



# The Learning Village





a concept  
of constructive  
educational  
experience...

# crisis...

★ There is a crisis in America. Our vast, complex system of public and private education is failing our youth. This failure to prepare children to meet current cultural demands is not limited however to formal educational settings. Education encompasses all experiences and thus occurs in the home, on street corners, through comic books, through television, through movies, in our nation's schools, and indeed is influenced by every aspect of the environment. Education does not start and stop at the ages of 5 or 18 or 22; it begins at birth, and continues throughout a lifetime. Each experience adds to an individual's education, and each experience has some effect on his future actions. If a child fails to learn symbols and their sounds, then he is more likely to fail at reading. Low achievement in reading increases the likelihood of failure in other subjects, which, in today's society, means he is inadequately prepared to meet success in life. The occurrence of this vicious chain of educational failure, begins at a very early age. Once the chain has begun, it is particularly difficult to intercede in a way that can help the child achieve success in learning and thus allow him those experiences that would make life in today's society more rewarding. ★

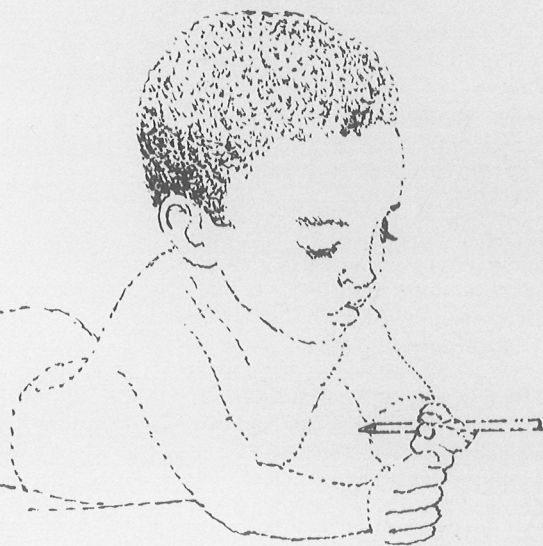
Although such a chain of failure resulting from inadequate early educational opportunity is dramatically exemplified by the plight of the poor, it is not a situation encountered by the poor alone, but extends beyond all social, racial and economic boundaries. An educationally neglected child is unfortunate, regardless of the parents' income.

America's educational system is therefore not only faced with the serious challenge of educating the nation's children once they reach school age, but at the same time it must often counter-act the results of the five years of training accumulated prior to beginning his "official education."

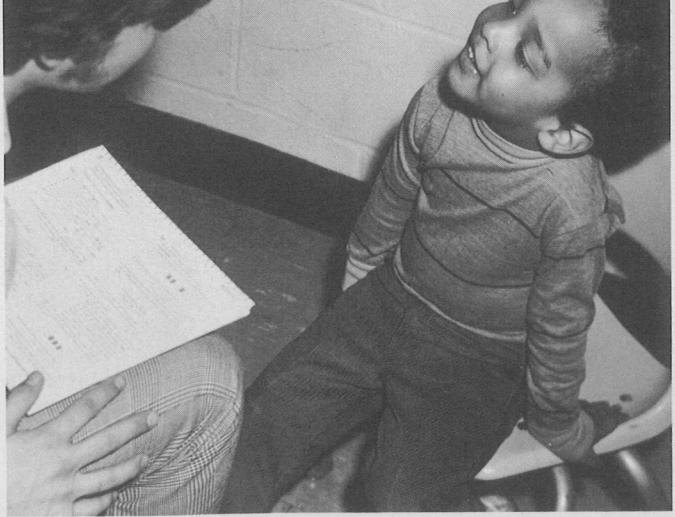
Often when the child's "official education" begins, the chain of failure upon failure is perpetuated. Education is enforced with threats and reprimands for children who, because of their "unofficial education," are unable to meet the expectations of the teacher or the school. Those children who have had enriched early experiences can participate effectively in their own education and continue to meet success throughout their school careers. Those children who cannot initially meet the educational requirements established for their age group are left with failure and nothing but distaste or hatred for the system they are forced to attend.

Such a child's behavior can range from withdrawal and resignation to open hostility. The child is forced to relinquish the goals predominant in society. Unable to find achievement and self-esteem in the socially acceptable learning situation, he turns to other behaviors, many of which are clearly unacceptable to, and actively punished by society. In fact, many of America's most costly social problems, including mental illness, juvenile delinquency, unemployment, and social discontent could be alleviated through more satisfactory educational systems.

