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ABSTRACT

The procedures and results of an information dissemination technique involving direct mail activities and conferences are described in this report. The approach described was utilized as the first step in an effort to begin the national implementation of the Multiunit School-Elementary. Analysis of the results of the project indicate that the direct mail and conference procedures are viable means for systematic and focused dissemination of information. Nearly 30,000 school personnel learned of the product. A substantial number of educators indicated a strong interest in the Multiunit School-Elementary as a result of the mailings and the conferences. The procedures utilized in this effort appear to provide a more efficient and effective dissemination effort than can be realized by more conventional and general efforts. (Related documents are ED 051 589, ED 049 552-553, and EA 004 330.) (Author)

FINAL REPORT

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DISSEMINATION OF THE MULTIUNIT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

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I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Since 1968 the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning has, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, been developing a four stage model[1] for diffusion of Center products. The model includes an awareness stage, first year installation, maintenance, and refinement-institutionalization.

In the awareness stage printed information is sent to assumed decision-makers in local education agencies. These include the chief school officer, central office staff, and building principals. Following the distribution of printed information a one-day awareness conference is conducted to provide information about the product in a face-to-face setting.

In the second stage, first year installation, staff development activities are provided to school personnel prior to the beginning of a school year or semester and during the school year. The first activity is a workshop for the principal and selected staff. Following this, these personnel provide a workshop for the rest of the staff just prior to the opening of school. Finally, inservice programs are provided during the school year.

Maintenance, the third stage, is needed for school personnel during the first or second year of experience with the product. Institutes are conducted to help assure that school personnel have the necessary skills and

[1] H. J. Klausmeier, M. Quilling, J. Sorenson, R. Way, and G. Glasrud. Individually Guided Education and the Multiunit Elementary School: Guidelines for Implementation. Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, 1971, Chapter 5.

information for successfully continuing the implementation of the product.

As a product becomes more widely available and used, a steady supply of competent personnel is required to institutionalize the product. To meet this supply need, arrangements are made with teacher education institutions for providing graduate-level residential programs including practicums.

In order to carry out these stages the Center establishes linkage relationships with state education agencies, teacher education institutions, large school districts, and other educational agencies. In addition, as products may become available commercially, publishers are also involved.

Within the context of this model, the effort in this project to disseminate information about the Multiunit School-Elementary (MUS-E), was carried out to create as much awareness as possible within the limitations of the financial and personnel resources available. Previous to this project, dissemination activities concentrated on articles in professional journals and newsletters, presentations at professional conferences, and an occasional special purpose conference. Such an approach required too much time to inform and create awareness among large numbers of potential adopters. Additionally, there was no systematic follow-through from printed information leading to a face-to-face situation with product users and experts which would provide an opportunity to obtain more detailed information. Consequently, a decision was made to plan a direct mail effort followed by one-day awareness conferences.

II

METHOD AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

Objectives

The primary purpose of this project was to disseminate information about the MUS-E, a new instructional-administrative organizational pattern for elementary school principals, teachers, and other staff. The secondary purpose was to determine the persons, by position, who respond to the invitations for further information or to attend the conferences.

Assumptions

From the outset it was assumed that persons with authority to make final decisions relative to the adoption of a product such as the MUS-E would generally depend upon other persons to gather information about the product. It may be most fruitful to disseminate information primarily to influential persons--in other words, to persons to whom decision makers look for information and advice rather than to persons who, for various reasons, cannot act on the information. Identifying such persons is difficult, and for that reason information was sent to a range of positions.

A direct mail effort is one method for disseminating information to a large number of persons in a systematic, efficient, and rapid matter. By contrast, journal articles and presentations at professional conferences are not so systematic or efficient, since there are a number of variables over which the disseminator has little if any control. It is not always possible to place articles in those journals which go to the desired audience. Once placed, articles in journals must compete with other articles and do not attract the singular attention of the reader. There are similar problems with professional conferences. The direct mail approach allows the message to be sent to the audiences desired with minimum competition.

A further assumption was that printed documents from the R&D Center should not be written in "hard sell" advertising-type language. Previous experience in communicating with educational practitioners had indicated that they were more receptive and likely to be convinced if the information was presented in a straightforward fashion without glossy Madison Avenue selling techniques. At the same time, materials must be presented in an attractive, readable, and quality document. Educational practitioners seem to expect one kind of approach from commercial profit-making publishers and another from an educational research and development agency. The printed materials were written and designed accordingly.

Printed information alone is not sufficient to make a person decide to adopt a relatively complex product. Thus it was assumed that more than printed information would be required. Other ingredients in the adoption process include a face-to-face communication with a knowledgeable person and an opportunity to see a demonstration. Since the latter was not possible in this project, a practitioner experienced with the product as well as an "expert" from the Center participated in the conferences. It is also important that the product not be so radically different that prospective adopters are intimidated by it. In this case, the MUS-E, while new, contains such familiar elements as differentiated staffing and team teaching. Moreover, the necessary staff development materials and programs must be made available for adopters. While the latter considerations are not part of this project, these elements were available and the target audiences were so informed.

