

# We Need the Ghostbusters!

## A Response to Jerome Freiberg

**Freiberg's lessons from the past include a few lingering ghosts. There have been, in fact, numerous reviews of differentiated staffing, and early models have indeed been replicated outside Temple City.**

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With differentiated staffing reincarnated in the Tennessee Plan and the career ladder concept being pushed from the national level, the ghosts of the past are being revived. Professor Freiberg's article is a somewhat limited review of "lessons" learned in the 1960s and '70s. It appears to have been derived mostly from a review of the literature, though he indicates he did visit some of the sites he describes in his article.

As one who was personally involved in the Temple City program, I take issue with several of Freiberg's "elements." These ghosts should be dealt with to end the speculation about what we actually learned.

### **Teachers' Readiness for Change**

According to Freiberg, one lesson from the past is that "many teachers were not prepared for the dramatic changes in the work environment." Frankly, I don't know how he came to this conclusion. Neither of the citations he uses points to conclusive data. In fact, the Edelfelt reference was not even written by him but by James M. Cooper.<sup>1</sup>

Let's lay this ghost to rest. There was actually too *little* dramatic change in the work environment. The reason is not hard to discern. Extending the teacher's role followed the existing division of labor already *within* the

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teaching ranks. This can perhaps be best illustrated in Figure 1, which was used in Temple City to illustrate the creation of a senior teacher, a "supra department chairperson."<sup>2</sup>

The creation of the senior teacher brought about one of the most successful and well-accepted role differentiations used in Temple City. It was a department chairperson role fully extended and funded and with precedent at the secondary level.<sup>3</sup>

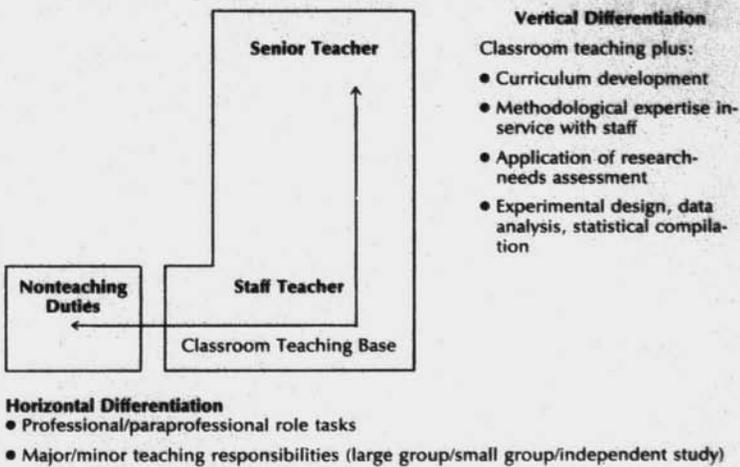
In 1973 W. W. Charters, Jr., of the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration at the University of Oregon, studied and compared two elementary schools, one that had implemented differentiated staffing and one that had not. Charters was particularly interested in measuring the *work system* of the two schools. He noted:

One might expect, under a differentiated staffing scheme, that team management functions would be concentrated in the formally designated leaders, although certain of the activities necessarily would implicate all teachers. Close inspection disclosed that the tasks did *not* revolve uniquely on the three instructional team leaders. In fact, the leaders were no more often implicated in them than the remaining faculty, even in the activities most likely to fall on a single individual.

We found no indication that a division of managerial responsibility had arisen during the year to help define the role of the instructional team leaders. The responsibilities were widely shared without regard to formal position.<sup>4</sup>

Differentiated staffing was not as successful as its leaders imagined because it failed to produce the dramatic and revolutionary changes *within* the teaching ranks that were promised. People expected large changes. Instead they got subtle role shifts or no discernible role alterations at all.