How can a more satisfactory educational system be devised? Can any system operate effectively when we place the education of our children below so many other national priorities?







# The Learning Village Program...

The Learning Village of Kalamazoo, Michigan was established by Dr. Roger Ulrich and colleagues from Western Michigan University's Psychology Department as an experimental educational program. The initial goal was to demonstrate that a better educational system can be devised and can evolve from within present social, political and economic structures. Five statements summarize the bases upon which the Learning Village was founded and upon which it operates:

1. Education (in the broad sense of organized experience) can never begin too early.
2. When children fail in school, the fault lies with the educational system, *not* with the children.
3. Education, to be effective in the twentieth century must include much more than the traditional "3-R's." Our children must learn a compassion for fellow man, a respect for the environment, an understanding of human behavior, a knowledge of the need for social change, a love of learning, and a respect for one's self.
4. Education should not involve physical punishment nor the constant threats, reprimands and general unpleasantness encountered in schools and homes. Learning can be, and is fun when educational systems are so devised that children often experience success and a joy of accomplishment.
5. The *only* way our present generation can *constructively* contribute to the future of mankind is through proper emphasis on the education of our youth.

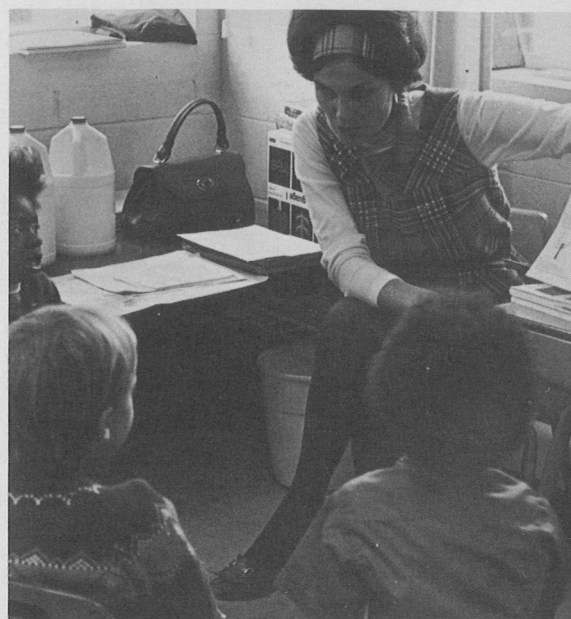
Based on these ideals, the Learning Village operates a school system for children between the ages of two months and eleven years. The children come from varied social and economic backgrounds. Upper and middle class parents pay tuition or contribute man-hours for the privilege of sending their children to the Learning Village. Other citizens who cannot afford tuition or personal time may enroll their children on a scholarship basis provided by the Learning Village, or through local, state and federal agencies. The Village is open year around from 7:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. for the convenience of working parents. Regular educational activities are usually scheduled between 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. During this time children are divided into "study groups," the size of which is determined by the particular subject matter being taught and the



children's advancement in that subject area. Elementary school students work in large groups on individualized assignments, while the very young work on a one-to-one basis with a teacher. Although the children are involved in learning many different subject areas, at each level the staff insures that the course content of basic classes contains the same subject matter as regular public school curricula so that children, if necessary, can successfully transfer into the public school system.

At all ages, other types of behavior besides the traditional "3-R's" are stressed with equal importance. Field trips to airports or local agencies are plentifully interspersed with daily educational activities, ranging from reading to trips to the YMCA. Special attention is given to personal, social and emotional development of the children. Cooperative play, constructive interaction with adults, good personal habits, a respect for the opinions of others, and an ability to search out answers for one's self are a few of the goals toward which the Learning Village strives. Perhaps the main goal of the Learning Village staff is to make certain the children are able to experience success at living and learning. As an example of this, children are never assigned work or a task that is too difficult for their level of experience. A child is not required to read if he has not yet mastered the prerequisite skills. Each task is broken down into workable units so that the child can progress at his own rate. When a child completes a particular unit, the teacher warmly acknowledges the child by offering praise and occasional material rewards for his accomplishment. In this way, the child not only succeeds, but is given credit for his accomplishment. With this procedure, the child is willing to progress to the next more difficult unit with confidence and enthusiasm. Of course, as the child progresses through his education, the tasks become increasingly more complex. Younger children may only write one sentence to obtain a reward or acknowledgement while older children may have advanced to the point where they write whole essays before expecting any sort of acknowledgement from the teacher. In some cases children are allowed to choose a particular reward from a list of items prepared by the students themselves. Such items include: chew gum for an hour, ride home in the teacher's car, lead the line for lunch, go without shoes for an hour, take a friend to the library, etc. All are inexpensive, cause no inconvenience for the teacher, and mean very much to the children.

