

only in the removal of the school and of the college from the isolation and vacuum in which each works. The same cooperative planning advocated in the school will work in the college. College instructors need to define cooperatively purposes for various curriculums and for consequent curriculum planning; colleges and high schools must maintain liaison with each other—neither the college nor the high school

can be totally right as long as they do not know intimately each other's concepts, efforts, and difficulties; college administrators must recognize that education is a continuous process and strive to put that belief into practice. Just as high schools must forget false ideas of prestige when working with elementary schools, colleges must forget false ideas of prestige when working with secondary schools.

## *When a Class Evaluates*

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DONALD BERGER

**An eleventh grade at the Horace Mann-Lincoln School, Teachers College, Columbia University, made real progress in meeting individual and group needs when they outlined objectives, arrived at decisions acceptable to all, worked toward goals, and participated in self and group evaluation. Donald Berger, who gives this account, is assistant professor of education at Northern Illinois State Teachers College, DeKalb.**

WE COULDN'T abolish marks, but we did devise a cooperative method of evaluation that emphasized goals and how to reach them.

It started in the fall when the eleventh graders were planning their core classes. We were not confined by any subject matter; there was no preconceived course of study that would limit problems to explore. There was only a block of time assigned to us; forty-six students; a hopeful teacher; and the opportunity to live, work, and learn together in whatever way we chose.

In retrospect, our progress during those early weeks of planning seems to

have been steady and apparently free of obstacles. But now we are reminiscing in an atmosphere of greater security and events no longer assume their true proportions. There was no dearth of problems to solve as we began our experiment with cooperative learning. One of these, whose solution was the source of our later experiences in evaluation, was, "What objectives are we to work for as individuals and as a group?"

Since the answer would determine our purposes, focus upon general directives, and help us shape later group procedures, it was important that the

results of our cooperative thinking represent our best endeavors. It was equally important that each member of the group feel satisfied that his individuality was not only safeguarded but enhanced.

We spent several days in lively, often heated, discussions during which we tried to resolve, or at least harmonize, conflicts to understand the other fellow's values and to arrive at some agreements through consensus. Each person suggested a list of objectives, and from these the class tried to structure a set of goals that everyone would be willing to accept.

### The List Grew and Grew

A wide range of interests, needs, and aspirations was reflected in these suggestions. Some were academic—created, we were sure, to give security to the teacher. Others were presented hesitantly—with the feeling that a classroom was not the place for such personal concerns to be aired.

We jotted them all down in whatever order they were offered; and after two days we were overwhelmed with what seemed to be an endless list of ideals: *try to have each person work up to his own ability, learn to get rid of prejudices, express ourselves with ease before a group, try to eliminate cliques, develop leadership, become more popular, and a host of others.* Aside from the variety, we were also impressed with the need for determining which goals would be most valuable for our purposes.

To facilitate this process and to free the larger group to consider other problems, a committee of five volunteered to summarize, organize, and evaluate the long list. They hoped to evolve

a simplified list that could be presented to the group for acceptance, modification, or rejection. Before setting to work the committee asked each person to check those goals he believed to be most important.

Two problems, not anticipated by the teacher, slowed the progress of this small group. The committee members had first to learn how to function as a working group; and they were asked by the class to organize the objectives into an instrument usable for later evaluations. After five luncheon meetings the committee came forth with the evaluation sheet and elaborate plans as to how it might be used.

In the interim the class had decided that an individual's progress should be evaluated by the teacher and student, and the group's by everyone concerned. The unexpected had happened. They were volunteering recommendations as to how individual evaluations might be conducted. The practice of "two-way evaluation conferences" was the result.

### Cutting the List to Workable Size

From the numerous objectives suggested, nineteen survived the tests of value, practicability, and preference. These were organized under the broad headings, *Individual* and *Social*. The former was broken down into *Work and Study Skills*, and *Thinking*. To determine whether deletions were warranted the class was asked to check this list against the original worksheets. Any objective not included was then shown to be either implied in one or more of those listed or not incorporated because it failed to receive preferential rating by the majority. One major group, relating to subject matter skills.

was omitted. When asked by several skeptics why, the committee explained that the group had not as yet chosen subject matter or defined a group problem for the year but when it did such skills would need to be considered in light of these objectives.

*Work and Study Skills* included the goals: Does the student (1) plan his work with good judgment, (2) carry through to completion the work planned, (3) use the resources at his disposal, (4) present materials and ideas well in writing and speaking, and (5) work to the best of his ability?

The *Thinking* section stressed the importance of objectivity: Does the student (1) think critically, logically, and analytically? (2) check his facts for correctness and lack of bias, (3) make decisions when necessary, (4) avoid prejudices and accept new viewpoints, (5) remain rational in defending his opinions, (6) take and profit by the criticism of others, and (7) recognize and stick to the main points of a discussion?

*Social Objectives* listed those attitudes and skills needed for effective participation in a cooperative society. Does the student (1) show respect and understanding for others and courtesy in behavior, (2) exercise self-control, (3) consider the group as well as himself in making decisions, (4) support the group decisions, (5) actively participate in all phases of the group's work, (6) show willingness to accept responsibilities, and (7) participate in the practice of self-government?

