

Strikes affect student reading, math achievement

By MARY BETH HORWATH
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

Two studies conducted by a University professor have linked teacher strikes in Pennsylvania to declines in students' attendance and math and reading achievement.

William E. Caldwell, associate professor in the College of Education's division of educational policy studies, conducted a study examining student achievement on Educational Quality Assessment tests after teacher strikes. He was assisted by Michael D. Moskalski, principal in the Selinsgrove School District.

The EQA was given to students in the fifth, eighth and 11th grades, and was used to collect achievement and attitudinal information in a variety of areas.

"We selected reading and math because they are the most highly recognized achievement areas," Caldwell said. "We did look at some of the attitudinal results but nothing is published yet."

Caldwell and Moskalski found that strikes did affect achievement, especially in math.

"Fifth- and eighth-graders had significantly lower math scores," Caldwell said. "Eleventh-graders had lower scores also, although not significantly lower."

The reading results were not similar.

"Eighth-graders had significantly lower reading scores, but fifth- and 11th-graders had lower scores," Caldwell said.

Caldwell said he expected the results.

"You have to think that there will be a difference if you think schools have any effect at all. I would have been disappointed if the results had been different," he said.

Moskalski agreed: "I would think both teachers and parents would be glad that this proves that school does have a great effect."

When the EQA was designed and administered in the 1973 period, it was voluntary, Caldwell said. The test was so acceptable that the state made it mandatory between the 1974 and 1976 academic years. This was the only period in which the test was administered by every school district in Pennsylvania, he said.

They discovered that 46 districts had teacher strikes between the first administration of the EQA and the second after 1977, Caldwell said. So they had EQA measures from all Pennsylvania districts that would be comparable because of the mandatory testing period.

"Reading is reinforced in a number of areas. But he wouldn't be likely to do math problems at church or in a club."

Caldwell also conducted a study with Robert P. Miller, a principal in the Cumberland Valley School District, examining student attendance.

"That study concluded that while no differences existed in student attendance in comparable districts prior to a strike, attendance decreased significantly following a strike. Forty-nine districts

which did not experience strikes were compared to 49 districts which did experience strikes.

"The depressing thing about that statistic is that student attendance has declined steadily over the last 10 years, but it declines faster after a strike," Caldwell said.

Miller speculated that the reason attendance declines after a strike may be because students' attitudes are affected.

"The kids see the teachers aren't in school, and services are stopped, and they think 'why should we go?'" he said.

Strikes cause a very negative situation in a school district, and one way to encourage student attendance after a strike is to encourage enthusiasm among the teachers and administration, he said.

"You have to get the staff back together and get the 'esprit de corps' again," he said.

Caldwell said other studies have been done which show that more students drop

of school following a teachers' strike.

"If anyone in education thinks about it long enough, they have to support the opinion that strikes affect achievement, and that it may affect the teacher-pupil relationship," he said.

Seven states allow teachers the right to strike, and strikes have increased in those states since the legislation was passed, Caldwell said.

Miller said the Cumberland Valley School District had a teachers' strike in 1975, and although it lasted only about four days, it had a significant impact.

"It had a big impact on the attitude of the central offices toward the teachers," he said.

Caldwell said he thinks new alternatives to strikes must be found.

"When the conflicts are so harsh, it does affect the kids," he said.

"You can parallel it to a family situation," Caldwell added. "Two people with a family don't always agree on everything, but they work the disputes out without affecting the kids."

Strike has not canceled teaching practicums

By LESLIE K. ZUCK
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

University seniors majoring in education have been affected by the 50-day-long Philadelphia teachers strike, but some have been denied a placement because of the strike, Robert P. Neuhard, University coordinator for the Office of Clinical Experiences, said.

About 16 special education majors who were originally assigned placements, or student teaching positions, in Philadelphia city schools Fall Term were reassigned to schools outside the city the day after Labor Day, said Martin W. Sharp, University coordinator/supervisor for student teaching.

"All our people got to do their practicums," Neuhard said. "I can't say they weren't affected, though, because in some cases we had to move them."