This brief description of some of the methods employed in the Learning Village is not new or unique to this program. The Learning Village techniques are, in fact, nothing more than a judicious use of the principles of behavior. These principles are based on the assumption that behavior is largely environmentally determined and if we desire our children to meet our expectations, then we must define those expectations and help to provide the basis for their attainment. The techniques employed in the Learning Village are often called behavior modification or contingency management. Their origins are based in the experimental





behavioral laboratory. In practice, the Learning Village relies on programmed learning materials and on the simple process of rewarding behaviors which contribute to the successful academic, social and emotional development of the child.

The program has yielded promising results along several dimensions. First, the children enjoy learning. Parents frequently express the fact that their children actually look forward to attending school. Parent involvement is encouraged. In fact, 41% of the children enrolled in the Village have parents who actually work as Learning Village staff members. Parents and children are invited to serve as Advisors to the Learning Village Coordinators. To guarantee feedback from parents, another procedure has been adopted in the Village. When parents receive periodic "grade cards" on the progress of their child, they are asked to complete a "grade card" on the Learning Village and give their estimation of the progress the Village has made in relation to their child. Thus far, such reports have been enthusiastic.

The degree to which the children of the Village enjoy learning is also reflected in their progress. When education is fun and children are allowed to progress at their own pace, their degree of progress is an accurate indication of their degree of enthusiasm.

Six graphs are presented to show some of the effectiveness of the Learning Village system of education. These graphs only show the children's measured progress in traditional academic achievement. This initial report points to the promise of future success, both for the Learning Village program and for its children.

Is the Learning Village system of education economically feasible for larger systems, especially our public schools? Can similar results be obtained where classroom design and limited school budgets dictate the boundaries of edu-

