

● Innovations in Education

Criteria of a Model Secondary School

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OUR nation is presently experiencing a revolution in education. The pressure of reality continues to move the American society toward the stated ideal of excellence. Numerous programs, plans, and directions have been proposed and/or adopted to achieve this end.

One of the concepts now receiving national attention within the context of the drive toward excellence is the idea of the "model school." This idea presupposes that there are schools in the nation which represent excellence in education, and which may serve as models or patterns for others.

The validity of this concept as a desirable approach to improving education has been accepted on a limited scale and there are now innovative and exemplary schools serving as models and demonstrating their programs for the benefit of others.

The National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards has identified "demonstration centers" throughout the nation. IDEA, a project of the Kettering Foundation, has given support to "demonstration schools" located in several states. The U. S. Office

of Education is particularly interested in the concept of "model schools." Much federal money has been spent in support of this effort. Title III, ESEA, especially seeks innovative and exemplary programs in public education for funding. The National Education Association has made an impact in this area through its publication of *Profiles of Excellence*, recommended criteria for evaluating the quality of a local school system.

The desirability of expanding these types of programs and producing greater visibility of more schools for more people to see as examples of excellence in education is clear.

Model or demonstration schools have been selected generally on the basis of promising trends and practices in secondary education which have been translated into meaningful criteria. Obviously, criteria for selection of a model school vary from locale to locale and organization to organization.

The criteria suggested below were developed as a result of (a) an extensive review of the criteria used to select model schools, especially related to the organizations already mentioned; (b)

on-site visitation of schools depicted in the literature as being pace-setters in education; and (c) personal interviews with respected authorities in the field. These activities were undertaken by the writers as a part of their assignment in the PACE program (Title III, ESEA), while employed by the U. S. Office of Education.

The major underlying assumption of this article is that a model school represents excellence in education as defined by the criteria set forth. The criteria listed below may relate to parts and/or the whole of a school. However, a school is not a model school unless the quality of innovativeness and/or exemplariness is school-wide.

A Model School

1. *Philosophy and objectives.* A model school is committed to a philosophy which subscribes to a continuing quest for opportunities for experiences which give the learner powers he can use outside the school.
 - a. The philosophy has been translated into a set of specific objectives. These objectives:
 - (1) Indicate priority considerations
 - (2) Are reflected in the total school program
 - (3) Provide direction for change and innovation.
 - b. The progress of a model school in meeting its objectives will be evidenced in such ends as:
 - (1) Increased student responsibility and capacity for self-direction
 - (2) Student adeptness in techniques of learning, attacking new problems, and acquiring new knowledge
 - (3) Student competence in basic skills
 - (4) Student knowledge and understand-

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ing of basic concepts, principles, and the processes of inquiry into the structure of subject matter

- (5) Student behavior which exhibits the quality of coping with and adjusting to new situations and environments along the continuum of adolescence to adulthood
 - (6) Teacher behavior which indicates a commitment to teaching, not as telling, but as the stimulation and direction of inquiry
 - (7) A commitment in word and action by the total school population to democratic processes.
2. *Commitment to improvement.* A model school has developed a systematic strategy for continual improvement which includes the institutionalization of mechanisms of change.
 - a. The school will have in its employ an agent of change whose function is to

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assess and evaluate existing educational programs within the community in light of:

- (1) The school's philosophy and priority schema of objectives
 - (2) Changing goals in an increasingly complex society
 - (3) The latest research, theory, and practice in education.
- b. Participation in inquiry, design, demonstration, and adaptation by the staff is encouraged and supported by:
- (1) A formal procedure for staff involvement
 - (2) A line item appropriation in the school budget for such activities
 - (3) A released time provision for this participation.
- c. Commitment to staff growth and development is evidenced by:
- (1) The provision, on a regular basis, of special courses and workshops, attendance at regional and national conferences, and inter-school and district visitations by staff members
 - (2) A teaching load which allows each teacher to pursue growth and development activities on a continuing basis
 - (3) Use of the latest methods of improving instruction by techniques such as interaction analysis and/or the self-administered video tape
 - (4) An advancement system with realistic rewards for professional growth and development (a professional salary for professional services—department head, associate department head, etc.).
3. *Organization and facilities.* A model school has an organizational structure and the facilities to permit flexibility of class variables such as size, length, composition, and leadership, to assure

that each class functions in maximum concert with its task. Modern practices and facilities designed to meet this end include:

- a. Team teaching and/or other cooperative efforts—seminar rooms for planning, etc.
 - b. Modular scheduling
 - c. Provision and facilities for large and small group instruction and independent study
 - d. New staff utilization patterns that effectively capitalize on the talents of the staff, including the use of non-professional aides for the nonprofessional tasks in the school.
4. *Program.* A model school provides an individualized program of studies for each student. Such a program would be facilitated by a comprehensive updated curriculum and implemented by staff members who make use of current theories of learning and promising instructional techniques.
- a. Elements which may be indicative of an individualized program include:
 - (1) Grouping patterns which provide for the continuous progression of achievement of all learners (such as nongrading)
 - (2) Flexible assignment of students based on assessment of individual potentialities, needs and achievement in relation to the available program (computerized assessment of individual needs and program prescription to meet these needs may hold future promise).
 - b. A comprehensive and updated curriculum is evidenced by:
 - (1) A range of course offerings with the breadth and depth to meet the individual needs of all students
 - (2) New curricular programs in various subject areas (PSSC; MSG; BSCS)
 - (3) A systematic procedure for assessing strengths and weaknesses of the new curricula.
 - c. Modern teaching techniques including the use of instructional aids will be indicated by:
 - (1) A well-equipped instructional materials and resources center for the storage and preparation of a large variety of teaching materials
 - (2) Wide use of instructional equipment and materials to supplement the teaching process
 - (3) The development and use of programmed materials enhancing individualized instruction
 - (4) The use of special techniques and materials for large and small group instruction.
 5. *Community.* A model school enjoys the support, cooperation, and involvement of an interested public. This is evidenced by:
 - a. A permanent study committee of lay citizens who represent a cross section of the community and serve to advise and counsel with school personnel in the formulation of policy
 - b. Continued financial support (affirmation of school bond issues and school budget elections)
 - c. Attendance of parents at school related functions, especially those involving their own children
 - d. A planned program of community involvement activities.

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