Direct mail materials must compete with other mail that crosses the recipient's desk. It was decided, therefore, to send initially only an announcement-type brochure which would stimulate interest for more information

available upon request. This procedure had the advantage of getting a quick review of the product to the audiences that would not require too much time to read. A second advantage was that the more extensive and expensive description was provided only to those who were sufficiently interested in learning more about the product.

Procedures

The first step in the project was to prepare and distribute an eight-page "announcement" brochure to elementary principals, superintendents of school districts with elementary schools, elementary coordinators, and representatives from teacher education institutions, state education agencies, and persons who previously had requested information about the MUS-E from the Center. Total distribution was 29,058 brochures. These brochures were designed as self-mailers and included a business reply card which the recipient could cut out and return to the Center for more information about the product. The card also provided an opportunity to indicate interest in attending a conference.

Reply cards were number coded to correspond with the target audiences. The codes provided a means for determining what happened to the brochure once it entered the school system, since the person returning the card was asked to provide his name and title. For example, a superintendent who received the brochure may have responded personally or he could have had a coordinator or building principal respond. The reverse may also have taken place. With this kind of information it becomes possible to identify those who may be influential in decision making and those who provide the best entry point in the school system for generating the most response.

For people requesting more information, a second 16-page brochure was sent along with another business reply card to indicate if they would attend one of the conferences. As with the first mailing, it was expected that some attrition would occur, although not to the same extent.

Following the distribution of the printed information, one-day awareness conferences were organized in April and May, 1971, in various regions of the country. Conferences were arranged to cover the Great Lakes states, the Plains states, the West Coast, the East Coast, and the Southeast.

In addition to the data gathered from the business reply cards, data were also gathered from questionnaires distributed at the conferences and then again in the fall following the conferences to determine adoptions and non-adoptions and, if the latter, the obstacles to adoption. No assumptions were made as to the relationship between the project's activities and adoption since, prior to the project, some awareness had already been created through articles, news releases, and presentations at national professional conferences. In addition, the Center through other funding had initiated a national implementation effort, and the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/) of the Kettering Foundation had also started a parallel MUS-E implementation effort.

III

RESULTS

As indicated previously, data were gathered from three sources: the coded business reply cards distributed in the first mailing; a questionnaire distributed at the one-day conferences; and a questionnaire mailed to conference participants early in the fall of 1971. It should be remembered that the purpose of the project was to disseminate information about the MUS-E, and not to conduct research on the dissemination process. Data were gathered, therefore, primarily to give some assessment of the feasibility and practicality of the approach already outlined. Information will now be presented with regard to responses to the initial mailings, then to the second mailings, next with regard to the first and second questionnaires, and finally the costs of such an effort.

Responses to First Mailings

The first mailing was an eight-page announcement brochure with a business reply card attached. It was sent to elementary school principals, superintendents of districts with elementary schools, elementary coordinators, teacher education representatives, state education agencies, and persons who had previously requested information from the Center. In all, there were four coded categories as shown in Table 1. An elementary curriculum coordinator was defined as any person at the school district's central office level who had responsibility for the elementary program. The term "elementary coordinator" was used as a generic label for the category since such various titles as Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Elementary Supervisor, Elementary

Coordinator, and so on, are given the position. Addresses were purchased from an agency specializing in educational mailing lists and were selected randomly from each state.

Code	Category	# Mailed	# Returned	% Returned
#1	Elementary principals	20,245	427	2.11
#2	Superintendents	4,778	152	3.18
#3	Elementary coordinators	2,178	89	4.09
#4	Other: Teacher education, SEA, and Misc.	1,857	133	7.16
Total		29,058	801	2.76

Table 1: Codes, Categories, and Number Sent in First Mailing With Number and Percentage of Returns

Table 1 also shows the number and percentage of cards mailed which were returned from the first mailing, by coded category. This table shows only the returns by category, not who returned the cards. For example, 20,245 brochures were sent to category 1 (elementary principals), and 427 category 1 cards were returned. The returns were equal to 2.11% of the number mailed. However, some cards were returned by other than the original recipients in category 1 (elementary principals), as well as in categories 2 and 3. With regard to category 4, the only information collected was the person, by position title, who returned the card.