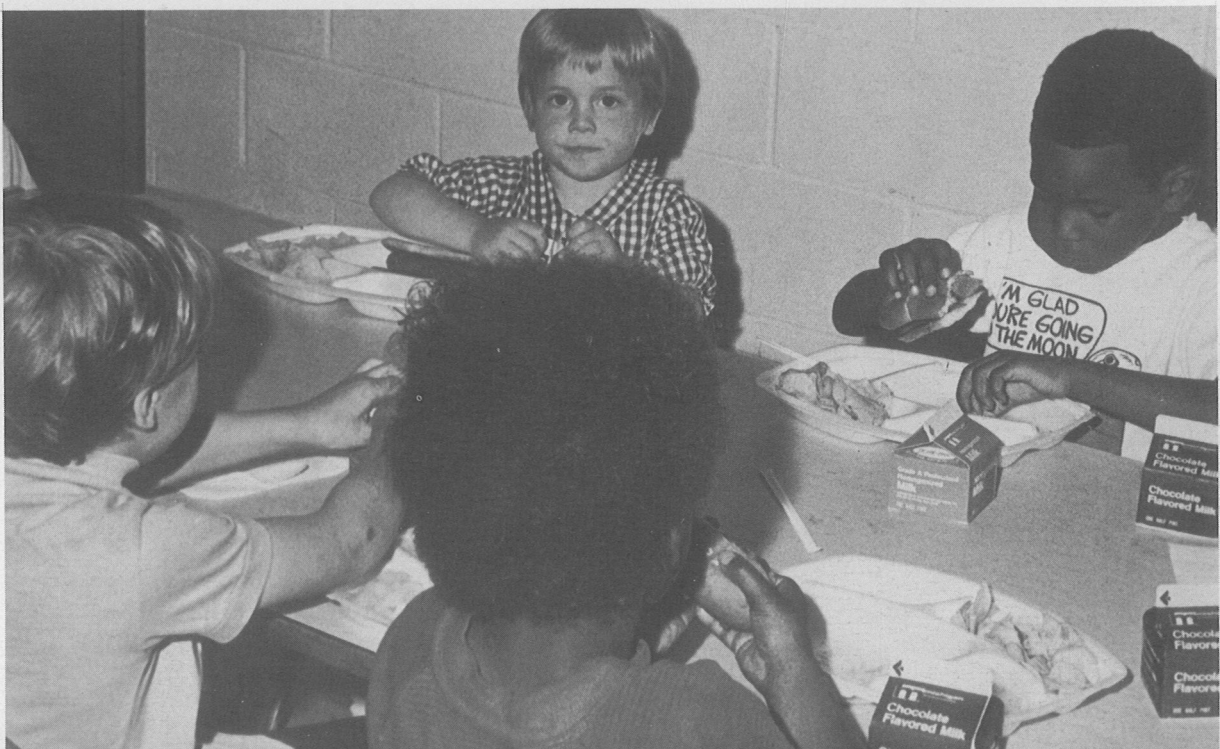




cational quality? To provide answers to such questions is one of the major challenges facing the Learning Village. Within the Learning Village, one solution to the economic dilemma of education has been found. An effective method of increasing the quality of education within public (or private) school settings is to decrease the student/teacher ratio. This provides each teacher the opportunity to follow the child and his progress more closely. Relying on its own in-school teaching-apprenticeship program, the Learning Village has made excellent use of paraprofessionals as teachers and aides. These paraprofessionals come from varied backgrounds, including parents of children in the Learning Village program, college students, high school students, high school push-outs, personnel supplied through local community-help agencies, and, most uniquely, the children themselves. Elementary school children have welcomed the opportunity to function as teachers for the infants. Their "specialties" include teaching colors and other object identifications. Less than 20% of the Learning Village teachers actually have Teaching Certificates, but all, regardless of their age or previous experience, have been trained by advanced Village staff. The effectiveness of both certified and noncertified teachers is reflected in the success of the program.

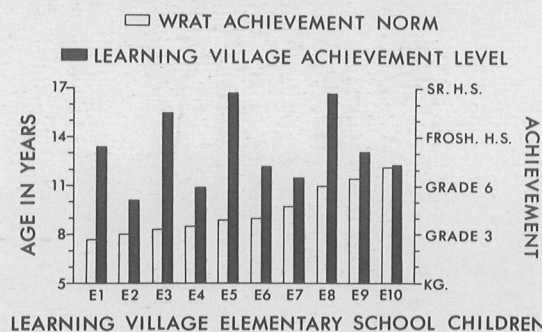
The Learning Village is an approximation of a new system of education. As a model and experimental program, the Learning Village shows great promise. As the Learning Village and programs like it expand and prove their capacity to produce similar results among larger groups of students, the appeal of contingency management strategies beginning with the very young will increase.

Programmed instruction, contingency management, and the use of paraprofessionals are not the only solutions to America's educational crisis — but they are tools that are available now. Most importantly, they are a step in the right direction.

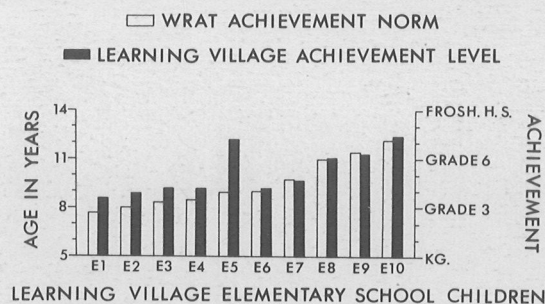




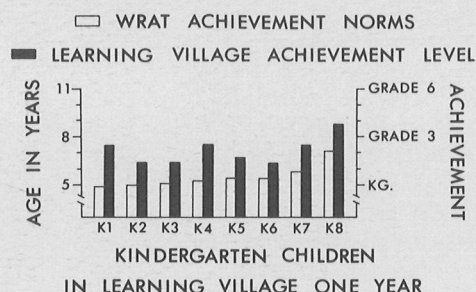
# WIDE RANGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST: READING SCORES



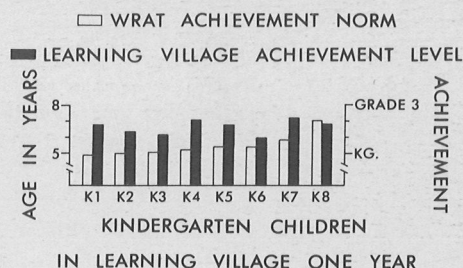
# WIDE RANGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST: MATH SCORES



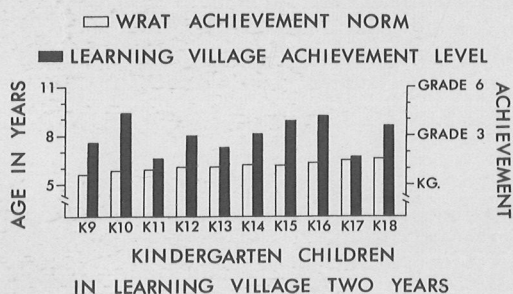
# WIDE RANGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST: READING SCORES



