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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this bulletin is to present the state of the scene in teacher preparation for open area schools. It begins with two accounts of college students and their instructors struggling to get started in new programs. The third article cites skills of the British primary teacher as possible competencies toward which a program of teacher preparation might be directed and as possible aids to the practicing teacher. The fourth article discusses the variables of in-service development of teachers in open schools and makes some suggestions for working out a program through advisers and counselors. The fifth paper identifies the challenges of open education for those in schools and colleges, while the last presents an application of open education to the college classroom. (DDO)

ATE Bulletin 36

# WINDS OF CHANGE: TEACHER EDUCATION FOR THE OPEN AREA SCHOOL

*Selected Papers by:*

Elinor Ross
Mary H. Beaven
Margaret F. Ishler and
Richard E. Ishler
Bernard Spodek and
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James Binko
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Foreword by Chandler Barbour, chairman of the 1973 ATE Communications Committee

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## Foreword

Open space structures and the concept of open education have in recent years taken a large foothold on the education scene. The literature on open education grows steadily and authorities inform us of the rapid increase in such plans for the nation's school districts. These arrangements and programs are not fads that could blow away with a new wind.

A question that often comes to mind after reading about or visiting an open school is: Are teachers being prepared to work in these new schools? Other questions can quickly follow: Are schools attending to the in-service needs of staff who must work in open space arrangements? Have college programs followed this new direction?

Happily, we can say that there are many interested educators devising new courses, plotting new strategies, and altering techniques of teacher preparation to accommodate openness. In our investigations of the literature we encountered some examples of program adjustments to meet the demands of open schools. While there are no models that can be emulated, there are some directions and experiments that are worth sharing. We hope the articles in this bulletin are of that genre and can be useful for stimulating plans.

The purpose of this bulletin is to present the state of the scene in teacher preparation for open area schools. It is far from comprehensive, and the committee has been forced to select only a few of the interesting suggestions and program descriptions we received.

Although these papers rely more on personal observation and experience than on hard evidence, the feeling expressed is one of the worth and success of open education in terms of both student and teacher growth. Planned and concerned involvement with open education results, as Binko puts it, in something different happening to teacher and pupils. The same might be said for teacher education. This bulletin communicates the idea that a significant effort can be mounted to alter the traditional programs to meet the needs of open schools.

The five papers have been arranged to lend a quality of growth, from the struggle in rural Tennessee to a formulated plan that is being tried out in Northern Virginia. Elinor Ross and Mary Beaven communicate the needs and some possible directions in two different accounts of college students and their instructors struggling to get started in new programs. These may not be distant from the experience of others. Next, Margaret and Richard Ishler cite skills of the British Primary teacher as possible competencies toward which a program of teacher preparation might be directed, or as possible helps to the practicing teacher. Spodek and Manolakes present a stimulating note on the

variable of in-service development of teachers in open schools and some suggestions for working out a program through advisers and counselors. James Binko has identified the challenges of open education for those in schools and colleges. And Bob Gilstrap has one answer to that challenge—an application of open education to the college classroom.

The ATE Communications Committee is indebted to the members of the Review and Screening Committee for long hours of work in preparing and identifying materials for this publication.

Chandler Barbour
for the ATE Communications
Committee, December 1973

## Contents

## Introductory Note

The first two articles in this bulletin are accounts of actual experiences presented to show the range of experiments being made to prepare teachers for open education. In both these situations there is a quality of getting involved. Success in new programs may well rest on the courage of educators to pursue ideas such as these. The challenges indicated here are articulated by Binko in a later article.

# Chapter 1
# EXPERIMENTS WITH OPEN EDUCATION

## REACTION OF STUDENT TEACHERS TO OPEN CLASSROOM TEACHING

Elinor Ross

A school burned, and after two years of using community makeshift buildings the citizens of an area in the Upper Cumberlands of Tennessee found themselves with a new open-space school.

