



When Students Teach Others

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A BASIC tenet of compensatory education is that the academic potential of poor children is depressed by an inadequate self concept and weak motivation. Primarily the school, rather than the community or the parents, creates the environment within which the child perceives himself as unable to succeed and protects his battered self-image by choosing not to try.

"One-to-One" Project

The "One-to-One" tutorial project of the Los Angeles County Schools Office posed three hypotheses regarding the solution of these problems: (a) that the process of teaching is an extremely effective method of learning; (b) that one's sense of power and worth is enhanced by success in a teaching role; and (c) that this success will motivate behavior suitable for maintenance of a more positive self-image and improved performance in school.

Funds for summer programs for youth made available by the Office of Economic Opportunity through the Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency of Greater Los Angeles as a part of the War on Poverty made a testing of the above hypotheses possible. The program exceeded expectations in the initial year and was expanded in subsequent summers to 18 school districts with additional support through Neighborhood Youth Corps and ESEA Title I funds.

Initial performance objectives of the One-to-One project were stated as follows:

1. Upon completion of the six-week session, the tutors' mean reading grade placement score will be increased by six months as measured by a standardized reading achievement test.
2. Upon completion of the six-week session, the tutees' mean reading grade placement score will be increased by three months as measured by a standardized reading achievement test.
3. Following participation in the program, the number of days that tutors are absent from school will be 50 percent of their absenteeism for the previous school year.
4. Following participation in the program, 95 percent of the tutors will complete the subsequent year of school.

Other purposes were related to the employment of low-income youth, the involvement of the community, and demonstration of the model to school districts.

Only three factors were considered in the selection of tutors: (a) scores two years or more below actual grade placement on standardized reading tests; (b) either dropouts of high school age or those who were

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dropout-prone as indicated by absenteeism, failing grades, or stated intent; and (c) low family income in conformance with the policies of the funding agency.

Tutors were aware of the income requirement, but the popularity of Head Start and the Neighborhood Youth Corps for which low income was also a qualifying factor had long since offset sensitivity about being identified as poor. Tutors were not apprised of the other two requirements, but instead were honestly assured that we believed in their potential for teaching reading to younger children.

For the successful student, the opportunity to function as a tutor involves status and consequently may be motivating in itself. For the potential dropout, the opportunity to earn money is a more realistic inducement. Consequently, the tutors were offered hourly wages at Neighborhood Youth Corps rates.

The project was scheduled during the regular summer school program, which permitted use of the facilities and services at elementary school sites. Each tutoring unit was assigned one teacher-supervisor and from five to seven tutors. During the first two-hour period, each tutor was assigned one elementary student—a fourth, fifth, or sixth grader who was behind in reading. During the second period, the tutors worked with a second group of tutees.

Employment of a teacher-supervisor for each unit added considerably to the cost of the project, but was essential to ensure that the tutors would experience success. The teacher-supervisor trained the tutors in the use of a variety of materials, equipment, and methods. He reviewed each tutor's lesson plans and helped the tutors to assess the progress of their tutees. The tutors received wages both for a week of preservice training and for a daily hour of planning time. This extra time also was utilized for home visitations by the tutor.

A Typical Tutor

To illustrate how One-to-One typically affects participants, let us review the case of one tutor. Maria, at 16, had just completed

her sophomore year in high school. She informed the Neighborhood Youth Corps coordinator that she probably would not return to school in the fall. She had failed sophomore English and she felt that repeating the course would be very distasteful to her. Besides, she viewed her own future exclusively in terms of marriage.

She felt that her rather heavy household responsibilities in caring for younger children and cleaning and cooking while her mother worked were more than adequate preparation for a homemaking career. She had fallen into the habit of missing a day of school each week, usually with the complaint of a headache or toothache.

Maria applied for a summer job with the In-School Neighborhood Youth Corps. She was surprised, but self-consciously pleased, when asked to be a tutor. She approached the first training session with careful diffidence. The teacher-supervisor did not comment on the rollers in her hair and also ignored the burgeoning beard sprouting on the chin of a fellow tutor. At the end of the second day, Maria borrowed an individual tachistoscope and practiced using it with her younger sister.

On the day that work was to begin with the tutees, Maria was frightened. However, her tutoring group had planned activities for the first day which would put the tutees at ease and get everyone acquainted. She had helped arrange the room and knew how to use the equipment and she felt a nervous eagerness to show all this to her tutees. At the end of that first day, a fifth grader looked up at Maria and asked, "I'll see you tomorrow, huh?" Maria promised that he would.

Maria's teacher-supervisor understood the tutor's need for support and encouragement. He insisted that Maria be prepared for each day with a variety of activities and helped her assess the reading growth of her tutees. As her charges learned, her own confidence expanded and she saw herself differently than she had before. The teacher-supervisor cautioned her about being too demanding in her zeal as a tutor.

Maria was fastidiously groomed on the day of her first visit to the home of Billy, one

of her tutees. The poverty criterion did not apply to the selection of tutees, and this child lived in a middle-class neighborhood with homes quite different from those Maria knew in the barrio. Billy's mother had heard glowing accounts of Maria and had observed with delight her son's eagerness to go to school and his new interest in reading. Maria was received as a very special guest.

Although Maria's malingering had previously been a problem, during the six weeks of tutoring she did not miss a day. In fact, she usually arrived early to review her lesson plans and often walked home with one of her tutees.

Maria returned to school that fall. Attendance was never again a problem, and she received no grades below a "C." Recently she talked to her counselor about becoming a teacher.

Variations on One-to-One

Many variations of the one-to-one, students-teach-others concept are possible, given two constants: (a) tutors who have had learning problems, and (b) assignment of tutors on a one-to-one basis.

A variety of strategies may be introduced to meet objectives which may readily be reduced to measurable performance terms and ultimately examined in terms of their relative costs and effectiveness. Such an approach may permit school managers to gain experience with the emerging planning-programming-budgeting system (PPBS) approach.

Participating school districts have varied the model for incorporation in the regular school year. One particularly successful approach appears to be tutoring of elementary students during the regular school day for which the tutor receives course credit. Programs which tack tutoring onto the school day as a volunteer activity have had only limited success.

One district has developed objectives related to the problems of desegregation and integration. The close, personal tutor-tutee relationship provides an opportunity for chil-

dren of different ethnic and racial backgrounds to share experiences which are genuine and meaningful and which effect more positive intergroup attitudes on the part of both children and parents.

Plans are being made to expand One-to-One tutoring in mathematics and other subject areas.

Assessment of the One-to-One Model

The Los Angeles County Schools tutorial model has been tried under the varying circumstances of 16 school districts over a period of three years. Gains in reading achievement scores have consistently exceeded our expectations. Figure 1 indicates the gains achieved by tutors and tutees during each summer of the program.

	N	Tutors Months Gain
Summer 1967	69	8 months
Summer 1968	343	8.5 months
	N	Tutees Months Gain
Summer 1967	78	4.6 months
Summer 1968	686	4.8 months

Figure 1. Gains in Reading Grade Placement Scores During a Six-Week One-to-One Tutorial Program

Funds were not provided to conduct a follow-up study of tutors. District procedures for collecting such data were neither uniform nor thorough and did not allow for the highly mobile character of the target population. Nevertheless, such data as are available make it apparent that the tutor is more apt to attend school regularly, to obtain passing grades, and eventually to complete high school than are the students with similar problems who do not have the tutoring experience.

When students who are near casualties of the education process teach others through One-to-One, conditions are provided which maximize participants' opportunities for involvement. Tutors, in fact, become teachers. They quickly recognize that their role is genuine and not contrived. □

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