

HEIGHTS ACADEMY IS FIVE YEARS OLD

With the graduation of the class of 1980 last month, South Boston Heights Academy successfully completed its first five years of operation. It's been a busy, wonderful and somewhat miraculous five years and everyone connected with the school expects the next five years to be as exciting.

Not many believed that such an enterprise could get started in South Boston, let alone last five years. But now that the Academy has sunk its roots deep in the community that gave it birth, the skeptics have begun to change their minds. They realize now that the Academy has become a permanent part of this very special community. And they ought to be proud of it.

As most Southie residents remember, the Academy opened its doors in October 1975 in rented quarters on Broadway. Parents and organizers had spent almost a year preparing this complex and difficult undertaking. Space had to be leased and made into classrooms, walls had to be built and painted, furniture bought, teachers hired, textbooks purchased, a curriculum and schedule organized, students enrolled and tested, dress and discipline codes decided on.

It had been agreed by the founders that the new private school should reflect the wishes of the parents who wanted more than just a refuge from forced busing. They wanted a school structured along traditional lines, a school that taught the basic academic skills and maintained a safe, non-disruptive environment. And that is what the school endeavored to give its patrons.

The first two years were spent learning to run a school. A lot of mistakes were made, but also a lot of progress. In July 1977 the Academy purchased the old Choate-Burnham School on East Third Street which the city had decided to sell. This gave the Academy a permanent home in a very fine building of its own. The cost of purchase was \$60,000. Another \$40,000 was spent bringing the old building up to modern standards. New bathrooms were installed, a new alarm system put in, new lighting, and many other improvements made. Thus, when the new school year began in September 1977, the students entered a building completely renovated and restored to new life.

During the last three years the school has exerted great effort to maintain and improve its academic standards ~~sexxyxthexfoundedx~~ and to keep tuition costs as low as possible in the face of ever-rising operating costs. To do this, the Academy embarked on an energy saving drive and a variety of fund-raising activities. These included bazaars, rummage sales, raffles, candy and bake sales, dinners, car washes, etc. In December 1979 the Academy was issued its licence to conduct bingo games and other such fund-raising activities. The directors decided to conduct weekly blackjack nights and monthly Las Vegas nights. These activities have attracted excellent attendance and are now providing the school with much-needed funds to help overcome its present operating deficit.

The help of parents and faculty has been crucial to the Academy's fund-raising activities. Out of this has developed a family spirit within the school among parents, students, teachers and directors. Everyone is working together to provide quality private education at

as low a tuition rate as possible for the people of South Boston.

The advantages of private education are many: small classes, individual attention, close supervision, and a safe environment where children can learn. The student-teacher ratio at the Academy is about 15 to 1, which is found^{only} in the best private schools that charge five times as much. This means that the student gets far more individual attention in his work than he would in a public or parochial school. In addition, each student's program is tailored to fit his or her goal. The Academy's upper school provides three basic programs: college preparatory, business-commercial, and technical-vocational.

In the elementary grades the Academy stresses the development of the three basic skills: reading, writing and arithmetic. Special emphasis is placed on developing good readers. One of the board members is Samuel Blumenfeld, the author of The New Illiterates, How to Tutor and numerous articles on the reading problem. Mr. Blumenfeld, who has lived in ~~where he has lived in~~ South Boston since 1970, monitors the reading progress of the Academy's primary students to make sure that each pupil achieves his or her highest level of reading ability.

This fall the Academy will launch a kindergarten program in the afternoons at a cost of \$7 per week. The program will be geared to first-grade **preparation** rather than to the baby-sitting concept prevalent in most kindergartens.

Heights Academy is particularly proud of the excellent and dedicated faculty it has put together in the course of its first five years. It is also proud of its extra-curricular program which has

included an educational trip to France for seventeen students during the spring vacation, ski trips to New Hampshire, outings to the theater, visits to museums, roller-skating parties and a host of other social activities.

From every standpoint it would seem impossible for a good private school to succeed in an urban community such as South Boston. But not only has the Academy succeeded, its success has attracted national attention. Visitors from all parts of the country have come to see the Academy for themselves and learn the secrets of its success. The "secrets" are dedication to the cause of good private education at moderate costs, parents who care about their children, a supportive community, and a determination to overcome obstacles.

There are many who have not wanted the Academy to succeed -- for obvious reasons. But the Academy has indeed succeeded, proving that low-cost quality private education is a viable alternative to the expensive, wasteful mess of today's public education.

For parents who want to enroll their children, the Academy is *during the summer* open [^] Tuesdays through Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For information call 269-4482. For the best educational value in Boston, this is it.