To the children, the parents, and the educators of this rural community the new school is a source of wonder and pride. There is air conditioning, carpeting, acoustical tile on the ceilings, and color everywhere. There are wide hallways with bold supergraphics on the walls. There are vast open spaces made to accommodate large groups of children and there are nooks and small rooms for small groups. Federal funds have provided new instructional equipment to offer varied learning experiences.

Special-purpose rooms exist throughout the building. Each group of teachers has a workroom and storage area. Other rooms are used by the guidance counselor, for audiovisual programs, and for conferences. In the center of the building are the instructional materials center and a little theatre. Along one side is the kindergarten area featuring a child-sized gymazosanc, an intriguing combination of gymnasium, maze, and sanctuary.

When the building opened, disorder and confusion prevailed for weeks. Although some preparation had been made for the open classroom design, no one had really known exactly what to expect. The building and the concept were radically new and different to the children and teachers alike. Because much of the equipment and many of the supplies had not arrived, the first few weeks were spent unpacking books, setting up tables, and arranging materials. Different scheduling plans were being tried but no single plan seemed suitable. Teachers were trying to find the most effective balance between directed teaching and guided independent study. The children had scarcely begun to develop the self-discipline and control necessary for independent work.

Into this situation were placed eleven carefully selected student teachers who were considered adaptable to new situations and quick to learn. Their supervising teachers welcomed them with enthusiasm, seeing in them some assistance for making task cards, programming materials, and working with students. They were caught up in these activities with little chance to observe and become acquainted with the people or the concept. Many were overwhelmed, confused, discouraged, or just plain frightened. Some felt that teaching was not the right field for them. They looked around them and saw

chaos; they saw children who seemed to be just playing and floating and wondered how they could be learning.

The noise and confusion bothered the student teachers perhaps more than anything. They found it difficult to do directed teaching even with small groups because of distractions caused by other children moving about freely. It was just as difficult to keep large groups of children who were working on tasks from bothering smaller groups being taught by a teacher. The student teachers were constantly concerned about what noise level was acceptable to the different supervising teachers with whom they worked.

No less a problem for most of the student teachers was discipline. The open concept was new to the children and they weren't quite sure how they were expected to act. Many of the sixth graders had been in a traditional school for enough years to be disinterested in any type of activity. Expectations for behavior were not consistent since children moved from one area to another where teachers held different standards.

Time was too short for the student teachers to establish any long-term behavioral modification program, and they did not have the authority to establish a consistent policy for discipline. They were not allowed to paddle the children, even though paddling seemed to be the only effective method of discipline for some.

Many traditional forms of discipline were denied them because of the rigid scheduling. It was nearly impossible for them to motivate some students who had ceased to care about school. Ultimately, the student teachers found that what worked best was to gather their groups together and establish rules for behavior and appropriate penalties for infractions.

The student teachers had other problems associated with open classroom teaching. They felt that it was difficult, in ten weeks, to get to know the many children with whom they worked, sometimes as many as five classes. Although working with different supervising teachers could be a valuable learning experience, it was sometimes difficult to understand and meet the expectations of each. Some student teachers were uncomfortable with the lack of directed teaching and with the use of tasks rather than texts. When they taught units, the time limitation of one language arts or social studies period a day seemed inadequate for developing the topic to the extent they wished. There was little opportunity for incorporating math, art, or science into the unit.

Although many of these problems persisted throughout their experience, most of the student teachers gradually changed their attitudes toward open classroom teaching. The supervising teachers offered sympathy, encouragement, and a chance to share problems. As time passed, the student teachers learned what was expected of them and to appreciate the advantages offered by this new style of teaching. Many felt that their love for children and the children's enthusiastic acceptance of them helped them most.

A student teacher seminar, based on their needs and held on campus in the middle of the week, provided a break from the demanding school schedule. The free discussion of mutual problems and exchange of ideas seemed to be a release from the pressures that had built up in the school. Discussions

frequently centered on discipline and motivation. Together the student teachers examined the reasons for inappropriate behavior and explored possible solutions.

