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Research on Teaching

ROBERT MCNERGNEY AND MARTIN HABERMAN

It's Time to Wait

Teachers typically wait less than one second after they ask a question for students to reply. They wait about the same amount of time before responding to students' answers. *Wait time* is the term researchers use to describe these pauses. If teachers can learn to increase their average wait time to three seconds or more, students' use of language and logic will improve. Students' *and* teachers' attitudes and expectations will also likely improve. Why?

The idea of wait time appeals to our common sense. If we are not given time to think, we won't. When we have time to think and talk through what we have done or observed, our ideas multiply and, in turn, are clarified and refined. Yet, the rapid-fire speed at which most elementary and secondary teachers ask questions and respond to students' answers is astonishing and may prevent any thoughtful consideration by students or by teachers themselves.

Several things happen as wait time increases. Students lengthen their responses and make more inferences and logical arguments. They exchange more ideas with one another. There are fewer failures to respond. More students participate, and unsoliticited but appropriate comments increase. Students become more confident rather than trying to guess what's on the teacher's mind. Achievement improves even on questions that require complex thinking.

Teachers, too, are affected as wait time increases. They stay on the topic longer and develop ideas in depth. Their questions decrease in number but improve in quality; they invite elaboration or contrary positions. Teachers' expectations for certain students improve. Their disciplinary acts decrease.

Teachers can learn to lengthen their wait time. The most promising approach involves taping teachers, having them transcribe their tapes, and encouraging them to try again. The payoffs seem well worth the effort.

For more information on this topic, read Mary Budd Rowe's "Wait Time: Slowing Down May Be a Way of Speeding Up!" *Journal of Teacher Education* 37, 1 (January-February 1986): 43–50. □

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Supervision

CARL D. GLICKMAN AND JEAN W. JONES

Creating the Dialogue

School systems are increasingly shedding dogmas about supervision being a particular set of skills, behaviors, procedures, and observations, and are developing their own programs based on adaptations, revisions, and combinations of particular approaches. The aim of supervision is not to ensure the soundness of using a certain approach. Standard uses of such approaches as clinical supervision, developmental supervision, and the Hunter model are being criticized by their own developers (see Hunter 1985, Glickman 1986, and Goldhammer et al. 1980). The critical point is that supervision creates an instructional dialogue among and with teachers that results in planning and acting upon improvements in learning for students (Sparks 1983, Beach 1976, Franseth 1972, Lovell and Phelps 1976, Goldsberry and Hoffman 1984). As Rutter and others (1979) concluded from their study of successful high schools:

> Rather, good morale and the routine of people working harmoniously together as part of an efficient system meant that both supervision and support were available to teachers in a way which was absent in less successful schools (p. 184).

Sometimes an instructional dialogue is created from formal observations, conferences with or without observations, drop-in visits, walking in the hall and talking to teachers, or meeting with groups of teachers, and so on. Essentially, a dialogue occurs when supervisors provide the elements of time, focus, and structure for individuals to meet and talk. Without these elements, a school remains a collection of individual teachers isolated and invisible (Glickman 1985).

It is when talk engages teachers individually and collectively in thinking about instruction that a successful school emerges, as Little (1982) wrote of her findings about such schools.

> Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice. . . . By such talk, teachers build up a shared language adequate to the complexity of teaching, capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtues from another, and capable of integrating large bodies of practice into distinct and sensible perspectives on the business of teaching (p. 331).

How the dialogue is created will vary among schools, as will the person responsible for supervision. What is important is that instructional dialogue becomes a prevailing part of a school.

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