

# Team Teaching in Junior High School

*An experiment in  
team teaching  
seems to offer promise.*

THE Wisconsin Improvement Program of the University of Wisconsin was organized under the direction of John Guy Fowlkes. The Program was concerned with teacher education and curriculum experimentation in local school systems. It also served as the impetus to the team teaching experiment at Franklin Junior High School in Racine.

Two staff members, Romayne Seidel and the writer of this article, attended the four-week conference in which the experiment was designed and later initiated at the local level.

The experimentation involved two teaching teams with three teachers on each team. The seventh grade team was assigned to six sections of students under the unified or block program of organization. Under this plan the three teachers were assigned separate unified period (English and Social Studies) classes, all meeting at the same periods. For example, the unified period teacher is assigned to two class sections under the normal plan or organization; one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Thus it was quite easy to implement the team

teaching experiment by assigning the three teachers to two groups of 90 students. We provided a room that would seat three sections or approximately 90 students. This room, in addition to their respective classrooms, was a minimum requirement.

This same plan of organization was necessary for the three member eighth grade team. The use of the large room, however, was shared by both teams for large group instruction. In addition to the room, we supplied the teams with a tape recorder, overhead projector, and flip chart standards for the teaching process. An added service to teachers was approved by employing an instructional secretary to serve the two teams. The secretary's responsibility was to do all clerical work in order that staff members might have added time for preparation and planning. These items of facility and service are considered of utmost necessity in the program.

## A Team Approach

The students then, receive the services and instruction from three teachers in the unified English-Social Studies program. The teachers plan together what is to be taught each week throughout the year from a general curriculum outline; why it is to be taught; by whom and

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how it is to be taught; how it is to be brought to the minds of the students clearly and effectively; whether it is to be large group, small group or varied instruction. They also plan the follow-up work that is necessary for all the students and determine whether grouping will be involved for certain students or sections of students throughout the week and why. In the eighth grade, one staff member has been assigned responsibility as team leader. This person serves as chairman in all planning sessions, seeing that plans are carried out and that everything that enhances the teaching-learning process is provided for and used. This leadership role has been rotated in the seventh grade periodically for experimental purposes.

As a result of our work this past year, a number of observations and outcomes can be projected. In starting the experiment a number of searching questions were asked. Is it possible to improve instruction using a team of teachers? If so, in what respects? If not, why not? Can we meet a number of comparable and measurable objectives more effectively with team teaching? What pattern of organization is best for instruction of junior high youth? Is there a better way to organize a school for instructional purposes? Do teachers have strengths and weaknesses that we can concern ourselves with more effectively? Can three staff members plan better than individual teachers? Is the cooperative plan better? Are the individual student achievements greater through the use of this method? Is grouping done more effectively? In other words, is this method

a new and more effective approach to education of the junior high school student?

Some of the observations made at present are quite significant. The students tell us frankly that they prefer team teaching to conventional teaching. They state that some teachers can teach certain skills and understanding better than others. They like to gain the insights and beliefs and contributions of all their teachers; they sense the effective planning and follow-up that are evident; they like to be grouped for certain purposes but still be members of their basic class group. They like large group and small group instruction; they like being taught in the large group because all students should be exposed to facts and skills to a common degree, but when they return to their group or classroom their individuality and their special abilities can be put to work through varied and special assignments.

The teachers state that team teaching represents a workable compromise between the self-contained classroom situation and the subject centered period. It is a good solution to the homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping problem. Flexibility of grouping is one of the most positive aspects of the team approach. Such grouping can be done at the discretion of the team without processing or waste of time through office procedures. Student groups may vary for certain purposes. There is advantage in uniformity of presentation and motivation. There is value in teacher planning and preparation through sharing of abilities and ideas. The plan of instruction is well thought through and is of common knowledge to all members of the team.

Team teaching has allowed members to teach that which they feel they are best suited to teach. Teachers have felt

a superior sense of achievement and satisfaction in this experiment that they have missed in regular teaching. It has allowed each teacher to teach on a different basis and insured the best instruction available through uniformity of consideration and a chance to expand the original lesson along lines of personal capabilities. It has made the use of resource people more realistic by large group presentations.

### A Common Period

One great necessity is a common planning period for each team. Our present schedule allows each team to meet daily on school time for one period. In addition to this they share an additional period for student and parent conferences. Thus each team teacher in the Racine junior high schools is assigned four teaching periods, one conference period and one preparation period.

In organizing this experiment the teachers were approached by the writer of this article prior to the opening of school. He presented the idea, which was then placed on a voluntary basis for the teachers. All six teachers accepted the idea. They then proceeded in the following three weeks to plan systematically the implementation of the experiment.

Harris Russell, Director of Instructional Services, and John Maxwell, Language Arts Consultant for the Racine Public Schools, have worked closely with the experiment. Some of the outcomes that have been observed by our joint team and resource staff have been: the potential of teaching to strengths, in-service growth for teachers, flexibility in meeting individual differences, saving of teacher time for professional preparation, richer use of resources, better evaluation and variety in teaching.

Some of the problems about the experiment have also been observed by members of the team and resource staff. All members of the team must have mutual respect for one another, they must operate on a cooperative and purposeful basis. There is need to agree on basic purposes, goals and objectives. Unless the interaction of the team is positive, there is a potential danger that progress will not be made. It is workable if all members are congenial and have the personalities and abilities to create and execute ideas. Problems of mechanics, such as pupil movement, space, ventilation, and viewing limitations, have been factors of minor concern at times this year. The problem of a teacher's knowing 180 students as compared to 60 and whether the team can share effectively in teachers' evaluation of students was another concern. Problems of student discipline were of minor significance in the large room due to thorough planning and effective teaching.

A cooperative relationship with the Wisconsin Improvement Program and the University of Wisconsin has been valuable in establishing a research design for the experiment. Dr. Julian Stanley, a specialist in educational research, has worked with the team throughout the year. We will continue to work with the Improvement Program staff and the University during the coming school year. The experiment is to be evaluated and measured at the end of the school year of 1961.

Our observations at this time must be made on a tentative basis. We have all been impressed by the team teaching idea and we sense its potential strengths and its potential weaknesses. We feel we have learned a great deal about teaching by our involvement in this experiment.

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