Field trips for the student teachers were arranged to three open classroom schools where a program had been in effect for two or more years. Here they could sense the possibilities for their own situation and recognize that similar problems can exist in all schools.

During the quarter, the student teachers functioned in many ways as they would have in any student teaching experience—they checked papers, made bulletin boards, prepared ditto sheets, and worked with students individually; they taught reading groups and prepared units. But in some respects their activities differed. The children did not have textbooks and the student teachers needed to make many task cards on different levels for different interest centers. They planned most of their activities for small groups or individuals rather than for the entire class. A daily period provided for teachers gave them time to plan activities, evaluate results, and consult with their supervising teachers.

At the beginning of the year there was little team teaching because the teachers were too busy adjusting to the new school to attempt to coordinate their plans. Gradually, however, they began combining their classes for special lessons or planning their lessons to coincide with those of another teacher. Particularly in the primary area, teachers shared in making task cards and preparing lessons in math, language arts, spelling, and science.

The student teachers liked the idea of team teaching, and four of them planned a unit on Mexico. Soon, throughout the intermediate area, children were greeting each other with "Buenos dias, amigo," or parting with "Adios." Bright colored tissue paper flowers decorated the entire area, Mexican food was sampled, and pinatas were slowly and carefully constructed of papier-mâché. Children were poring over maps and books about their neighbors to the South. The unit culminated with a gala fiesta in costume involving the entire school.

Toward the end of the quarter, the student teachers began to see many advantages to the open concept. They felt that there was more freedom for both students and teachers. There was more opportunity for individualizing instruction by allowing children to work at their own rates and ability levels. The open concept demanded that the student teachers be more creative in their teaching methods since they could not rely on textbooks or traditional large-group instruction. And the children had to develop self-discipline, independent study habits, and a sense of responsibility.

At the close of the quarter the student teachers were asked how they felt about working in an open classroom situation. A few regretted that they did not have adequate experience teaching in all subject areas, but nearly all were glad to have had the experience of learning about open schools through direct participation. They intended to adapt the learning centers idea to any teaching situation in which they might find themselves. They liked the freedom, the easy movement, the flexible arrangements of materials and children, and the relaxed atmosphere. They felt they benefited from their

exposure to many children, several teachers, and a variety of methods. They liked the role of guide rather than director of learning. They discovered how to combine efforts with other teachers in order to provide learning opportunities which would appeal to the interests and levels of the many children they taught.

Other groups of student teachers have completed a quarter at the new open school. They have taken more time to observe and have started working with children more gradually. They have not had the same scheduling problems as the first group and have seemed less confused. As the supervising teachers and the children grow more accustomed to this type of teaching, it seems easier for new groups of student teachers to adjust to the open concept, which can prepare them to teach in almost any situation.

# IMPROVISATION: GROPING TOWARD OPENNESS

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Books and courses dealing with the implementation of open education include material on constructing learning centers, writing contracts, preparing pre- and post-mastery tests, sequencing learning activities, and devising means of evaluation. However, few books and courses deal with improvisation, and in my opinion, unless a teacher is able to improvise—to spontaneously construe the events of the minute into new patterns—open education will expire. In working with individuals, small groups, or large groups, a teacher needs to orchestrate the nuances and possibilities inherent in the minute, letting the learning flow smoothly and flexibly from one area into another. A teacher needs to develop the intuitive knack of knowing when to offer direction and suggestion and when to step aside and let the students assume initiative. Unfortunately, this ability to improvise does not develop miraculously from reading books, listening to lectures, or engaging in discussions; these activities are too safe and do not require courageous risk-taking.

