

# Learning From and With Others

A. J. BEELER\*

**I**N SEPTEMBER 1971, the Louisville, Kentucky, public schools entered into the second year of experimentation in nine elementary schools, four junior high schools, and one senior high school. Though a number of changes have been inaugurated, plans for these schools are essentially the same as they were for the 1970-71 school year. No rigid formula has been applied; instead, each of the experimental schools has the autonomy of its own decision making and planning. Some of the features of the program are: a much smaller pupil-adult ratio; work with Teacher Corps interns; and use of paraprofessionals. Most of the schools are located in low income areas.

These schools have highlighted an interest in the affective domain as well as in the cognitive. The community is involved in all stages of the planning and implementation of the curriculum, which is essentially child-centered. Emphasis has been placed on the following: team teaching; individualized instruction; a more humanistic attitude of teachers toward students; a more relevant curriculum; increased freedom for students to pursue subjects of their own choosing; and informal classroom settings. All personnel involved participated in preservice and inservice sessions designed to increase their proficiency.

Since a great concern for individual

students is essential for the success of such programs, schools involved have planned and carried out numerous experiences in "learning with and from others."

## Elementary Schools

Elementary schools have concentrated on working with individuals on a one-to-one basis in tutorial situations. Children have been encouraged to help others in their own classes; there has been cross-grade assistance; and in at least one instance children who are practically nonreaders at the sixth grade level were sent to help first grade students with reading.

Parents have been deeply involved. They have served on a voluntary basis as tutors and library aides. They have assisted in cleaning and sewing clothing in projects concerned with good grooming, health, and the improvement of self-images.

Interested persons have been brought in from the community to help. On one occasion a black artist demonstrated his ability and worked with individual students. Black athletes have appeared to discuss fair play and good sportsmanship. Newspaper reporters and other persons from the community have

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been involved in working with individual students and small groups.

Colleges and universities located in the city have made a genuine contribution. In some instances students have done tutorial work with individuals and small groups as a follow-up to their teaching methods courses; in other instances they have served as volunteers. Men students particularly have been valuable in working outdoors and on athletic fields.

Experimentation is currently being carried on in a number of reading programs, several of which emphasize individualized instruction. An effort has been made to make this a total language arts program, including independent reading, discussion, puppet shows, dramatization, and radio plays.

Louisville has a full-time director of a school volunteer program. At the moment 2,600 persons are involved in helping teachers enrich and expand the work done in the classroom. These persons assist in the reading program particularly under the guidance of a certificated person in tutoring, preparing materials, relieving teachers of routine work, and sharing special talents and skills with students in grades kindergarten through 12. This group includes homemakers, businessmen, students, and retired persons. They participate in preservice and orientation programs.

One particularly valuable service was provided to teachers by a professional dramatics director from the community. Twenty teachers of grades 1 and 2 representing all of the project schools were involved. Ten to twelve children of this grade range were used to show teachers how to help children individually through dramatization of situations with stories; music; painting; simulating experiences such as becoming trees, with toe-roots digging into the ground and feeling the water rise.

### **Junior High Schools**

Similar activities have been carried on in junior high schools. Students at this grade level have worked in groups and with individuals; some of them have helped in nearby

elementary schools. University men have provided valuable input with units devoted to cowboys, mountain climbing, and camping. In one instance 30 educable mentally retarded boys were taken on a weekend camping trip following preparation involving all of the subject matter areas.

Two junior high schools not directly involved in the experimental programs have participated in a project referred to as TEAM—Talent, Experience, Ability, Maturity. This project has been cosponsored by the Louisville Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, Volunteer's Bureau, and the Kentucky Commission on Aging. The purpose of this group, organized in 1965, is to use the talent, experience, ability, and maturity of retired and semi-retired persons to work with school children who both want and need the individual help which the teacher does not have time to provide.

Members of this group have assisted boys and girls in current events; mathematics; fine arts, including creative writing, dancing, music, and photography; home economics; industrial arts; counseling; language arts; foreign language; and social studies. The last page of the brochure describing this program contains this sentence:

Giving of himself to a child, developing a close personal relationship with the child, and being instrumental in improving academic achievement have proven to be a most rewarding experience for the team of volunteers.

### **Senior High School**

In addition to activities previously described, the senior high school has included a sheltered workshop for retarded students; a carpentry and masonry program; reading aides in elementary and junior high schools; sharing time and facilities with a nearby parochial high school; an honors reading program; and a human relations three-hour block of time involving English and social studies. One of the units in the human relations block was an in-depth career study, culminating in a Careers Fair which brought into the school community persons representing a variety of careers.

A most interesting and exciting senior high project has been the Male Model Program. This involves 75 boys working with children in the early elementary grades. Need for the program was indicated by studies of delinquency which showed a high incidence of "mother only" families among youth expressing delinquent behavior. Participants in this program are senior high school males who are considered dependable and potential college material. For a two-hour block of time each day they serve as student-teacher assistants assigned to Head Start, kindergarten, and first, second, and third grade classes in a nearby elementary school.

They assist the teacher in a variety of ways. Each week they participate in a two-hour seminar conducted by the senior class counselor in the school. For this they receive one-half credit in psychology and one-half credit in sociology.

In an endeavor to assist each school child in experimental programs in the Louisville public schools to reach his maximum potential, personnel working actively in the projects have found these activities as well as many others to be successful and rewarding. As experimentation progresses, they will continue to search for other means of "learning from and with others." □

## REMOVING BARRIERS TO HUMANENESS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

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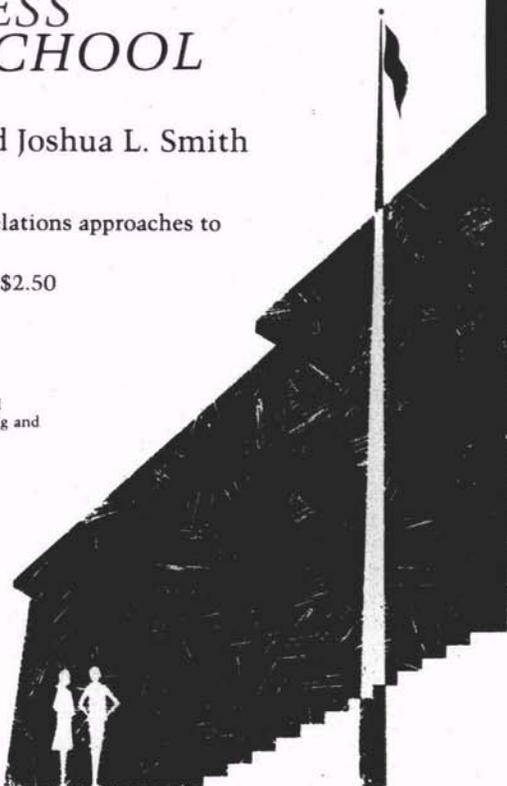
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