

# Team Teaching in Canton's Model School

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**M**OST of the attempts at team teaching are predicated upon a particular architectural design. When one mentions team teaching to the average practitioner, the immediate conceptualization is that of a new building with wide open spaces and movable walls, all leading to maximum freedom of movement. However, most of our students are still housed in buildings which were built long before the advantages of team teaching became known.

The major goal of Canton's Model Experimental Elementary School<sup>1</sup> is to develop team teaching in a traditional egg-crate type school building. The 13 teachers on the staff at the Experimental School were specifically selected and divided into three teams of teachers to work with approximately 360 children. Team A consists of six teachers for children two through seven years of age.

An Early Childhood Development Center was added in the second year of the project. This center has 15 two- and three-year-old children in the morning and 15 four-year-old children in the afternoon. In

addition to this, Team A has all six- and seven-year-olds placed in four homogeneous homerooms with two sections of kindergarten in a separate room. There is some movement of kindergarten children to rooms with six- and seven-year-olds in some subjects. Team B consists of four teachers for the eight- and nine-year-olds, while Team C has three teachers for the ten- and eleven-year-olds. Each team has the additional help of two teacher aides and one full-time teacher intern. The interns are college students who lack only the student teaching experience and who receive a \$4,000 salary.

Differentiated staffing is an integral part of the team situation. In the Canton Experimental School, each team is differentiated in that it has an executive teacher (team leader) who coordinates and is responsible for all team activities. It has a professional teacher who is highly qualified and experienced and who is responsible for supervising interns, student teachers, aides, and volunteers. It also has a provisional teacher who is a beginner or one with very little

<sup>1</sup> Canton's Model Experimental Elementary School is in its second year of an ESEA Title III project, funded and renewable annually for a maximum of three years.

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experience. This hierarchy is based on differences in the teachers' educational background, experience, administrative responsibility, and salary.

Much of the hoped-for success of the project rests on cross-age grouping. This type of organization is aimed at eliminating the highly superficial grade-level barriers in elementary school education. This in turn allows for a much greater instructional flexibility. Cross-age grouping, however, is only effective in an ungraded situation. The Experimental School is appropriately ungraded in all curricular areas. The social studies curriculum consists almost entirely of teacher-made units, with MACOS (Man: A Course of Study) being used in Team C. SCIS (Science Curriculum Improvement Study) science activities and materials are used in all teams. All teams have switched to the Sullivan (McGraw-Hill) programmed reading series and use the Warner Organic Reading-Writing-Spelling Method as a supplementary program. Physical education consists of a rigorous teacher-devised program of perceptual and physiological growth and development and is a 20-minute daily program for all children.

## Team Planning

In the traditionally designed school, as in the modern open-area schools, the most important and vital aspect of team teaching is team planning. At the Canton Experimental School, teams are required to meet a minimum of three 50-minute periods each week. These planning sessions are organized by the executive teacher and are scheduled for different purposes. One session might deal with problems of grouping in reading, or the development of learning centers. As a result of the planning session, children might be changed from one group to another, from one level to another, or from one teacher to another.

Other planning sessions are scheduled during which a teacher presents long and short range plans and behavioral objectives for the entire team in a curriculum area. In this respect, each team has subject matter specialists in the various areas of the cur-

riculum (Figure 1). For example, each team has a subject matter specialist in social studies. These specialists meet together to plan or change the overall curriculum in this one subject for the entire school. Since each team of teachers is represented in each subject matter team, communication is greatly enhanced. Once presented, these plans are discussed and constructively critiqued by other team members and appropriate changes are made. Planning is the *heart* of the program and teachers receive stipends for additional time spent in team meetings.

Type of teacher	Team A	Team B	Team C
Executive teacher	Social studies	Science and math	Math and science
Professional teacher	Language arts	Social studies	Language arts
Provisional teacher	Science and math	Language arts	Social studies

Figure 1. Subject Matter Specialties of Team Members

Finally, there is an additional team called the Curriculum Coordinating Committee (comparable to the Instructional Improvement Committee in the Individually Guided Education [I/G/E] plan) which is comprised of executive teachers, the principal, and the project director. This group works in terms of the direction of the total project and deals with items of concern to all teams. The executive teachers relate the content of this group's meetings to the other team members.

## Staff Development

Continuous in-service education is crucial to the success of any innovative project. The team teachers were involved in in-service education for seven weeks during each of two consecutive summers and participate in on-site methods instruction throughout the entire year.

During the first quarter (fall 1970), for example, the concentration was in the area of diagnosing reading disabilities. Experts from nearby colleges and universities are used for these on-site methods courses. Their role is first to teach teachers, then to demonstrate with pupils, to observe the staff

teaching, and to evaluate each member of the staff in his performance of these activities. An example is the administration of a diagnostic test in auditory perception. Following this phase of in-service was the implementation of learning centers based on the diagnosed needs of the students.

Teachers in the project are expected to stay at Lathrop for at least two years before moving to another school in Canton where they will put into effect some of the ideas gained during their time at Lathrop. The concept of "satellite" schools is beginning to take form. Also, the idea has been generated of eliminating the building principal and creating a new type of elementary school administrative organization. This new organization will involve utilizing the staff and more specifically the executive teachers in new and unique ways. One variation is to release the strongest executive teacher for a period of time during both the morning and afternoon to look after the entire building. This, of course, would require the help of an executive secretary. It can be seen that in this way funds might be released to pay for various paid interns and teacher aides, making the project transportable to other buildings at little or no extra cost.

## Evaluating the Project

If this project is to serve as a model for Canton and other school systems, we must be able to demonstrate its effectiveness with hard data. Thus, evaluation is one of the most important components of the project. The major objectives include attempting to raise significantly the achievement levels with regard to ability level and to raise significantly pupils' self-image as well as their attitude toward school. We also want to determine the constancy of the IQ. A control group, matched with the experimental group with regard to achievement and socioeconomic factors, is employed in the experiment and has been used in all pre- and post-testing.

Results of the first year of the project show that our major aims were achieved in significantly raising the achievement and IQ levels of Lathrop children. Pupils' self-image

and attitude toward school were also significantly raised. In all cases referred to, the differences were statistically significant in favor of the experimental group. All other phases of the project have been evaluated, such as effectiveness of in-service education, the process of team planning, and cross-age grouping. The teachers participate in project evaluation by completing various types of questionnaires as well as face-to-face evaluation carried out in personal conferences and small group discussions. Outside evaluators are being used for the largest part of evaluation, and extensive use is made of the computer in project evaluation. Data will also be made available, in cooperation with ESEA Title I personnel, that will enable cost accounting to the extent of cost-per-month of increment in the different variables measured.

In closely examining the entire project, it appears that the term "team teaching" is a misnomer. In reality, a team's effectiveness and efficiency are directly related to the quality of its planning sessions. Also, a crucial factor in team teaching is the evaluation of children by teams of teachers meeting together. Thus, team teaching really consists of team planning, the resulting teaching-learning episodes, and finally, team evaluation of pupil progress.

Teachers' comments thus far can be summarized in statements such as "I learn so much more now that I meet with other teachers rather than when I was in a self-contained room"; "Pupils' needs are being met so much better than ever before due to the team teaching and flexible grouping"; and "I have developed a need and desire to change old methods of organization and instruction, as well as a much keener sensitivity to the problems of other teachers." Thus the members' subjective evaluation indicates that from their point of reference the project is successful.

Finally, in viewing the entire project to date, it appears that the staff has developed instructional competencies that are truly indicative of a profession. The project, thus, might be conceived of as a model for developing teacher effectiveness. □

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