One of the best vehicles I have discovered to foster improvisational ability is experience in creative expression in the related arts where what is expressed in one medium may be transformed into another. At the beginning of undergraduate and graduate courses in open education, I set up activities in the related arts; one might say that I structure a stimulus, leaving the response unstructured so that students may react as they wish. Two or three weeks later I remove myself from the position of director, and each student plans a thirty-minute activity for the class if it is small or for his reference group if the class is large. As my hesitant students assume the responsibility for leading activities, I become the model student, the first to comply and become involved. As my students' confidence increases, I begin to create tranquil mischief, unobtrusively veering the activity off course so that other participants learn how to improvise in their role as learners and so that the person directing the activity learns how to respond to the evolving mood, needs, and interests of the group. Dexterity in improvisation grows, and by the fourth week of one of my courses it is not unusual to participate in a class similar to the one described below.

One cold, blustery February day I entered the School of Music on the way to class and found a number of disgruntled students waiting for me; each seemed as upset as a toddler who has had a lollipop whisked from his hands. "Our room" had been appropriated by a visiting string quartet, and we had been delegated to another room where there were—horror of horrors—screwed-down desks and where another class was in session. Seeking to relieve my distraught students, I suggested that we dismiss class for the day. But they would not allow that. Ten minutes later, after having requested other space in which to meet, we found ourselves ready to begin the first activity for the day.

One young man had everyone don a blindfold and explore the area. Although he requested that no one talk, the group was vociferous as it made its way around the room, which contained bass fiddles, a xylophone, and other large instruments. Because the objects were fascinating to touch and because class had begun in disharmony, we could not maintain silence. Next we were told to form a circle, keeping our eyes shut, and when we accomplished that feat, the activity ended. During the ensuing discussion participants were most enthusiastic about the activity, but the leader revealed his distress that everyone had jabbered—the goal that he had in mind had not been accomplished because of the chattering. Because the group recognized his feelings and respected them, we decided to repeat the activity in silence and found that it became much more meaningful. As one woman revealed, "I would reach out expecting to feel something hard, like a bass fiddle, and then my hand would encounter another person's back or chest. Before I knew it, someone would be squeezing my hand and placing it on some interesting texture—the rough wall, the radiator grating, or the cold window pane. I became aware of so much more the second time."

After the second trial our discussion centered on the importance of following directions. When questioned why he did not insist that everyone remain quiet the first time, our leader provided reasons: he thought it impossible to stem the talk; he wanted to allow the group freedom to react as it chose; and because he was thoroughly disgusted with such loquacious adults, he did not intercede—he feared his anger would erupt. In retrospect, the group agreed that his silence followed by his disclosure of disappointment helped them become aware of his feelings and alert to the importance of following directions.

Next the group varied the activity so that it could be used for ear training. One person was blindfolded while the others arranged themselves along a soft-loud tonal spectrum and then moved to another stationary position in the room. The blindfolded person had to locate the person clapping the loudest and then to identify him through touch. In another variation several persons left the room as everyone else took a pitch, humming it constantly. Those outside were given pitches and instructed to enter the room and locate the person humming that particular tone. These variations emerged spontaneously from discussion and were implemented at once.

Progressing to another activity, two men demonstrated how they could carry on a conversation in gibberish. Then they involved the rest of us as they cast parts for class volunteers. We had an angry tenant confronting a somewhat

dense landlord, a blind date between a garrulous girl and a taciturn boy, and argument between lovers, a policeman accosting a hippie, and so on. The students found these exercises engrossing, and requested a second round. Although the two directors of the activity had not prepared additional situations, the class was not deterred. They created their own.

As the second round commenced, another class burst into the room we had confiscated and we learned that it was possible to return to our own headquarters as the string quartet had completed its performance. As we gathered our paraphernalia, one of my students, a former soloist with one of the country's leading choirs, remarked that she had felt uptight *talking* in gibberish but believed she could sing in gibberish. I suggested that she try as soon as we got moved, and one of the men, a sensitive improvisationist at the piano, agreed to accompany her. They left ahead of me, and by the time I reached the other room, the soprano was soaring away on the wings of song, and just as I entered, a tenor joined in spontaneously. While they were emoting, a baritone villain began lurking behind the pillars of the room and soon had an accomplice. Next a servant appeared for the tenor and a confidante for the soprano. From out of nowhere marched a soldier's chorus. And voila! Spontaneously every one of my students entered the action as he saw fit. With such a captivating mood, even I could not resist. We improvised as we sang in gibberish, and those assuming minor roles transferred from one role to another as the whim struck them.