Table 2 shows the number and percentage of persons by position title who returned the cards. For example, of the 427 cards returned in category 1,

Category	# Returned	Principal		Teachers		Elementary Coordinator		Super-intendent		Other*		SEA		Teacher Ed.		% of total Returned
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1	427	372	87.12	19	4.45	22	5.15	8	1.87	6	1.41	--	--	--	--	
2	152	27	17.26	3	1.97	41	26.97	81	53.29	--	--	--	--	--	--	
3	89	13	14.61	2	2.25	66	74.16	3	3.37	4	4.49	1	1.12	--	--	
4	133	5	3.75	1	.75	6	4.51	2	1.50	14		2	1.50	103	77.44	
Total	801	417	52.05	25	3.12	135	16.85	94	11.73	24	2.99	3	.37	103	12.85	

*"Other" in this table and subsequently in this report refers to such positions as directors or coordinators of special projects, subject matter specialists in central offices, or any position not clearly identified as principal, teacher, elementary coordinator, or superintendent.

Table 2: Persons by Position Title Responding In Each Category

372 (87.12%) were returned by principals, the target audience in category 1. Of the cards sent to principals, 19 were returned by teachers, 22 were returned by elementary coordinators, 8 were returned by superintendents, and 6 by persons in other positions. By comparison, 74.16% of the elementary coordinators returned their cards and 53.29% of the superintendents returned their cards. Superintendents referred the information most often to elementary coordinators and then to principals. To the extent that elementary coordinators referred the information to others, the principal was likely to be the recipient. Principals who referred their information to others tended to divide the referrals equally between teachers and elementary coordinators. Of further interest is that while 66 elementary coordinators receiving information in that category (category 3) returned the cards, 69 elementary coordinators returned cards originally sent to other categories, the greatest number being from the superintendent category (category 2).

Responses to Second Mailing

In response to the first mailing returns, a second and more informative publication, an invitation to a one-day awareness conference, and a return registration card were mailed to 801 persons. Of these, 417 were principals, 135 were elementary coordinators, 94 were superintendents, 25 were teachers, 27 were to persons in "other" positions, including the three state education agency personnel, and 103 were teacher education personnel (see totals in Table 2). Table 3 shows the number of persons by position title who attended the conferences. Two groups show an increase in attendance over invitations, teachers and "others." Although principals constituted the largest group in attendance, a far larger percentage of invited elementary coordinators attended the conferences. Both the number and the percentage of superintendents

attending were less than any other single group. A comparison of the number of registration cards returned and the number in attendance at the conferences shows that 344 persons registered in advance and 386 persons attended, an increase of 42 persons.

	# Invited	# Attending	% Of Invited	% Of Total Attending
Principals	417	141	33.81	36.53
Teachers	25	85	340*	22.02
Elementary coordinators	135	95	70.37	24.61
Superintendents	94	13	13.83	3.37
Other	27	33	122*	8.55
Teacher education personnel	103	19	18.45	4.92
Total	801	386	48.18	100.00

*Increase.

Table 3: Number and Percentage of Persons by Position Title in Attendance at Conference

Responses to First Questionnaire

Participants at the one-day awareness conferences were asked to respond to a questionnaire regarding their future plans as a result of the conference, and whether their interest in the product had increased or decreased as a

result of the conference, as well as some general information. Of the 386 in attendance at the conference, 293 (75.91%) of the participants responded to the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix B. Questions 1, 3, 6, and 13 are not reported in the following discussion. Data from question 1 are presented in Table 3. The results of questions 3 and 6 were uninterpretable and thus not reported. Question 13 was used to evaluate the major portions of the conferences and the results were used to improve the presentations.

Since there had been considerable dissemination of information about the MUS-E prior to the project, it was considered of interest to determine whether participants had heard of the product from sources other than the printed documents distributed as part of this project. Of the 293 persons responding to the questionnaire, 111 (37.88%) first became aware of the MUS-E as a result of the first and second publications. An equal number learned of the product from other people. Seventy-one persons (24.33%) first became aware of the MUS-E from other sources such as magazines, professional newsletter articles, and presentations at national conferences. Participants at the conferences represented 420 schools and 263,985 children.

Question 4 was used to determine the size of groups attending from one district. Of those who responded to the questionnaire, 55 (18.77%) attended the conference alone. There were 232 (79.18%) who were in a party of two or more. Parties of two, three, or four were the most common group size, representing 153 (52.20%) of those attending. Six (2.04%) did not respond to the question.

Question 5 data were collected to determine the most common type of transportation to the conferences. The data indicate that 222 (75.77%) of the participants came to the conferences by automobile. Forty-nine (16.72%) came by airplane and the balance used other means or did not respond to the question.

