

NEWSLETTER OF THE COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

Co-sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools

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FEATURE

Collaboration & Personalization: How the latter might well depend on the former by Grant Wiggins

In the extensive study of secondary schools in Britain entitled Fifteen Thousand Hours,* the authors documented that schools do have an effect on children, independent of all other factors. Though verbal ability and parental attitudes play a significant role in educational success, according to the authors, the character of the individual school made a verifiable difference in determining student progress in academic performance and social behavior when native ability and socio-economic background were factored out.

Many of the conclusions suggested by the research should come as no surprise to school people: higher standards, uniformity in enforcement of those standards, more homework, more feedback on student work, more praise and public recognition for work done well--all of these traits set the better schools apart from the worse, irrespective of the location, population, or physical plant of the school.

What may be of most interest to those of us involved in the Coalition was the authors' conclusion with respect to effective pedagogy and faculty planning. Though the topics are different, the point being made was essentially the same: successful schools depend in large part on the ability of schools to make "collaborative work" effective and primary, whether it be among students in the classroom or among teachers as they decide upon and implement policy.

Though collaboration is clearly a characteristic we would hope to see in each Essential School, there is an apparent clash in two of the Coalition's Principles: a tone of decency depends a great deal on the ability of the individual to see group needs

Summer Symposium!

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and concerns as central--whether we are speaking of teachers or students. Yet, superficially, the idea of personalization suggests that the relationship between teacher and student approach that of the tutorial--in effect, isolating the student from the work, schedule, and interests of other students, and isolating teachers from each other.

Though this is a false dilemma, we do have to be mindful of the fact that coaching is not tutoring, that social and psychological interests do often, in fact, diverge. Even discounting the dependence of moral education on social interaction and the value of tutorials, effective schooling cannot rely on a tutorial model as an ideal: it may be effective to have twenty tutorials but it is surely not efficient, given only one tutor and limited resources and time. The authors of the British study suggest a different perspective to help us see how attention to the class as a class can be consonant with the aim of personalization.

The research clearly showed that teachers are most effective when they teach the class, not individuals: "Higher proportions of time spent with the whole class were associated with better outcomes in terms of academic attainment, behavior and attendance." The authors note that while the problem of handling an entire class is most seen in the habits of the new teacher, "in the schools with less satisfactory behavior and less good exam results even the more experienced teachers tended to focus unhelpfully on the individual to the detriment" of the class as a whole.

The authors are quick to stress that these findings "do not mean that an individualized approach to teaching is a bad thing." Rather, the data clearly show that "if a class is set up for group teaching, it is important to teach in a way which keeps the whole group involved."

When is a classroom a group and when is it a collection of individuals? When is teaching most appropriately directed to the group and when to individuals? When does effectiveness point in different directions than the demands of efficiency? These are unavoidable questions for the Essential School teacher, questions that go to the

heart of the inherent problems of curriculum design and assessment which would honor both the individual student and the criteria of mastery. What the report suggests is that teachers need to be careful in how they conceive of personalization. For it could be that the most "personalized" form of education might well entail seminar or collaborative projects where individual interests and ideas come together in the work of the group.

Piaget and Dewey certainly thought this to be the case; they each argued that the individual mind can only grow through an education which is built on the sharing of (different) ideas among peers. In other words, group work is more than sharing when it is "personalized" and effective. Ensuring that group work achieves that end without degenerating into aimless conversation is one of the teacher's most important tasks as a planner and facilitator.

Sometimes, of course, private need and public good diverge. Nowhere has this been more acutely felt than by teachers trying to honor the need for professional autonomy while contending with intrusive mandated aims. The Coalition firmly believes that obligatory schoolwide aims can free rather than hinder the individual teacher if those aims are determined by consensus of the faculty and if they are general or flexible enough to accommodate human differences. For the aims to be properly conceived and realized, collaboration between teachers is essential. The British report provides statistical support for this notion. Teachers, like students, work best when appropriate collaboration is an essential part of school life, according to the study.

Better schools are more "coherent," mostly through collaborative planning and a greater degree of collegial supervision and encouragement: "The outcomes tended to be better when both the curriculum and approaches to discipline were agreed to and supported by the staff acting together. It was not just that this facilitated continuities in teaching but also that group planning provided opportunities for teachers to encourage and support one another." This was true despite the fact that the responsibility for many decisions

that the responsibility for many decisions did not rest with the faculty as a whole.

With respect to supervision of teachers, in the more successful schools teachers reported that their senior colleagues "knew what was happening. This was not a matter of intrusive control but rather a reflection that staff cared about the way the school functioned. 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 that was absent in less successful schools. In poorer schools teachers appeared very isolated, teaching their own syllabus with little interest being taken in what they were doing."