When our leads ran out of breath, I suggested that those who had played revolving minor roles create an improvised barbership scene. Before I finished speaking, three barbers, three clients, and a shoe-shine boy were already singing. They created such an interesting situation that within five minutes, one by one, all of the spectators had entered the action. No one could resist the temptation. This time when our voices and breath gave out, someone suggested that we dance, and dance we did until exhaustion reigned and everyone dropped to the floor. Our improvised opera and ballet had lasted over fifty minutes, with the spontaneous, total involvement of the class.

As we sat gasping for breath, I noticed expressions of incredulity appearing on various faces. Then comments came forth: "What happened?" "I've never done anything like that before." "I was transformed." "How could we do that without planning?" "I have never been so totally uninhibited."

Our improvised opera and ballet had been a peak experience. No one had sensed a separation among himself, others, and the improvisation; a harmonic union had merged us into a beautiful happening, and residual elation remained (B-cognition, in Maslow's terms).

"Can we do it again?" "Can a teacher plan for something like this?" I offered my opinions. Such extensive burst of genuine spontaneity involving an entire group rarely occurs in classrooms. However, most of my classes experience a number of similar transformations during a term. I have found that I cannot plan for them. Magic moments require that group members develop a feeling of trust in each other so that they are free to let go when the mood strikes. Naturally, it takes time for that prerequisite trust to develop.

Before these moments of transformation occur, a group leads up to them. In the course I already paved the way by providing a number of simpler exercises—relaxation exercises, blindfolded walks, mural painting, mirror exercises, pantomime—each requiring increased concentration, participation, and improvisation. As students become more able to participate totally in such experiences, the likelihood that peak experiences will occur increases. When these magic minutes commence, all a teacher needs to do is to let things happen. Of course, a prerequisite is that the students must know on the gut level that they have the freedom and encouragement to let loose. The teacher cannot function as a judge or dictator; students must sense that he is a co-participant, eager to explore the possibilities of the moment.

If students recognize that they are free to explore their creative potentials in improvisations, they do so, building rich encounters for which no script or lesson plans can ever be written. I have found that these peak experiences assume different characteristics: students may share deeply felt emotions and tears, they may engage in an intense experience in the arts, or they may transcend themselves in moments of riotous hilarity.

As mentioned earlier, reading books, listening to lectures, engaging in discussions, and even working with school children will not develop improvisational abilities as just described. Working with improvisation initially tends to be difficult, for group work in dance, music, drama, and art seems to bring to consciousness a wide repertoire of inhibitions. To defend themselves, students may scoff at art activities and call them "kid stuff." They may become hostile, as Audrey did, and write:

> I hope you're not deceiving yourself—about our so-called 'increasing powers to creativity,' I mean. When people were throwing out brainstorm ideas on creativity, someone's plea, "Can creativity be forced?" suddenly struck me as the central problem. Can creativity be pigeon-holed, quantitated—and graded? Is creativity talking out the most in class or most realistically walking on ice or making a paper mobile? *Can* creativity be measured? *Is* it only X number of outside readings—or X number of media used on a final project? Is this creativity course pure, unadulterated ————.