**Figure 1. Horizontal/Vertical Differentiation of Teaching Responsibilities.**



### Parents' Concerns

Parents' fears that the "best" teachers were being removed from direct contact with children was a minor problem in Temple City. In order to obtain wider use of teaching staff, it was necessary to break out of the lockstep cellular structure used in schools. This required a new approach to using teacher talent and required a different schedule. Parents were mostly concerned with flexible or modular scheduling, the use of unstructured time by children, and the costs of the differentiated staffing program. As one board member put it, he didn't want to "get married to a finance problem that is going to drown us."<sup>5</sup>

### Lack of In-Depth Evaluation

Freiberg contends that the self-reports from those directly involved in the projects did not provide an adequate base for modification and improvements, and that each district model became too idiosyncratic for general

dissemination to other districts. Actually, there was a variety of in-depth and external reviews of differentiated staffing projects.<sup>6</sup> In 1970 Temple City employed an external team to examine what had been accomplished. The results were utilized to make significant internal changes.<sup>7</sup>

Later Temple City employed the American Institute for Research, which filed a comprehensive report in August 1973. This study cited the following *successes*:<sup>8</sup>

• *Shared Decision Making.* "Staff seem clearly to have been more fully involved in important decisions in several areas such as curriculum, hiring, staff evaluation, and budget planning."

• *Inservice Training.* "Has served a valuable function in providing ideas and stimulation for improved instruction and in helping staff members adapt to various innovations."

• *Involvement of Staff.* "The broad scale inclusion of teachers and other staff members in planning and defin-

ing Temple City's differentiated staffing program has contributed significantly to the program. Rather than imposing itself from the top down, the program has largely evolved from those who would be using it."

● *Role Differentiation.* "While not all roles in the differentiated staffing structure have received widespread approval, the senior teachers particularly have contributed significantly to improved education. In addition, the use of paraprofessionals is heavily favored and clearly successful in the district."

● *Work Climate.* "An improved climate of teamwork and sharing among staff members seems to have been established through the differentiated staffing program."

The report also noted the following *weaknesses*,<sup>9</sup> which reinforce some of Freiberg's "elements."

● *Cost.* "The program proved expensive, more so than anticipated. This disadvantage was mentioned more than any other by staff members questioned in the interviews."

● *Role Differentiation.* "Particularly irritating to staff members have been the alleged differences between associate and staff teachers. While the two are defined somewhat differently and receive different levels of remuneration, such teachers, in fact, perform almost identical duties. The master teacher role has not been successfully implemented."

● *Career Ladder.* "The concept of a career ladder, which allows teachers

to advance to higher levels of responsibility and income within teaching, has proved largely impractical due to the lack of teacher turnover and absence of openings to which teachers can in fact advance."

● *Leadership Load.* "The leadership positions create some real burdens on individuals who are expected to both carry on with a full-time teaching load and devote considerable energies to their leadership functions as well."

● *Decision Making.* "While the decision-making process is probably fairer now than previously, it is also often less efficient and prompt."

● *Pupil Learning.* "While some of the innovations have been directed toward helping students achieve relevant outcomes more effectively, many of them have been teacher directed, and it is questionable how beneficial the latter have been to students."

The entire differentiated staffing movement was evaluated by the Evaluation Training Center at Florida State University.<sup>10</sup> Other aspects of differentiated staffing, particularly the use of extra pay for roles, were independently assessed by Garms and Guttenberg of Columbia University. They were interested in the sources and nature of resistance to incentive systems in education and studied Temple City and Mesa, Arizona.<sup>11</sup>

Garms and Guttenberg concluded that psychological, philosophical, and practical issues (including technical problems and vested interests) contributed to resistance to incentive pay systems and differentiated staffing. The most prevalent forms of resistance centered around practical-technical issues. "Technical problems can be real, in which case objections are justifiable, or ephemeral, in which case objections are used either to hide or point to other factors."<sup>12</sup>

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## “Freiberg and I agree that current merit pay and master teacher plans won't do it.”

### School Principals' and District Administrators' Loss of Status

Freiberg's contention that “school principals and district administrators lost status in a decentralized system” simply cannot be supported by the data. Freiberg cites his source as Edelfelt, but Edelfelt makes no mention of this so-called lesson.<sup>13</sup> In fact, this assumption could never be supported by evidence.