It is no accident, then, that most of the Essential School plans call for collaborative planning periods and some team-teaching. We would do well to remember that such periods are not, therefore, "free" periods but rather "full" periods that are central to the success of the budding efforts in each school. And we must continually keep in mind that teachers, like students, may at first resist collaborative efforts after a lifetime of autonomy. Authentic reform, like authentic teaching, demands that habit and narrowly-focused inclinations be transformed into practice more consistent with espoused principles.

***Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children.** By Michael Rutter, Barbara Maughan, Peter Mortimore, Janet Ouston, and Alan Smith. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Curriculum Resources: Integrating Literature & the Arts

The central staff is in the process of compiling annotated bibliographies on curriculum resources, especially materials enabling teachers to make curricula more integrated or multi-disciplinary. Our first bibliography on Literature & the Arts, compiled by Elizabeth Derecktor, is now available from the Brown office; more such bibliographies are in the works. The excerpt below provides a sample of the useful information contained in this six-page report.

Attleboro, Mass. Attleboro Public Schools. Don L. Brigham and James Hall, "Visual Arts in Basic Education: A guidebook for Teachers in the Attleboro Public School System." 1978 (mimeographed).

This guidebook is designed to prepare teachers to implement visual arts lessons and to originate new lessons. The clearly outlined lesson samples are invaluable to any teacher trying to focus on the skills of inquiry and expression.

Beebe, Robin. "The Links Grow in the Bronx..." For example: "John F. Kennedy High School." Dromenon, February 1979, Vol. 1, No. 56, pp. 61-67.

This article discusses a "Reading Improvement Through Art" program at J.F.K. High School which raises the issue of how integrated teaching can significantly improve learning, making the right/left brain connection. At the end of the article is a provocative outline showing how to improve current practices a few steps further: to get students to become more active learners, help them connect subjects, and how teachers can rearrange school and classroom structures to create an environment for these improvements.

Beebe, Robin. "Towards Integration of Arts and Minds: Suggested Readings," Dromenon, February 1979, Vol. 1, No. 56, pp. 61-67.

A helpful annotated bibliography covering works that deal with the arts as they help people to integrate learning. The author has grouped the sources into categories such as "On the Creative Process" or "Research" in this area of education. Her annotations are informative and clear.

Broudy, Harry S. "Arts Education: Necessary or Just Nice?" Kappan, January 1979, pp. 348-349.

In this article, Broudy puts forth the argument that art and aesthetic education must be an integral part of the school curriculum because it helps to develop the very necessary and active part of our minds in learning: the imagination. He connects the use of language to mental imagery and describes how developing our natural skill of visual thinking can aid in all other learning capacities (including language, math, science, history). It is a persuasive article and provides a series of thought-provoking examples of the connection between the image and the spoken word (literature and the arts).

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Starting Points, or What to Do While Waiting for the World to Change by Rob Fried

Faculty in all kinds of schools who have pondered implementation of the Coalition principles have felt a squeeze between the impatience to do something and the notion that change takes time, and significant change can take a significant amount of time.

Ted Sizer has counseled, "Calculate the planning time required for instituting change within a school--and then add at least six months," and most Coalition schools have heeded that advice.

But it should be possible for any group of folks to create some exciting beginnings while at the same time allowing the planning process to take its course. An interplay between some "events" and a sustained series of planning sessions may be just the right prescription for success of the planning process amid the results-oriented pressures of today's educational climate.

The most common example of such an event is the kind of animated discussion that has followed the reading of Horace's Compromise by small groups of faculty and administrators in many schools. Often it has been the intense, immediate, and personal reactions of school people to the dilemmas posed in that book, and in the second volume of the series, The Shopping Mall High School, that have galvanized frustrations of long standing among people and led them to make a commitment to change.

Here are some similar events to consider--before and/or during the planning process:

1. The Ideal/Reality Exercise for Teachers. This "event" works well with any group of teachers, regardless of their exposure to or involvement with Coalition literature. In fact, it can be especially effective in a situation where skepticism is widespread.

Ask the faculty to spend 10-20 minutes describing IN DETAIL on a sheet of paper the kind of teaching and learning situation in which they, as teachers, feel most effective, most like "true teachers." Ask them to describe what they are doing; where the teaching is taking place; what students are actually engaged in; and how they and the students feel about what's going on. Give them enough time to flesh out their visions.

When the teachers have completed this assignment, ask them to estimate what percentage of the time they spend in school falls into the category they have just written about. What percentage of the time do they feel themselves acting as true teachers?