Thank goodness, between the third and sixth weeks of the course, students begin to notice changes in themselves, both in and out of the classroom. They notice that they are more spontaneous, courageous, and open. They go to schools and find they work well with pupils. After the class fingerpainted our personal conceptions of Hiroshima and paradise, Audrey ventured into a high school:

> . . . I figured that using the same idea on juniors in high school would be relatively easy. But my teacher explained to me that ETHS kids would probably regard my idea as highly unconventional and would be rather skeptical about attempting it themselves. But she herself was really enthusiastic and said that . . . if I really had a definite point in using a media experiment that they would be pretty receptive. A boy in my Ed class wanted to come watch, so it all of a sudden became a bigger production than I had originally thought. When Friday came, there I was waiting for

the bus with my box of watercolor paper, sticks, cup, finger paints, and newspaper. . . . All of a sudden I became apprehensive, thinking that maybe I was becoming too carried away with this creativity business, and maybe finger painting was too silly. Would all the kids laugh at me? But I am not one to lose my resolve that quickly. . . . After the first class I headed to the bathroom with a plastic basin to fill with water. I sat there for 15 min., thinking of exactly what I could say to the kids that would be effective—and convincing! . . . When the bell rang . . . I formed a pretty ludicrous picture, waddling down a long hall with a ridiculous yellow basin filled with water—and was it ever heavy! When I got to my class, I was suddenly nervous—there was Dwight from Ed class, Mrs. X, and those damn doubting kids, who walked in the room with comments like, "Oh, great—are you gonna put goldfish in there for us to watch?" . . . I tentatively began my semi-thought-out explanation. "I'm going to try an experiment in expanding your senses," I began when someone joyously cried out, "Oh, boy, are we going to smoke some marijuana?" I sure wasn't expecting that comment! After I finished explaining what I hoped they would see as the relevance of finger painting to the reading of *Hiroshima*, I was attacked by comments like "Hell, this is for babies," "I'm not getting all dirty," "This is stupid," etc. But I was not upset and everyone eventually sat down to work—and amazingly enough, those who complained the most got the most personally involved! In fact, the class leader, who had condescendingly informed me that she could express herself better in writing, did an extraordinary symbolist representation—and took it home to put on her wall! That made me very happy. The teacher and I had the best time; we got into the painting, too. Why just sit there?"

By the time the end of the course came, Audrey had become able to improvise in many different kinds of situations. Then she wrote the following:

I was really surprised. I entered the course a skeptic. . . . I expected nothing—I expected to endure another Ed course—and I was amazed to find myself enjoying instead! I found not only a lot of helpful innovations to incorporate when teaching but, more important, a lot of ways to come out of myself—to not only fulfill myself but to *relax* (difficult sometimes in this competitive collegiate world). I was also happy to feel a camaraderie among the kids in the class; just saying hi to people on the street and having them answer cheerfully is a novelty in itself around here! I guess "pleasantly surprised" is the best way to describe my retrospective feelings. Surprised at what I learned. Surprised at what I could do. And surprised at how I grew.

And so, as my students groped toward openness through their experiences in creative expression in art, music, dance, drama, and writing, they learned to improvise spontaneously, first in their art work, then in their teaching, and finally in their own personal lives. And unless a teacher develops the ability to improvise on all those levels, it may be that that teacher will not be able to foster genuine open education in the classroom. Open education depends on an openness to one's environment, to one's own thoughts and emotions, to those of others, and to the interactions of the minute. In my opinion, improvisation

and creative expression in the arts and related teaching activities develop those characteristics a teacher needs most in an open classroom.

# Chapter 2
# INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS OF THE BRITISH PRIMARY TEACHER AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Margaret F. Ishler
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and
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University of Toledo

The success and expansion of the child-centered primary school in England has provoked a steady stream of American visitors to observe for themselves the subjects of the Plowden Report of 1966 (7). Armed with cameras and tape recorders, they have captured the sight and sound of the lively classrooms. And they have reacted in numerous books, from Silberman's chapter on "The Case of the New English Primary Schools" (9) to Vincent Rogers' *Teaching in the British Primary School* (8). Elementary schools patterned after the British primary are beginning to blossom around the United States. Examples can be found in such diverse places as the inner cities of New York and Philadelphia and the small hamlets of Connecticut and North Dakota. With evidences such as these, there can be little doubt that British primary education is exerting influence on elementary education in this country.