In questions 7 through 10, participants were requested to indicate their plans with regard to implementing the MUS-E. It was not expected that many participants would know at that time, but it was felt that the responses to the questions would give some information about their perceptions of and level of interest in the product. In addition, the Center could use the information from this and other sources to determine future implementation requirements. The data reported in Table 4 show, as expected, that a majority of participants did not know whether they would adopt or implement the MUS-E either in 1971 or 1972, but that they were not rejecting the possibility. A factor which must be considered in evaluating the responses is that although the mailings went to persons in all states, the Center was able to provide an inservice program in only ten states. Therefore, many potential adopters could not implement the MUS-E. The data also show that the further away in time the decision was to be made, the less likely people were to respond to the question. It must be remembered, however, that the majority of those in attendance were not in a position to make such a decision but only to report to some higher authority with decision making power.

	Yes		No		Don't Know		No Response		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1971-1972	24	8.19	27	9.22	190	64.85	50	17.06	293
1972-1973	11	3.75	4	1.37	172	58.70	106	36.18	293

Table 4: Number and Percentage of Participants Indicating Adoption Plans

Questions 9 and 10 were designed to elicit information relative to the interest participants would have in participating in a three-day inservice workshop and using the inservice materials. In part, responses to the questions provide a measure of the interest persons have in the product. If they are willing to attend inservice workshops and use the materials, they

probably have a relatively high level of commitment to the product even though they may not know whether they will adopt the MUS-E. The responses of participants indicating either a "yes" or a "don't know" adoption decision are shown in Tables 5 and 6 for 1971-1972 and 1972-1973, respectively, with regard to certain inservice program and materials considerations. The data provide further evidence that persons attending the conference perceived the product favorably. Even though 190 persons did not know whether they would adopt the MUS-E in 1971-1972, 79 (41.85%) of these would be able to attend a three-day inservice workshop and nearly 35% would plan to use the inservice materials. In light of the very small minority who responded "no" to the inservice program and materials, it can be inferred that the need for the extended workshop was recognized and the materials were acceptable.

If participants responded "don't know" or "no" in question 8 they were asked in question 11 to indicate the possible obstacles to adopting the MUS-E. Table 7 shows their responses to question 11. Since the question of adoption is of concern primarily to school personnel, only their responses are shown. It should be noted that none of the 13 superintendents at the conferences responded to this question. The three most important problems perceived by the participants who responded to the question are cost, lack of teacher cooperation, and building constraints, in that order. Teachers are more likely than principals and elementary coordinators to perceive all three as more of a problem. Elementary coordinators perceive building constraints as a relatively minor problem. More of a problem to the elementary coordinators than building constraints is the "other" category. Where they specified the nature of the "other" problems, elementary coordinators were more likely to indicate lack of time for inservice and

Number and Adoption Decision		Interest in Three-Day Workshop				Interest in Using Inservice Materials				Purposes for Using the Inservice Materials			
Decision	#	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response	Information	Implementation	Both	No Response
Yes	24	17/70.83%	1/4.17%	5/20.83%	1/4.17%	20/83.33%	1/4.17%	3/12.50%	0/0.00%	3/12.50%	7/29.17%	12/50.00%	2/8.33%
Don't Know	190	79/41.58%	2/1.05%	89/46.84%	20/10.53%	66/34.74%	0/0.00%	89/46.84%	35/18.42%	54/28.42%	5/2.63%	73/28.42%	58/30.53%

Table 5: Number and Percentage of Persons Indicating an Adoption Decision for 1971-1972 Responding to Inservice Program and Materials Considerations

Number and Adoption Decision		Interest in Three-Day Workshop				Interest in Using Inservice Materials				Purposes for Using the Inservice Materials			
Decision	#	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response	Information	Implementation	Both	No Response
Yes	11	10/90.91%	1/9.09%	---	---	11/100.0%	---	---	---	5/45.45%	1/9.09%	5/45.45%	---
Don't Know	172	79/45.93%	3/1.74%	68/39.53%	22/12.79%	60/34.88%	2/1.16%	74/43.02%	36/20.93%	46/26.74%	6/3.49%	68/39.53%	52/30.23%

Table 6: Number and Percentage of Persons Indicating an Adoption Decision for 1972-1973 Responding to Inservice Program and Materials Considerations

planning as a problem. In fact, 12 of the 16 responses, or 75%, indicated lack of time as a problem.

Question 12 was designed to provide an overall measure of the success of the conferences in stimulating interest in the product. Increased interest in the MUS-E was expressed by 266 (90.78%) of the participants. Only three persons indicated decreased interest, and seven persons felt the conference had no effect. Seventeen persons did not respond to the question.

Responses to the Second Questionnaire

In October of 1971, a second questionnaire (attached in Appendix B) was distributed to the 386 participants in the conferences, and 204 (52.85%) returned the questionnaire. The major purpose of the questionnaire was to determine if any of the schools had adopted the MUS-E, and if they had not, their plans for the future. Of the 204 responses, 49 (24.01%) indicated that they had adopted the product in 60 schools in the fall of 1971.