The discussion which follows can proceed in various ways: People can share their scenarios with each other; they can calculate the group average of "true teaching" time; they can begin to list and then talk about the obstacles which keep that percentage of effective teaching from being significantly greater than at present, and so on. Make sure to keep a written record of the discussion.

A revealing follow-up to this event would be for some or all of the teachers to volunteer to pose the same question to students in one of their classes: "What is happening when you feel that you are really learning, working up to your potential? And during how much of your time in school does that take place?"

2. "The Shadow Knows..." When was the last time some teachers spent an entire day experiencing what it is like to be a student at their own school? Coalition staff member Grant Wiggins asked a dozen teachers to do that recently--to shadow a student for a day--as part of his "Working Party" on Curriculum. "The results," according to Grant, "were dramatic and unsettling for all teachers." Even veterans found themselves surprised at the discrepancies between the teachers' and students' experience. The effects of this kind of experiment in a school could benefit the entire planning process, particularly in revealing the need for a more coherent, less fragmented curriculum.

3. A "Teaching/Learning Improvement Week." An extension of events 1-2 would be an entire school week devoted to making small changes on a class-by-class basis, beginning with some serious dialogue between students and teachers on ways to make more of what they both think of as "real learning" occur. Such a week would hopefully lead to a consensus on identifying major problems within the system, and would almost certainly broaden the basis of interest, support, and commitment to long-range planning for substantive improvement.

4. The "Two-Week Thing"--a school-wide engagement with one or more of the Coalition principles. A bit further in its planning process, a school might choose to involve the whole school, or an entire grade, in a sustained, two-week experience in one or more areas described by the nine Coalition principles.

During April of 1985, Thayer High School in Winchester, New Hampshire, spent two full weeks (with much previous planning) in an experiment with an integrated curriculum built around themes. Teachers worked together on the design, and students selected the project they wished to engage in: "Re-creating the first modern Olympics," or "Tracing the steps of the first settlers to reach Winchester from Massachusetts during colonial times," etc.

The entire school participated, and this experience convinced many on the faculty that such ideas as integrated learning and team-teaching were challenging but certainly do-able options.

Similar two-week school projects could explore the notions of "student-as-worker" or the difficult area of "exhibitions."

The value of these experiments to the planning process is considerable. The school community immerses itself in a new way of teaching and learning, to recognize the difficulty of change, to highlight the significant obstacles, and yet to be able to return to "business as usual" soon afterwards.

And it just might happen that "business as usual" proves difficult to re-establish. Just maybe, immersing themselves in alternative approaches might make students and teachers impatient for further change--and yet tolerant of the time it takes to plan well for such change.

Associate Schools Network by Rob Fried

The Associate Schools Network has come into being during the past few months with the announcement by the Coalition of the first seventeen Associate Schools. They range from Fort Lauderdale, Florida to Calgary, Alberta and from Andover, Massachusetts to Kirkland, Washington. Public, independent, and church-affiliated; rural and urban; traditional and traditionally experimental--these Associate Schools represent the great diversity of educational institutions which have accepted the challenges represented by the Coalition's common principles.

Associate Schools may differ from the "partner" schools in the Coalition in their more gradual and more selective implementation of Coalition principles. They receive much less direct assistance from Coalition staff and their network is largely a self-supporting one. But there is nothing to hold these schools back from moving ambitiously toward the kind of integrative, substantive school reform that characterizes the Coalition of Essential Schools.

Each Associate School will assume part of the leadership of the entire Coalition effort by undertaking a project, study, or experiment--keyed to one or more of the nine principles--which we expect will contribute significantly to the Coalition as a whole.

Associate Schools are being organized into several regional groupings across the nation to facilitate networking. The first two of the new network's Regional Symposia were held in Providence, R.I. at the end of February and in Cleveland, Ohio in mid-April.

More information, including a prospectus on the Associate School Network, is available from the coordinator, Robby Fried, at 4 Academy Street, Concord, NH 03301. Or call (603) 225-6755.