Although, as Silberman and Rogers have pointed out, only about 30 percent of all English primary schools now function in the open concept, the Plowden Report seemed to be pointing the way to almost a total commitment to this organizational structure. The movement is gaining momentum despite the lack of hard data to support empirically and unequivocally the superiority of its instructional techniques. Yet one has only to visit a school and spend a little time in observing the activity, structured freedom, and joy emanating from the rooms to know that "measured or not," something important is going on in the open British primary that has far-reaching implications for teacher education both at home and abroad.

After scanning the literature and recalling our personal visits to British open classrooms in the spring of 1972, we can reiterate some characteristic behaviors of the British primary teacher which bear study for incorporation into our own training programs. The resultant change in teacher education necessary to accommodate the cultivation of these behaviors is also explored in this analysis.

Consideration of some of the skills demanded of the British open school teacher that would benefit our preservice and in-service teachers are discussed below in the arrangement of the "onion construct" articulated by

Spodek and Manolakes (10). The levels of difficulty present in actualizing the suggested behaviors are compared to the layers of the onion. For example, the external layer, as the layer of onion with the brown skin, is more easily accomplished because it deals with externals—room arrangements, selected texts, materials. Each ensuing internal layer becomes more difficult to actualize as we move from techniques to philosophies and values of society which influence our educational system. It is essential to acknowledge that more than just simple techniques and learned behaviors are being considered here, but also necessary changes in attitudes, values, and philosophy for the individuals in the program, training institutions, and the schools of the community, if these behaviors are to be functional. Therefore, in a discussion of necessary competencies for preservice teachers who are being prepared to teach in the open school style and for in-service teachers who are preparing to adapt some of the techniques of the open school for their classrooms, the onion construct of behaviors required by the teacher might look like this:

The External Layer—Room Arrangement and Materials

The teacher must demonstrate:

1. *the ability to create a stimulating learning environment through the structuring of active learning experiences.* This ability pertains to being able to combine two rooms and a hall for diverse learning experiences; to filling room with "stuff" to use in manipulative play and learning experiences. It includes the ability to structure active learning experiences that combine activity and development of basic skills.

Internal Layer 1 (Specific Instructional Strategies)

The teacher must demonstrate:

1. *the ability to foster independent learning skills.* This ability includes students and teachers making their plans and setting their goals together, encouraging students to work with others, developing responsibility in students to keep records of their own progress and work habits, rewarding students with the right to plan their own time, holding frequent conferences with them about their work (6).
2. *the ability to cope with different activities going on simultaneously for much of the school day.* The teachers will learn how to structure a variety of activities such as art work, research, math, reading, and science experiences so that students can be involved in these with a minimum of aid from the teacher, who is available as a consultant.
3. *the ability to teach in vertical grouping* (several age groups placed together in a "family group" for a span of several years). Such a grouping requires the teacher to be able to individualize, to group and regroup for interests and ability, and to encourage students to learn from each other.
4. *the ability to use techniques to develop responsibility and independence in the children.* The teacher must be able to provide freedom in the classroom through presenting the child with meaningful activities. The teacher must demonstrate that freedom within the

classroom is expressed within a structure of choices set up by the teacher.

5. *the ability to use techniques to encourage and develop the creative energy of the children and himself.* The teacher must know how to encourage divergent behavior through the questions he asks and the activities he plans. He must be receptive to the use of student ideas, be able to use experiences to build sensitivity and aesthetic cultivation, provide ample opportunity for creative expression in all four, and be aware of the learning value of play.
6. *the ability to use a variety of diagnostic and evaluative techniques for comprehensive records.* The teacher must be able to evaluate in terms of participation, demonstrated behaviors such as learning skills, attitudinal changes, changes in work habits, and so on, rather than solely on test grades; he also must know diagnostic techniques in order to gather essential information needed to work with each child. The teacher must be able to utilize a variety of ways to report to parents on student progress.