That it was doubted by external reviewers as well is highlighted by Garms and Guttenberg:

Differentiated staffing presents a slightly different kind of threat to school administrators; here the potential threat comes from insiders rather than outsiders. At least as it is conceived of in Temple City and Mesa, differentiated staffing implies a diffusion of decision-making authority. The usual administrative decisions such as scheduling are supposed to be handled by committees representing program participants. There is some question whether this is actually taking place in Temple City.<sup>14</sup>

Charters was far more blunt about this lesson.

Our measures of the distribution of influence and of personal esteem in regard to issues of general school concern showed the ... schools [pilot DS and traditional] to be similar in certain respects and dissimilar in others. An outstanding point of *similarity* [my underlining] was the principal's dominance of the influence structure.<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion, Freiberg's somewhat armchair retrospective of the “lessons from the past” is more true than false. With the exceptions noted above, I concur with his observations but point out two inconsistencies: (1) that there is not *an absence of research* on differentiated staffing that has left “little new knowledge upon which others could build and improve”; and (2) that “early DS models were too idiosyncratic” to replicate. The fact that the Temple City Plan is now the Tennessee Plan is proof enough that what worked for a short time in a small, middle-class community of 4,000 students in southern California in the late 60s and early 70s has been superimposed by legislative fiat on some 850,000 students and thousands of teachers in the 80s.<sup>16</sup>

The alternatives to a master teacher program seem to be hackneyed solutions to the problem. The profession desperately needs restructuring to recognize, advance, retain, and utilize its most talented practitioners. Freiberg and I agree that current merit pay and master teacher plans *won't do it*. The fact that we know that is testimony to what was learned earlier about differentiated staffing. We aren't afraid of these ghosts. We've lived with them too long! □

<sup>13</sup>See James M. Cooper, “Differentiated Staffing: Some Questions and Answers,” *The National Elementary School Principal* LI, 4 (January 1972): 49-54.

<sup>14</sup>Figure 1 is taken from Fenwick W. English, “Field Testing a Differentiated Teaching Staff,” in *Educational Manpower*, ed. J. L. Olivero and E. G. Buffie (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 196.

<sup>15</sup>Fenwick W. English, “Differentiated Staffing: Refinement, Reform, or Revolution?” in *Differentiated Staffing*, ed. James M. Cooper (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1972), pp. 30-44.

<sup>16</sup>W. W. Charters, Jr., *Measuring the Implementation of Differentiated Staffing* (Eugene, Ore.: Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, 1973), p. 40.

<sup>17</sup>M. Stauer, “Scaled-Down Staff Plan Is Proposed,” *Temple City Times*, March 7, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Charters, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Robert T. Stout and David Burke, “The Dilemmas of Differences” (Mimeo, 20 pp.) (Temple City, Calif.: Temple City Schools, June 1970).

<sup>20</sup>Dayton and others, op. cit., pp. 4-7.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-9.

<sup>22</sup>Jacob G. Beard, Michael L. DeBloois, Garrett R. Foster, *An Evaluation of School Personnel Utilization Projects* (three volumes plus appendix) (Tallahassee, Fla.: The Evaluation Training Center, Florida State University, 1971).

<sup>23</sup>Walter I. Garms and Richard Guttenberg, “The Sources and Nature of Resistance to Incentive Systems in Education,” Final Report on an Investigation Under Contract HEW 05-69-94 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, October 1970).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>25</sup>Rov A. Edelfelt, “Differentiated Staffing: Where Are We?” *The National Elementary School Principal* LIV, 4 (January 1972): 46-48.

<sup>26</sup>Garms and Guttenberg, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

<sup>27</sup>Charters, op. cit. p. 94.

<sup>28</sup>Enrollment figure derived from “Table 2.2 Public Regular Elementary/Secondary School Enrollment, by Grade Level and State: Fall 1970 and Fall 1978” in *The Condition of Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1981), p. 58.

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