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The list of Associate Schools as of March, 1986, includes:

Andover High School, Andover, Massachusetts
Bishop Carroll High School, Calgary,
Alberta, Canada
Bryn Mawr School, Baltimore, Maryland
Catholic Central High School, Springfield,
Ohio
Elizabethtown Area High School,
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
Finn Hill Junior High School, Kirkland,
Washington
Gordon School, East Providence, Rhode Island
Juanita High School, Kirkland, Washington
Metro High School, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Miss Porter's School, Farmington,
Connecticut
Nova High School, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Nova Middle School, Fort Lauderdale,
Florida
School One, Providence, Rhode Island
Springdale High School, Springdale,
Arkansas
St. Andrew's-Sewanee, St. Andrews,
Tennessee
University School of Nova University,
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Walden III, Racine, Wisconsin

Portland Visits Paschal by Mary Jane McCalmon

Four members of the Portland Essential High School team paid a visit to their colleagues at Paschal High School in Fort Worth, Texas. The Portlanders were most impressed with the high energy level of the Texas group and appreciated the warm hospitality extended. Many valuable lessons were shared in the course of that visit to the school within a school. Among those that seemed most important to us were:

1. Keep open lines of communication between the Essential school and the larger school.
2. Plan slowly and carefully.
3. Require minimal entry level skills in reading and math.
4. Plan for and hold sacred the common block of collaborative time for the core teachers.
5. Support teacher efforts by providing effective ongoing staff development which is responsive to teachers' needs and essential school goals.

Portland High School

(Editor's note: The following article shows how one Coalition school formally sought faculty involvement in the school-within-a-school project. The announcement and questionnaire followed a series of faculty discussions organized by the planning group.)

What will involvement in the Portland Essential High School mean for teachers during 1986-87? The PEHS is:

1. An opportunity for teachers to meet together as professional colleagues to decide how to provide the best learning environment for their students.
2. A school where the emphasis is on teaching students how to use their minds well.
3. A curriculum that does make some connections for the students in order to make that learning more meaningful.
4. A school where professors at the University of Southern Maine (USM) can be resources for both students and teachers.
5. A school where all students will learn to become lifelong learners.
6. A school where teachers are given the time and authority to make those important decisions that affect the learning environment (length of class period, student grouping, number and kinds of "connections", and the kinds of development wanted).

Who will be selected to participate in the PEHS? Anyone who would like to apply. We will be selecting three teams of teachers to participate in the 9th grade PEHS this fall. One group of four teachers (English, Math, Science, History) will teach eighty students. They will have the same students in a block schedule. The teachers will have three common preparation periods. A second group of four core teachers will share two preparation periods with the first group in order to be able to participate in the staff development activities to prepare for teaching in the next level of PEHS during the 1987-88 school year. A third group of teachers (Industrial Arts, Art, Health, Business, Foreign Language, Music, Performing Arts, ESL, Special Education) will be involved with the team.

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What will stay the **SAME**.

1. A core of teachers will have four groups of students in common, as we do in the house. It will be the 9th grade House.
2. The curriculum taught will be the same as it is now, except that some areas will be taught in greater depth and others will be eliminated. The teachers involved are empowered to make those decisions.
3. The methods of presentation will be largely the same, with continued help towards making the student the active learner and responsible for his learning. This means more coaching and discoursing and less lecture.

What will be **DIFFERENT**.

1. The PEHS teachers will have four classes.
2. The PEHS teachers will have three preparation periods.
3. The PEHS teachers will be provided with ongoing staff development during their preparation periods (through the University of Southern Maine). We are writing a grant for funding USM involvement with teachers in the sciences, arts and humanities.
4. The PEHS teachers will create from four to eight interdisciplinary units for the year, which will make connections between their disciplines. They will determine the connecting theme/themes, materials, activities, use of school space, student scheduling and student grouping during those days. A grant has been written to provide time and pay during the summer for these units. Time to prepare has been built into their schedules.
5. Time has been provided to meet with guidance or with parents to monitor student progress more carefully.
6. Given a block schedule of students with the same teachers, there will be opportunities to take advantage of the cultural offerings of Portland without disrupting any other teacher's classes. A block of three hours is built into the schedule for attendance at the Portland Stage Company, the Youth Concerts, to go to an art exhibit or to go to the planetarium, etc.
7. Art, Home Ec, Industrial Arts, Music and Business will be integrated into the curriculum.
8. Teachers, working with colleagues, will be empowered to make these decisions.

Memo

TO: Faculty

FROM: Coalition Core Group

It would be helpful for you and for us if you would fill out the survey below.

1. Do you like working alone with little contact with your teachers about what and how you teach?
2. Would you like to rewrite the goals and objectives for each of your classes?
3. Do you think that the teacher should be the focal point of the class or should teachers provide opportunities for students to learn?
4. Do you like performing supervisory duties, such as cafeteria, hallway or study hall?
5. Would you prefer working with a colleague to performing your supervisory?
6. Would you like help to increase the number and variety of successful teaching techniques you can use to promote active student involvement?
7. Do you think it is more important to cover a lot of material in your class or to teach for understanding?
8. Would you like help from a colleague, such as the history teacher helping with the historical background and the English teacher helping the history teacher teach historical writing?
9. Do you feel that you have a chance to know each one of your students well?
10. Do you feel that you have time to share your experiences with a given student with all of his/her teachers?
11. Do you feel that you have had enough time for staff development built into your schedule?
12. Do you feel that your students are currently appropriately placed?
13. Do you think that all Portland High graduates have learned to use their minds well?