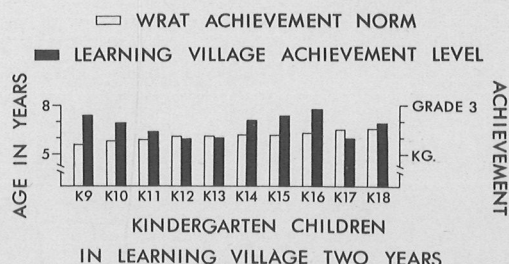
# WIDE RANGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST: MATH SCORES



# WIDE RANGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST: READING SCORES

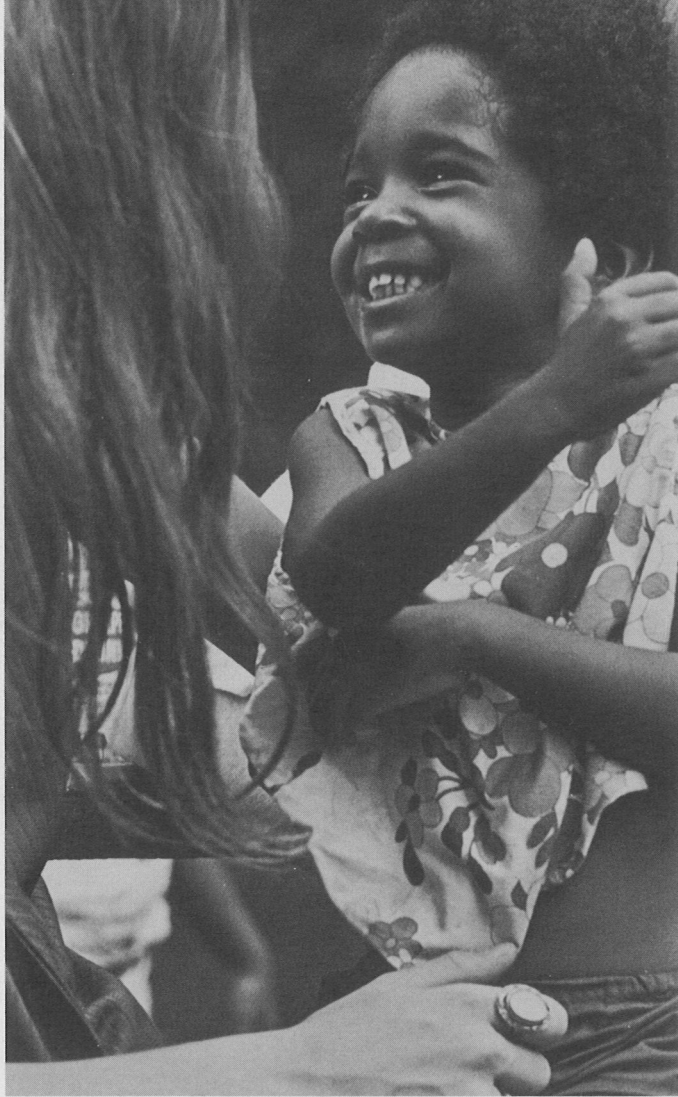


# WIDE RANGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST: MATH SCORES

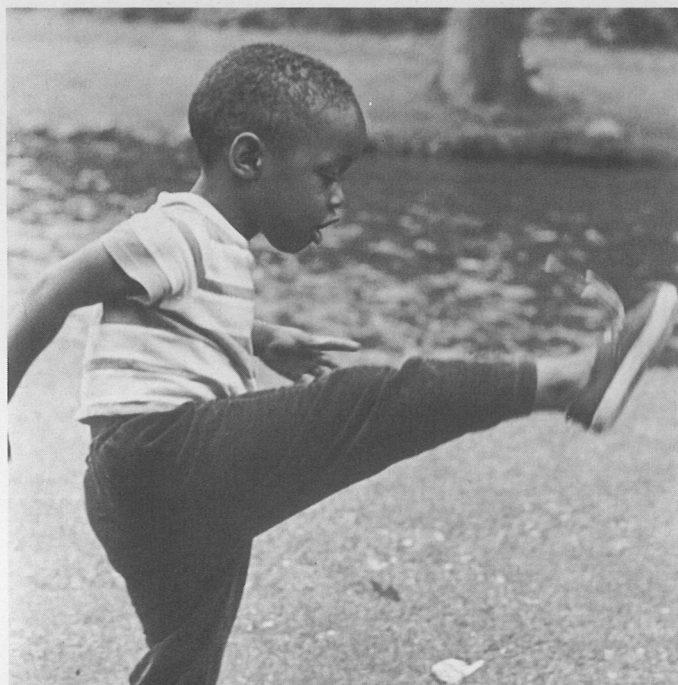


Scores of the Learning Village children on the Wide Range Achievement Test. The left hand column of graphs shows reading scores, and the right hand column shows math scores. Scores of the Learning Village Elementary school children are in the top row of graphs. Scores of the Learning Village kindergarten children who have been in the program one year are in the middle row of graphs. Scores of the Learning Village Kindergarten children who have been in the program two years are in the bottom row of graphs. Both sides of each graph give information on the children. The left side of each graph shows age, while the right side shows the equivalent grade level for that age. For example, on the reading scores (left side), of the Elementary school children (top), child E<sub>1</sub> is almost eight years old, which is the usual age of a child who is over half-way through second grade (see white bar). However, child E<sub>1</sub> is reading at over the eighth grade level, which is better than most 13-year olds (see black bar).





educational environment

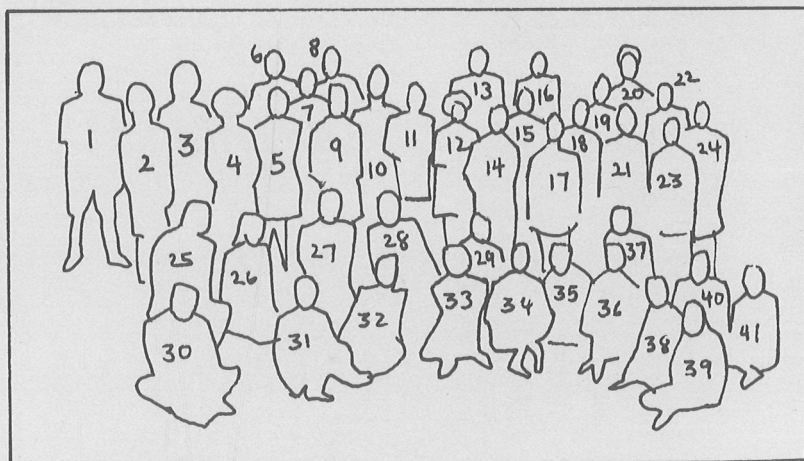






### Current Learning Village Staff

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Joe Auffrey     | 22. Anne Farmer    |