When nonadopters were asked about their future plans, 34 (16.67%) responded affirmatively, 29 (14.22%) indicated they would not, and 102 (50%) were still undecided. Those who had affirmative plans indicated that they would implement the MUS-E in 15 schools in January, 1972, 39 schools in September, 1972, and 17 schools at a later time for a total of 68 schools. One elementary coordinator from a large school district in a populous state expressed an intention to implement the MUS-E in all of the schools of his district. He did not mention any specific number and thus these would be in addition to the 68 already mentioned.

Recipients of the questionnaire were asked again to indicate any obstacles they perceived in implementing or adopting the MUS-E. The major obstacles identified by the respondents were lack of time for planning and inservice and cost. Combined, these were reported by 36.27%

	Potential Adoption Problems																Number and Percentage of Those at Conference Responding	
	Board Approval		Cost		Teacher Coopera.		Central Office Coopera.		Lack of Interest		Lack of SEA Coopera.		Building Constraints		Other			
	#	%*	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Teachers	17	20.73	25	30.49	27	32.93	6	7.32	14	17.07	1	1.22	18	21.95	6	7.32	82	96.47
Principals	8	8.33	32	33.33	23	23.96	8	8.33	5	5.21	5	5.21	19	19.79	9	9.38	96	68.09
Elementary Coordinators	9	11.54	22	28.21	20	25.64	6	7.69	9	11.54	6	7.69	8	10.26	16	20.51	78	82.11
Totals	34		79		70		20		28		12		45		31		256**	

*Percentage is calculated on basis of those responding to question 11 and not on those in attendance at conferences.

**Total of separate columns equals more than total of 256 since a respondent could indicate more than one obstacle.

Table 7: Adoption Problems as Perceived by Teachers, Principals, and Elementary Coordinators

of the respondents. The balance of the responses were either no response (42.15%) or were related to lack of board approval, central office support, and interest. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they felt a need for more information, and 75 (36.76%) responded affirmatively. Finally, those who had attended the one-day awareness conferences were asked if they had participated in any of the subsequent staff development workshops and institutes; 47 (23.04%) indicated they had.

Costs

The proposal for the national dissemination of information about the MUS-E was submitted simultaneously with a similar proposal for another Center product, Patterns in Arithmetic. It was suggested at that time that information could be disseminated about both products utilizing the same staff that would be required if only one proposal were supported with only minor additional costs for documents regarding the second product. Accordingly, both proposals were funded, and the staff worked on both projects. Under this arrangement, the total cost including salaries and wages, travel, supplies, printing and other associated items for the national dissemination of information about the MUS-E was $22,198.60. Aside from salaries and wages including overhead ($12,286.55), the largest expenditures were for travel for the one-day conferences ($2,690.11), supplies and materials ($2,223.40), printing ($2,945.00), and other services[2] ($1,022.39).

With regard to cost considerations, of primary interest were the cost of stimulating attendance at the awareness conferences. The costs to the project

[2]Other services include charges for purchase of mailing lists and for handling the bulk mailing of the publications, an activity for which the Center is not equipped.

were $57.51 per person attending. While no assumptions were made that the printed materials and conferences would result directly in adoptions, when each of the 60 adoptions is considered in terms of the number of staff members and students involved, the costs are quite reasonable. In addition, the amount of interest created and reported potential adoptions of the product suggest that the costs of such an effort are relatively small.

IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Within the context of a model for diffusion including an awareness stage, first year installation, maintenance, and refinement-institutionalization, this project was designed to create awareness about the MUS-E. The project was carried out in three steps: (1) widespread distribution of a brochure announcing the product; (2) a second, more informative document distributed to those requesting more information, along with an invitation to attend a one-day awareness conference; and (3) a one-day conference to provide information in a face-to-face setting.

In the first step, 29,058 announcement brochures were distributed to superintendents, elementary coordinators, elementary principals, state education agency personnel, and teacher education personnel. The overall response to the first mailing was 801 requests for further information for a 2.76% return. Particular group categories, especially "other" and elementary coordinators showed a much higher return (See Table 1). However, not all of the returns were from the original recipients of the materials (See Table 2).

More detailed printed information and an invitation to a one-day awareness conference were sent to the 801 persons responding to the first mailing. Of these, 344 (43%) and 42 persons not invited attended the conferences. While principals were represented by the greatest number, the highest percentage of responses was from elementary coordinators. There were more than three times as many teachers at the conference than registered in advance.

Five conferences were held in April and May, 1971, in various regional locations of the United States: Madison, Wisconsin; Atlanta, Georgia; Washington, D.C.; Lincoln, Nebraska; and San Francisco, California. A total of 386 persons attended. Feedback from the conference participants indicates that the greatest majority traveled by automobile and in groups of two or more. The most frequent size groups were parties of two, three, or four. Participants represented 430 schools and slightly more than one-quarter million children.