News Update
by Molly Schen

Activity in the Coalition of Essential Schools is picking up steam: students are enrolled in "essential" programs in six schools, and four schools are readying their programs for the fall.

On the Road

The central staff has hoped that visits to Essential Schools would not always be Brown-initiated, and recently our hopes have been exceeded. Not only have teachers from the schools been traveling to other Coalition schools, but even students are logging miles! A group of 7th-grade students from Central Park East Secondary School in New York City made a special trip in late April: they came to Brown University for two days, staying with Brown undergraduates in the dormitories. During their stay they visited two other Essential Schools: Hope High School and St. Xavier Academy. The students had a wonderful time--and so did their Brown friends.

In the News

The Coalition of Essential Schools has found its way into news articles of late, singled out as the only national school-based reform effort of scope. Of special interest: Ted Sizer was featured in the Brown Alumni Monthly in March. The article included detailed accounts of work underway in Essential Schools. (Reprints are available.) A piece in The Christian Science Monitor (April 18) thoughtfully described the student-centered structure of classes at Central Park East Secondary School.

At the Conference Table

The spring Principals' Council convened in April. Principals from Essential Schools together with their "coordinators" met with central staff to talk about their progress and problems. Art Powell and Grant Wiggins reported on their "working parties" (groups of Essential School teachers) which met in the winter on issues of exhibitions of mastery and curriculum. At concurrent sessions, principals talked about school reform

Summer Symposium Registration



through transforming the budget and coordinators discussed their role in the reform effort. We heard from Brown University anthropologist Bill Beeman on the subject of "Documentation and Assessment" of the project and responded to a proposal for beginning this work.

The Future

We're looking forward to seeing old friends and new at the Summer Symposium, July 16-18, 1986. The theme is "What is essential?" Please take the time to fill out the application form now; we'd like to send you some readings in advance of the conference.

Essential School teachers will meet in Providence just prior to the Summer Symposium. They will be continuing the work of "working parties" in the areas of curriculum and exhibitions of mastery. The working parties will continue to meet next year in order to push these ideas forward and create some insightful models.

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Register Now for the 1986 Summer Symposium!

The Summer Symposium is an opportunity for educators across the country to gather together to explore innovations in schooling. This summer, the Symposium will focus presentations and small group discussions on curriculum and exhibitions of mastery through the exploration of the theme: **"What is Essential?"**

The Summer Symposium is sponsored by the Coalition of Essential Schools, a partnership of Brown University and high schools across the United States which are pledged to a set of common principles. Coalition schools are diverse in character, geographically dispersed, and include both public, independent, and private institutions. Each school develops a plan appropriate to its own setting, which focuses on students' skill development, depth of knowledge and understanding, and the "exhibition of mastery."

The Symposium staff will include:

Theodore R. Sizer
Chairman, Coalition of Essential Schools
and Chairman of the Education Department,
Brown University

Holly Houston
Executive Officer
Coalition of Essential Schools

Grant Wiggins
Staff Development and Research Specialist
Coalition of Essential Schools

Arthur G. Powell
Director
Commission on Educational Issues
National Association of Independent Schools

Paula Evans
Co-Director
Institute for Secondary Education

Robert Shaw
Co-Director
Institute for Secondary Education

Essential School teachers and administrators

Admission and Costs:

Enrollment in the Symposium is limited to 200 school people. Participants should plan to arrive on the afternoon of July 16. The Symposium will conclude with lunch on July 18. The cost of \$250 for each participant includes the lectures, discussions, meals, accommodations, and parking at Brown University. (The cost, should you wish to lodge off-campus, is \$200.)

Application:

Please send the completed application form by June 10 to:

Summer Symposium

Coalition of Essential Schools
Box 1938
Brown University
Providence, RI 02912

Name _____

Institution _____

Position _____

Home Address _____

Home Telephone _____

To complete the application please enclose check made out to **Brown University** for the amount of \$250 (including accommodations) or \$200 (if you will be staying off-campus). For further information, contact Molly Schen, Coordinator, (401) 863-3384.

☐ I am enclosing a check for \$250.

☐ I am enclosing a check for \$200.

☐ Athletic pass (additional \$10).