### Measuring Stick for Growth

The objectives were listed opposite a ten-point scale. The committee felt

some system should be devised to show the amount of growth a student was able to make in reaching each objective in the course of the school year. They had discarded letters and percentages, believing these had little meaning. This chart could easily be made into a graph. After each conference it would become for the student a record of how he fared in relation to each goal and also a reference for him in planning his own work and role in the group.

Since marks would be given in the course, it was recommended that these be cooperatively determined during the last conference in May and that this instrument be used as a basis for not only this rating but all work undertaken by the group during the year. They felt that if each person sincerely tried to live up to as many of these goals as possible, the marks would become relatively unimportant.

Although the individual was to be evaluated during conferences with the teacher, these objectives were not to be forgotten by the class in planning group work. To reach these goals experiences would need to be planned to include opportunities for such growth. By the time the first conferences were scheduled the group had defined its purposes and the first group problem, and organized into a democratic unit.

### How Far Have We Come?

During conferences the student and teacher tried to arrive at some decisions regarding the former's performance and growth in reaching each objective of the instrument. Before a decision was made evidences were offered by both to justify the place checked on the chart. Such evidences included refer-

ences to all types of participation or contributions made during the period of time covered by the evaluation. To objectify such evidences many sources of information were drawn upon:

- the teacher's records
- the student's folder containing his written work
- records of class discussions, committee meetings, and group projects
- material from the student's personal file containing evaluations made by other students
- bibliographies
- lists of groups, committees, and other types of activities in which the student participated
- any other information that would aid in the conference.

It was frequently difficult to decide just what column in the scale of one to ten most adequately described a student's rating, but considering achievement in relation to past performance and amount of growth relative to ability and effort exerted was found helpful. If there were differences in opinion between student and teacher, each checked his own choice. These differences were not frequent, however, since one of the purposes of the conference was to come to some agreement upon a student's achievement—a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses so a program of action could be cooperatively planned that might prove helpful for future efforts.

Since there was usually a great range of checks recorded, it was considered helpful to average the points to receive a composite picture of the student's general rating. This number was of little significance in itself, except that an improvement over the course of time in any or all objectives increased the rating

at the next conference and represented a concrete symbol of achievement for some students. These averages were not used for comparing one person with another.

### Spotting the Strengths and Weaknesses

Of the many activities growing out of the cooperative learning experience, these two-way evaluation conferences seemed to have been some of the most valuable. They provided the teacher opportunity to become better acquainted with students, to help with individual problems, and to function in a more ideal guidance capacity. Most conferences gave evidences of a student's personal adjustment which proved helpful in working with him: his work and study skills; attitude toward the opposite sex, his peers, and the experiences planned by the group; his family relationships; and evaluation of self—his needs and interests, educational and vocational aspirations, degree of social and emotional adjustment in and out of school.

Discovering the student's most pressing needs and making provision for some of them by using the resources of the group was a direct result of these evaluations. No conference ended without some constructive program outlined by the student with the teacher's assistance to enhance strengths and overcome weaknesses. These contacts helped students to understand themselves, but this in itself was of little value unless some course of action, some decision-making also occurred.

Soon after the first conference each student was asked to evaluate this technique by making specific references to values and weaknesses.

## We Found Our Plan Sound

Although the group had the opportunity to discontinue this technique of individual evaluation, consensus was that we should continue with one modification—some re-evaluation of objectives. But when a committee charged with this task suggested that several of the objectives were not as important as the others, the group did not agree and we returned to the use of the list as we had first prepared it.

Certain basic assumptions underlie a sound type of evaluation. It is a process that seeks to bring about changes of behavior, and these should be in the direction of objectives set forth by the in-

dividual or group evaluated. In a direct sense it is an effort to ascertain how much progress has been made in realizing goals. Evaluation must use as wide a range of techniques as possible in gaining evidences for measuring changes and is the cooperative responsibility of all concerned in the process.

We do not conclude that our informal experimentation with two-way evaluation conferences has solved the complex problem of evaluating individual growth. We do believe, however, that our experience has given each person an opportunity to better understand himself and to direct his efforts toward reaching goals which he and his fellow students have considered important.

## What Do We Mean by Curriculum Change?

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GEORGE H. HENRY

This article grew out of observations which were made when George Henry interviewed parents all over the country. The results of his research will be helpful to all who are engaged in curriculum revision. George Henry is research assistant at the Horace Mann-Lincoln School of Experimentation, Teachers College, Columbia University.

AFTER CONVERSATIONS with upper middle class parents in forty different states, one inevitably reaches some conclusions about home and school relations. Parents everywhere, it would seem, are almost completely ignorant of the problems arising out of the presence of the new kind of pupils in high schools since the depression. From the

type of questions they ask, they show a meagre conception of the task facing the present-day teacher—the whole gamut of individual differences, the bewildering array of home backgrounds of pupils, the difficulties involved in motivating this throng.

Not understanding these matters, parents are at a loss as to why we should

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