Two questionnaires were distributed to conference participants. One questionnaire was distributed at the conferences and another was mailed to participants in October, 1971.

Of major concern in the first questionnaire was the extent to which participants had become interested enough in the product to consider adoption. As one would expect, a majority of those in attendance did not know whether they would adopt the MUS-E either in the fall of 1971 or the fall of 1972. However, slightly more than 40% of those responding "don't know" indicated that they were interested in attending a three-day staff-development institute and over one-third were interested in using the inservice materials (See Tables 5 and 6).

Participants were also asked to indicate their perceptions regarding possible obstacles to implementation of the MUS-E. Lack of teacher cooperation and cost were most often perceived as obstacles to adoption.

The primary purpose of the second questionnaire was to determine if any adoptions had taken place in the fall of 1971. Nearly one-fourth (49) of those responding to the questionnaire indicated that they had adopted the MUS-E in at least 60 school buildings. When these figures are compared with the 24 persons who indicated such plans in the first questionnaire, it would

appear that from the time of the conference in the spring of 1971 until the fall of 1971, a number of persons had been able to negotiate a favorable decision. Furthermore, had the Center been able to provide inservice to more locations, there very likely would have been a greater number of adoptions.

Some Conclusions

While it may be true that superintendents and boards of education have the final authority to make decisions involving changes of the kind required to change from a self-contained classroom organization to the MUS-E, superintendents depend on persons most likely to be involved in administering and managing the innovation to gather and evaluate information and make a recommendation. Superintendents had a tendency to refer information primarily to elementary coordinators and then to principals. Thus elementary coordinators and principals appear to have provided the best entry for introducing information into school systems. These were more likely to respond directly and were not so likely to send the information to other persons. Even though no information was initially sent to teachers, several attended the conferences, suggesting that those who provided information to final decision makers desired support from other personnel most likely to be directly affected by the adoption of the product. A further indication that the majority of participants at the conferences were gathering and evaluating information and were not final decision makers is evidenced by the large percentage which indicated that they did not know whether they would adopt the product.

Information gathering and evaluating is apparently done in groups. Nearly 80% of the persons attending the conferences came in groups of two or more. The fact that teachers accompanied principals to the conferences lends further support to the view that information is usually gathered by more than one person. Three major advantages are realized when others are involved in such an activity: the perceptions of more than one person provide validation for

any report to the final decision makers; the involvement of more than one person lends social support to the person seeking to institute a change; and finally, principals who are seriously interested in adopting the product find it advantageous to involve teacher representatives as early as possible. This involvement is particularly important since lack of teacher cooperation is perceived as an obstacle to implementation (see below).

The kind of report and support provided by participants when they returned from the conferences to their school system can be surmised by the fact that 91% of the participants indicated that the conference had increased their interest in the product. Perhaps this increased interest accounts, in part, for there being more adoptions reported in the second questionnaire than were indicated in the first questionnaire.

Participants perceived two major obstacles to implementation of the product. These were cost and lack of teacher cooperation. The third highest obstacle reported by the participants was building constraints. Participants, however, indicated more than one obstacle to adoption, suggesting that a combination of obstacles is more common a problem than any single one. Thus, school personnel, when planning and reporting, must devise strategies for overcoming these obstacles, explaining in part the indicated need for time to plan and prepare implementation of the MUS-E.

The approach used in this project, two mailings and a conference, appears to provide an excellent means for assuring that a dissemination staff eventually deals with only the most interested persons. Each mailing provides a mechanism for identifying persons with the most interest in adopting the product and limiting the conference participants to those who have made enough of a commitment to expend resources to gather more detailed information in a face-to-face setting. The project did create awareness among large numbers of persons, and

yet was an efficient use of dissemination personnel in communicating directly with school staffs.

While the responses to the first mailing were rather small (2.76%), there are some potential long-term benefits. Many persons were made aware of the product for the first time. Of those in attendance at the conference over one-third heard about the product for the first time as a result of the mailings. This suggests that nearly 10,000 persons on the first mailing were made aware of the MUS-E for the first time. These represent a large number of potential adopters in any subsequent efforts.

The fact that most (76%) of the conference participants traveled by automobile indicates the possibility that had there been more conferences covering smaller regions more recipients of the second mailing might have attended one-day conferences. Attendance at conferences was probably only one indicator of active interest in the product, and it can be assumed that there were people with a high degree of interest (and thus likely adopters) who did not attend the conferences. For economic reasons, rather than lack of interest, school systems tended to limit staff travel to distances that could be covered within two or three hours driving time. It would appear that the distance people had to travel suppressed attendance at the conferences.