| 2. Carol Siep      | 23. Sue Steiner    |
| 3. Thomas Johnson  | 24. Ruth Shafer    |
| 4. Mary Williams   | 25. Bob Wiggins    |
| 5. Melanie Blanks  | 26. Arlyne Gutmann |
| 6. Sylvia Dulaney  | 27. Carole Ulrich  |
| 7. Mary Ann Zender | 28. Roger Ulrich   |
| 8. Russell Jones   | 29. Alan Zukerman  |
| 9. Lois Martin     | 30. Dick Fearon    |
| 10. Darwin Stier   | 31. Dottie Marine  |
| 11. Marie Harris   | 32. Carmen Hren    |
| 12. Ruth Harper    | 33. Jim Scherrer   |
| 13. Marshall Wolfe | 34. Mona Mitchell  |
| 14. Bette Boulding | 35. Opal West      |
| 15. Cheri Yeager   | 36. Duane Shields  |
| 16. Bob Pierce     | 37. Lois Speck     |
| 17. Jan Brown      | 38. Janine Fockler |
| 18. Sharon Sowers  | 39. Deborah Briley |
| 19. Marilyn Shaw   | 40. Madelon Lewis  |
| 20. Alex Luvall    | 41. Lynn Peters    |
| 21. Kathy Williams |                    |



Not pictured are:

Galen Alessi  
Marilyn Arnett  
Melanie Blanks  
Lynn Collins  
Lola Dangerfield  
Judy Donovan  
Robert Dyche  
Gerald Harper

Hank James  
Thomas Louisell  
Roger Nabors  
Brenda Sherburn  
Pam Smith  
Richard Spates  
Jeffrey Waltz  
Helen Brewer

Individuals interested in enrolling their children in the Kalamazoo Learning Village or groups interested in establishing similar programs in their neighborhoods or community either privately or within the public schools should write: Learning Village Information

c/o Behavior Development Corporation

P.O. Box 1066

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

The Behavior Development Corporation of which the Learning Village is a facility is a non-profit Corporation.



