

ed their children not be assigned to her. Other teachers formed their team partnerships without her. This confirmation meant that he and I must orchestrate a strategy with just the right balance of recommendations and sup-

port—just the right combination of rigor and empathy—to enable this teacher to learn to love teaching, to impart to students the importance of the content and the value of themselves, or to seek her own fulfillment

elsewhere. There's no official form in all the world that can do that. □

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English

CHARLES SUHOR

Delphi Study Probes Future of Technology in English Curriculum

A University of Connecticut study of the opinions of leading English educators in the United States, Canada, and England yielded some interesting predictions about the role of technology in English instruction. Researcher Betsy Barber used the Delphi Technique—in which successive rounds of queries reveal increasingly sharper consensus among experts—to get a projection of the content and methods in English programs by the year 2000.

The panel of experts was generally optimistic about technological changes, holding that teachers will take the leadership in channeling changes such as developing broadened concepts of literacy and making increased use of word processors, video, and information databases in the classroom. The familiar bogeymen of machine-dominated classes, poor drill-and-practice software, formulaic writing, and lack of student interaction were rejected by most of the experts. Instead, they predicted increased attention to oral language skills and writing process instruction (particularly revision) and greater concern with collaborative research and critical analysis of media (especially television).

Despite the tendency toward convergence inherent in the Delphi technique, at least a fourth of the panel maintained sharply opposing views. Unlike the majority, they viewed three obstacles to technological change—high costs, negative teacher attitudes, and poor software—as insurmount-

able. Although they acknowledged that technological change was possible, they viewed its consequences—dehumanized classrooms, the emphasis on format over substance and facts over interpretation—in a negative light.

Barber's report revealed some differences among American, Canadian, and English panelists. While the American group was more optimistic about overcoming financial barriers to technological changes, the English and Canadian experts expressed greater overall optimism about such change. They also were more positive in seeing teachers as active forces in effecting change.

Grass Roots Excellence Identified in 150 Schools

A Centers of Excellence search conducted by the National Council of Teachers of English resulted in over 700 applications from elementary and secondary schools in the United States and Canada. One hundred fifty were selected as visitation sites after a task force reviewed curriculum descriptions and validators observed the finalists' programs in action.

Skip Nicholson of South Pasadena High School, chair of the task force, described commonalities in the programs, which span 38 states and embrace programs in English, reading, and journalism. All of the programs "enhance student learning—not merely by raising standardized test scores but by generating excitement about learning itself among students and teachers. They fit their communities because local teachers took a hand in developing them. They grow; they

adapt to changes in local circumstances. They accommodate the diversity of students they serve. They rest on sound theory and research." Additionally, the programs cited by the task force are adaptable to other locales so that schools in different parts of the country might benefit from examining program descriptions and visiting the Centers of Excellence sites.

Early in the development of the Centers of Excellence project, NCTE rejected the option of *creating* model programs and chose instead to *identify* existing programs. Nicholson explains this in terms of response to recent reports of educational reform, which have frequently suggested that models of excellence are lacking in American education. "Few of these are new programs...." according to Nicholson. "They've been around during all of the studies, all of the reports, all of the recent reforms. But they went unnoticed because so few people were asking the right questions of the right people.... Those who are trying to carry out reforms need to see examples of effective English programs."

For a list of names and addresses of schools with programs designated as Centers of Excellence, send a self-addressed, stamped (\$56) business envelope to Centers of Excellence, National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801. □

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