taking roll call and parents eagerly waiting in the lobby to retrieve their children.

But this school has no ringing bells, no textbooks to carry, no homework assignments to complete and no tests.

In the heart of summer vacation, youths from local public schools were happily rushing around the Hickory Ridge Building at Howard Community College, eager to begin another session of Kids on Campus, a summer school program distinct from any other.

The organizers of Kids on Campus (KOC) do not like to call their program "school."



DAVID HOBBY: SUN STAFF PHOTOS

"Kids on Campus is an academic enrichment program," said Sara Baum, director of KOC. "It's summer school without the school."

Tish Martinez, a former veterinarian technician and now a third-grade schoolteacher in Prince George's County, conveys this attitude to children in the

"Pets and Vets" class. Each day, she brings her pets to the classroom. Her yellow, gray and orange cockatiel, Buddy Robert, whistles to pupils as her two tear-drop finches, Earl and Pearl, bicker like an old married couple in their cage.

While the animals vied for the children's attention Wednesday, the star guest, a Welsh corgi named Mickey, rolled over for the 15-member class of 7- to 10-year olds. His owner, Howard Weinstein, a dog trainer, led the class discussion on animal training.

But he kept getting interrupted. The children only wanted to pet Mickey.

"Mickey is a magnet," Weinstein said. "I wish I was a kid again because these classes are fun."

Martinez and her class will spend one week exploring their role as pet owners. A veterinarian will give a guest lecture and, on the last day, each child will bring his or her pet for show-and-tell.

"Pets and Vets" is one of KOC's 57 summer courses for children ages 7 to 17.

"Social Savvy," also for elementary-age children, teaches kids the importance of etiquette. The course ends with a catered lunch to illustrate table manners. "Partners with Potter," for 8- to 12-year-olds, delves into the world of Harry Potter, examining characters and themes from the popular books. Amanda Solner, the art teacher for "Amateur Architect," emphasizes hands-on participation in her class, which examines architecture across history.

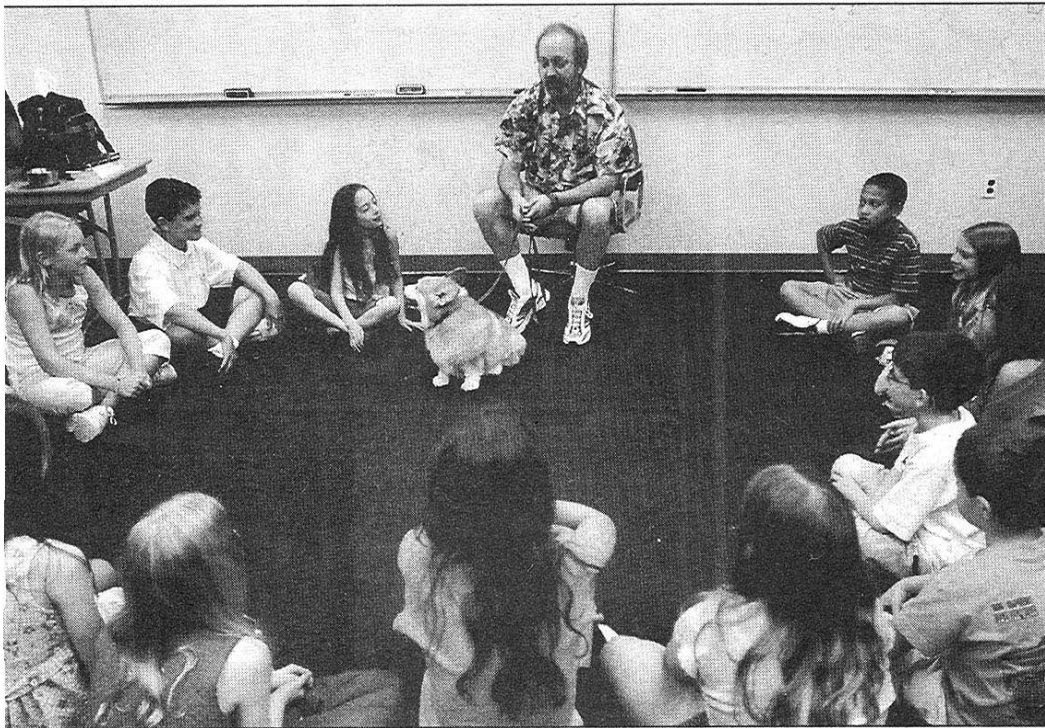
"I love when I teach the kids something new," she said during a lecture on Baltimore row-houses.

Ben Blake, 10, of Ellicott City said he was excited to begin "Amateur Architecture." His mother, Debbie, said she enrolled Ben in the one-week course just for fun.

"And I have been really pleased with the program," Debbie Blake said.

Baum said Kids on Campus, which began in 1987, has grown nearly 15 percent each year. Courses run throughout the year, but summer is the most popular session.

Baum said about 1,800 youngsters are enrolled this summer, representing each school district in [See Learning, 3B]



DAVID HOBBY: SUN STAFF PHOTOS

Dog trainer Howard Weinstein uses his dog, named Mickey, to teach 15 pupils about dog care. "I wish I was a kid again because these classes are fun," he says.

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Howard County. The program began June 23 and runs through Aug. 15. The classes run three hours, in the morning or afternoon, and each course costs \$100 a week. Children can enroll in two classes a day.

Baum, a former librarian, said KOC is well-balanced, calling the program a "happy variety" of traditional, practical and creative classes.

"Many courses are designed for what I saw that my own kids needed to enhance in their education," she said.

In addition to courses that analyze popular culture, such as "Monsters in the Movies," KOC offers preparation for the PSAT and training in Basic HTML, the computer language used to create Web pages.

While Baum is responsible for creating the program, she said she is thankful to her staff.

"The teachers capture my vision and bring it to life," she said. "I am very lucky."



The day's lesson on animal training was often interrupted by pupils eager to pet the dog. "Mickey is a magnet," his owner says.