He said strikes cause extra work for the education

department because the coordinators sometimes have to find replacement practicums for students.

"This one took us by surprise, in effect, because it wasn't a contract year," he said.

"Our prime responsibility," Sharp said, "is to place the students in the best possible school for their majors. It's a very important term for them."

"I have all my students placed in Delaware and Chester counties, which isn't unusual," he said. "Secondary, elementary and special ed students are already placed for Winter Term and it's business as usual."

"I have one student with a double major who had trouble placing Winter Term because she needed hearing impaired and elementary education, but we got her a position at the Philadelphia School for the Deaf, which is what she wanted," he said.

Neuhard said no student at the University has ever

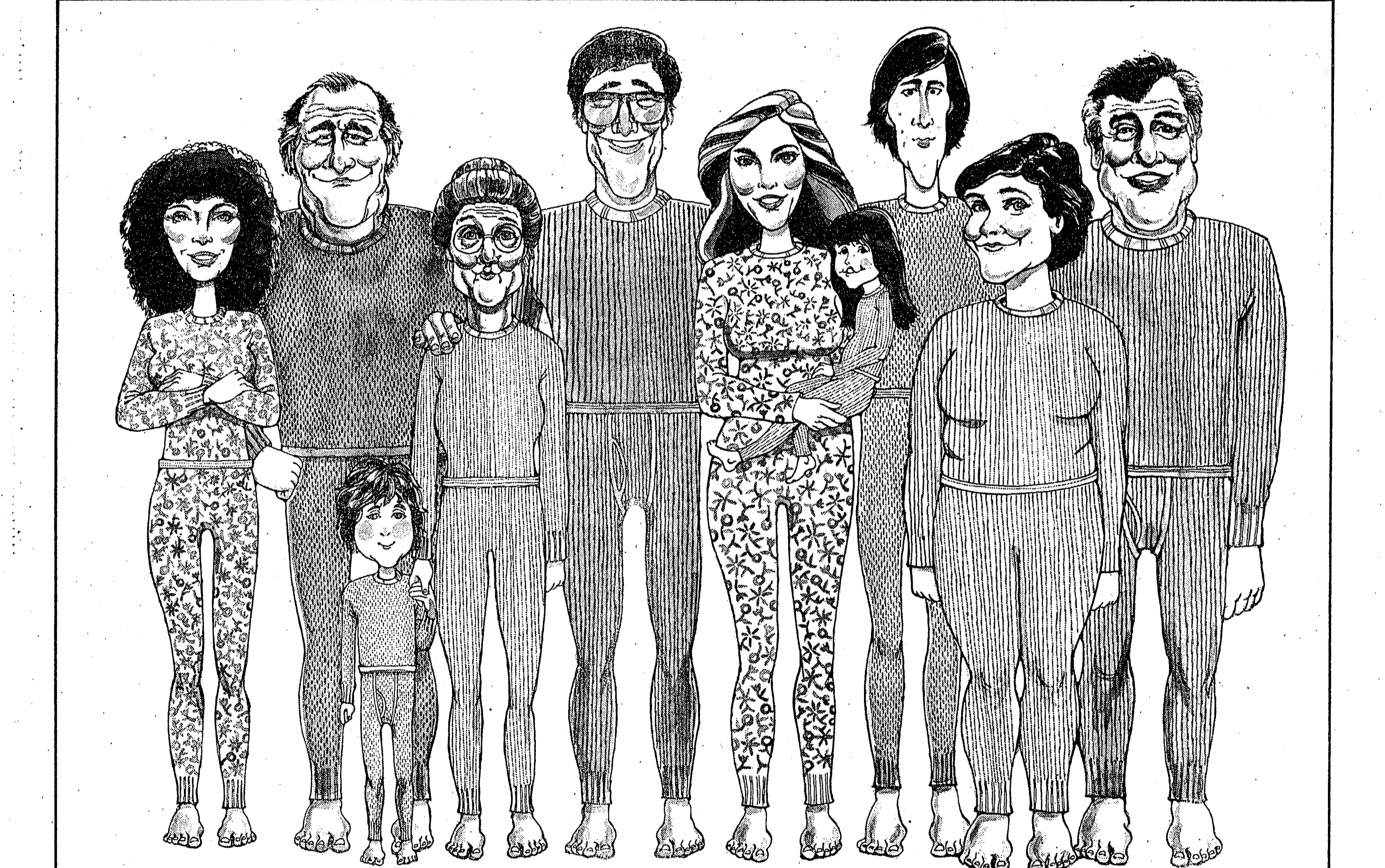
been denied a placement because of a strike.