The cost ($58 per person in attendance) to the project of stimulating attendance at the conferences appears to be reasonable when one considers that project staff are communicating directly only with highly interested persons. Such a situation is more efficient than, for example, a presentation at a session of a professional association meeting where the audience includes not only interested persons, but persons who are simply curious. Holding conferences also has the benefit of providing direct communication with larger

numbers of interested persons who would be unable to travel long distances. Even though attendance at the conferences did not result directly in a large number of adoptions (nor was it expected that such would happen), a reported 60 MUS-E's were adopted representing an estimated 36,000 children and 1,200 teachers, and the large number of nonadopters represents a pool of interested persons for which follow-up activities will require less effort. Moreover, the Center has realized the important but intangible benefits of good will and a good "corporate image."

The conduct of this project in disseminating information about the MUS-E was identical, in terms of the procedures used, to those used in a similar effort relative to Patterns in Arithmetic (PIA). Both projects sent announcement brochures to a range of positions in school districts in approximately the same quantity to a national sample. Each project, on the basis of a return questionnaire requesting further information about the respective products, sent a second, more informative publication and an invitation to attend a one-day awareness conference. Throughout the sequence of events the responses to the MUS-E were substantially higher than for PIA. As a result, the costs for stimulating attendance at the conferences was nearly ten times as great for PIA as for the MUS-E, $553 and $58 per person attending, respectively.

Since the procedures for both projects were similar but the results in terms of attendance and costs were substantially different, the obvious implication is that the product is the important variable. The procedures are viable ones for stimulating interest in a product and for efficient use of information dissemination resources, particularly personnel, since only most interested persons are likely to respond. The product, however, must be one which potential adopters perceive as an attractive alternative.

When PIA is considered in light of more recent developments in instructional television, the limitations of television technology in the classroom, and changes in the description of the content of mathematics for the elementary school, PIA may not be perceived as an attractive alternative to a school's present mathematics program. In addition, the attractiveness of PIA may have been diminished since the participants in the PIA conferences perceived the product's use as supplemental rather than as a complete program (in spite of statements that PIA was designed as a complete program, not a supplemental one) and indicated that the costs of implementing the product were an obstacle to adoption. It is also possible that the technology and equipment associated with television instruction are not readily accepted by school personnel. Even though Center conducted evaluation studies have shown PIA to be an effective instructional program, its value may not be worth the effort required to implement the series for reasons noted above.

The MUS-E, on the other hand, may be perceived as an attractive alternative to the self-contained classroom organization. Its benefits, such as increased participation in decision-making, increased professionalization of staff, and an improved environment for children's learning may be perceived by school personnel as outweighing the costs of implementation.

Recommendations

Future efforts should consider seriously the possibility of conducting a larger number of conferences. As suggested earlier, if more conferences had been located to cover smaller regions, it is possible that more persons would have been interested and able to attend conferences. This would be particularly true if the original mailings were distributed to elementary coordinators and principals and not to superintendents and other categories, even if the total number mailed was no larger than for this project.

More conferences would, of course, raise the total costs of such an effort. If there is a staff available for dissemination efforts, additional costs would be limited primarily to travel expenses and perhaps additional postage and materials in the second mailing. Even though the absolute cost would be higher, the cost per person attending would very likely be less. The result would be a more efficient operation and also a more effective use of resources in that information dissemination is clearly pinpointed to appropriate target audiences.

With regard to the conduct of the conferences, the experience with both the PIA and MUS-E projects suggests that it is highly desirable to have three persons on the conference staff--two persons to assume primary responsibility for presenting information and the third to function as a conference manager responsible for arrangements and the logistics required to support a conference.

Strictly in terms of variety, it is well to have two persons present the information. One person may be an "expert" representing the agency disseminating the information and the other an experienced practitioner. While one staff member is engaged with the total group, the other staff member is free to provide individual attention to specific questions and problems. In order to provide this kind of interaction, the presence of the third staff member to manage conference details is extremely helpful. In only one of the five conferences conducted was the conference manager not essential. It is desirable for this reason that the third person is familiar enough with the product to be able to respond to individual needs.

It is highly beneficial to have one person arrive at the conference site one day in advance of the conference to assure that audio-visual equipment and a projectionist are secured, to confer with the management of the confer-

ence location, and to determine if handout materials have arrived. This person also has time to locate resources to handle contingencies which may arise. For example, in one conference a portion of the handout materials sent in advance were lost in transit. The presence of the third person eased the problem substantially as this person was able to locate an agency which could reproduce the materials so that they could be distributed.

Summary

Information dissemination utilizing direct mail and one-day conferences as carried out in this project appears to be a viable dissemination technique. It is systematic and provides appropriate follow-up to initial information dissemination. Communication of information about a product is focused on the most favorable point of entry into a school system and on appropriate target audiences. Information is not communicated to inappropriate persons as is often the case in general dissemination. The result would appear to be an efficient and effective (in terms of increasing awareness and stimulating interest among relevant audiences) information dissemination effort. More general efforts comprised of news releases, articles in journals and magazines, and presentations at professional meetings should not be discontinued, but they should not be heavily depended upon for creating large-scale awareness and stimulation of interest. Less heavy utilization of these general techniques will release resources for more systematic efforts.