"It would take a massive shut-down statewide before we would experience any serious placement problems," he said.

Sharp said all of the institutions in Pennsylvania, including Penn State, Temple University and Cheyney State College, have experienced a large decline in education enrollment in the last three years, so there are fewer students to place.

Sandy Cohen (11th elementary education), said Penn State students were not affected nearly as much as students from Philadelphia colleges.

Cohen, who is student teaching this term in a Philadelphia suburb, said many students from Temple University and other colleges in the Philadelphia area who usually receive placements in the city were reassigned to parochial and private schools.

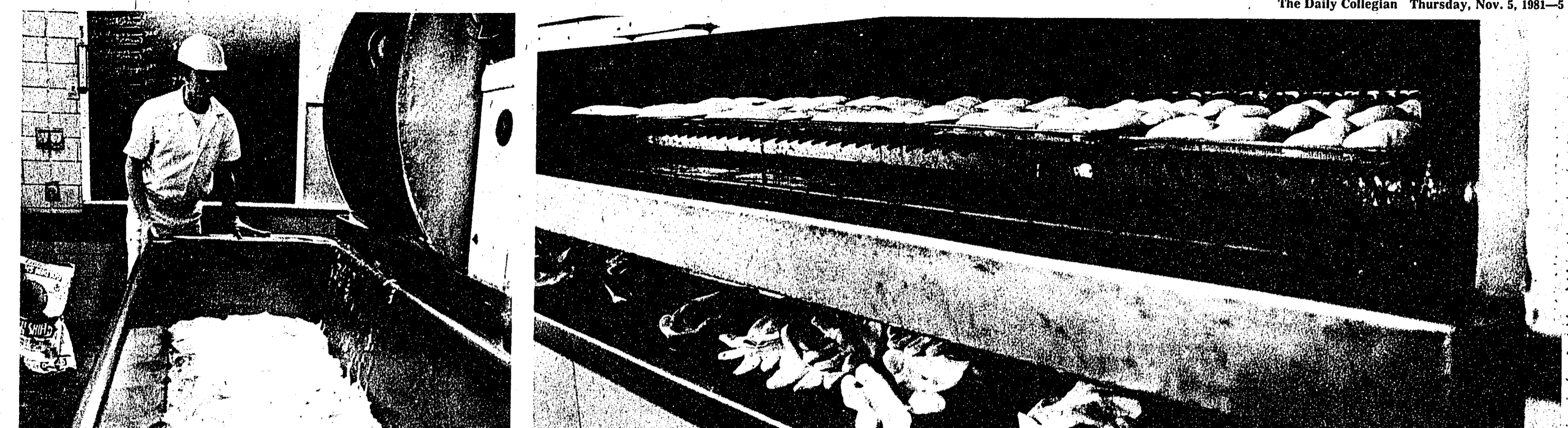


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To handle baking for 12,500 University Park students the bakery uses more than five tons of flour, 1½ tons of sugar, eight tons of shortening and 180 lbs. of dry yeast a week. Much of this goes into the more than 285,000 loaves of bread baked a year. The rolls made yesterday are part of the 675,000 dozen rolls made annually.

The dough is made in a big mixer with a capacity for 650 loaves, above left. It is then formed into little balls, right, and shaped into rolls for the final rising. After rising they are baked, above. Finally, they are automatically dumped onto cooling conveyors which snake through the bakery, bagged, and sent out.

Photos by Janis Burger



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