It is suggested, however, that an effort as described in this report should not be undertaken prematurely. That is, it is not wise to distribute information about a product until the product is ready for implementation and the necessary inservice resources are available to respond to any demands. Furthermore, it may be appropriate to modify the procedures depending upon the nature of the product. A product as complex as the MUS-E requiring a major decision for implementation probably requires that more information be provided

to prospective adopters. A more tangible product such as a reading program may not need such an extensive amount of information to stimulate interest. Furthermore, the nature of the product and its potential attractiveness as an alternative to present practices should be carefully assessed.

As the first step in an implementation program, the effort used in this project has some attractive advantages. As one moves from an awareness stage to providing inservice implementation support, an agency's staff is dealing only with the most interested persons at that time effecting a more efficient utilization of personnel resources. Inservice is labor intensive and should be used only when maximum benefit will be realized. If data are gathered systematically at the one-day awareness conferences, a list of potential adopters is available for further contact at such time as they may be ready for adoption of the product.

Appendix A

Printed Materials

See EA 004 330

Appendix B

Questionnaires

Questionnaire No. 1

WISCONSIN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOR COGNITIVE LEARNING

IGE DISSEMINATION DATA

Please answer the following questions. Check appropriate answer. Your cooperation will help us in our information efforts.

1. What is your position?

_____ teacher _____ curriculum coordinator _____ principal _____ superintendent

_____ state education agency representative _____ other (specify) _____

2. How did you first learn about IGE?

_____ From eight-page brochure (white with green interior) mailed by the Wisconsin Research and Development Center

_____ From 24-page publication (white, blue, and black) titled "IGE Multiunit Elementary School" mailed by the R & D Center

_____ From an R & D Center publication titled "Problem and Promise"

_____ From a magazine article

_____ From other people

_____ Other (specify) _____

_____

3. When did you first hear of IGE? _____ since January 1971; _____ during 1970; or _____ before 1970

4. How many people are in your party at this conference? _____

5. How did you get to this conference? _____ plane _____ car _____ train _____ bus

6. Who are you representing? _____ a school _____ central administration of a school system _____ state education office _____ teacher education institution

_____ other (specify) _____

7. If you decide to adopt the IGE-Multiunit system, how many school buildings will be involved? _____ How many children? _____

8. Do you plan to adopt IGE/MUS-E in 1971-72? _____ yes _____ no _____ don't know

For 1972-73? _____ yes _____ no _____ don't know

If your answer to #8 is YES or DON'T KNOW for either 1971-72 or 1972-73, please respond to the following:

9. Will you be able to send your principal(s) and unit leaders to a three-day inservice workshop in your region? _____ yes _____ no _____ don't know

10. Do you plan to use IGE inservice materials (films, slides, publications, etc.) in your school or system? _____ yes _____ no _____ don't know

(a) Would inservice materials be used _____ (1) to inform staff and board members about IGE before making a decision to implement; _____ (2) to actually implement the program; or _____ (3) both?

(b) When will you need the inservice materials? _____

If your answer to #8 is NO or DON'T KNOW, please respond to the following:

11. What problems do you see that might keep you from adopting IGE/MUS-E?

_____ lack of board approval _____ cost _____ lack of teacher cooperation

_____ lack of central office cooperation _____ lack of interest in the program

_____ lack of state education agency cooperation _____ building constraints

_____ other (specify) _____

EVERYONE PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING:

12. Did today's conference _____ increase _____ decrease _____ have no effect on your interest in IGE/MUS-E? (check appropriate answer)

13. Please rate the segments of today's conference from 1 to 5 on the basis of their appeal and interest with number 1 indicating the most interesting and informative segment:

_____ History, rationale, overview

_____ Discussion of multiunit organization

_____ Instructional programming and reading curriculum component discussion

_____ Practitioner's view of IGE

_____ Description of implementation sequence

Questionnaire No. 2

PLEASE PRINT

Name_____ Position_____

School Address_____
street city state zip

1. Have you implemented the multiunit approach in your school? ___yes ___no In your system? ___yes ___no (if yes, in how many schools?_____)
2. If you haven't implemented, do you plan to? ___yes ___no ___undecided
3. When do you plan to implement? ___Jan. '72 ___Sept. '72 ___later (In how many schools?___)
4. If you do not plan to implement, why not? ___cost ___lack of board approval ___lack of interest ___lack of central office support ___other_____
5. Do you need more information in order to decide whether to implement? ___yes ___no
6. Have you attended subsequent multiunit workshops since attending the one-day information conference? ___yes __no