Internal Layer 2 (Related to Professional Goals and Role Definition)

The teacher must demonstrate:

1. *The ability to assume a variety of roles within the classroom, such as stage-setter, facilitator, participant, and learner.* The teacher must be able to assume the role of the indirect teacher—being supportive, utilizing student ideas, building curriculum around individual interests and needs. He must be able to work as teacher with one child or with a group, or as learner within a group. He must be able to operate as a travel agent—helping a child go where he wants to go, counseling him on ways to get there, and helping prepare him for what he will see (2:257).
2. *The ability to utilize children as teachers.* The teacher must be able to see his own role with the flexibility that acknowledges that the child too can be a teacher within the classroom. Jerome Bruner, in his latest publication, advocates the utilization of this tremendous teaching force—children teaching each other (1).
3. *The ability to work as part of an instructional team.* The teacher should be able to cooperate and share with other teachers and personnel for greater utilization of talents, help with inadequacies, development of new ideas, and task distribution. Developing teaming capabilities will prepare the teacher to work in the differentiated staffing patterns predominant in the model elementary education curriculum being implemented around the nation (4). The development of teacher centers around the country will do much in the way of encouraging teachers to cooperate and share. They will provide sites where educators can come together to discuss problems, receive assistance, exchange ideas, and develop new materials.
4. *The ability to build and adjust the curriculum to fit each individual child.* The teacher is able to plan the curriculum around the interests and needs of each child, encouraging the child to take joint

responsibility in deciding what is to be learned. The referent point of structure is the child—not the age group or the clock. The teacher, with the help of the child, must be able to provide the structure in which the individual's curriculum operates.

5. *The ability to use knowledge of how a child learns so that process can be an essential part of curriculum.* Teachers must be familiar with research in learning, including the influential works of Jean Piaget, so that they can adapt method and organization to the classroom based on research authority. Teachers must be able to see the basic structure in their subject matter in order to plan activities that will get students involved with essentials in the curriculum. They must be able to plan experiences that will lead to an understanding of process, enabling students to generate their own knowledge and to see how knowledge fits together.
6. *The ability to use and include the community in the classroom.* The teacher must be able to see his educational domain stretching out into the community; to utilize the resources, expanding the classroom beyond the four walls, bringing the community in to help in the instructional program, seeking its financial support, and creating an atmosphere of receptiveness to parent aides.

Internal Layer 3 (Personal Goals and Self-Concept)

The teacher must demonstrate:

1. *The ability to develop his own interests and talents to serve as a stimulus in the classroom and for personal self-fulfillment.* The teacher must be able to exemplify the intrinsic pleasures in the cultivation of personal interests and hobbies, to explore with students new avenues of experience, and to develop and share individual talents. He must learn how to include all of himself in his teaching activities.
2. *The ability to develop personal dedication in terms of energy and planning time needed in open classroom teaching.* The teacher must demonstrate that he is willing to expand himself physically in this very challenging teaching situation. He must be able to experience firsthand the drain that total commitment to such a program places on a teacher so that he can be realistic about his ability to cope.

Internal Layer 4 (Beliefs and Values of the Community and Nation)

A program built around the above behaviors must acknowledge that its implementation is dependent on the community's acceptance of its aims and practices. The role of the teacher as director and authoritarian, and the purpose of the curriculum to build proficiency in the basic disciplines as demonstrated by performance on standardized tests — fostered by the Sputnik age — must be dealt with before the open classroom concept can be implemented in the schools. Attention must be paid to the core of the onion by teacher training institutions working with schools and the community if the climate is to be agreeable for open education techniques to flourish and be productive (2).

The above ordering of behaviors characteristic to open education was to emphasize that teacher education must consider the whole onion construct as

it begins to develop the layers of behaviors involved. Also, such a breakdown enables us to see that many of the competencies involved are not radical departures from our present concepts of good teaching. The significance of the open school movement to teacher education in the United States is that now we have a model that is working successfully throughout another country. This model is changing the whole tenor of elementary education, plus influencing changes in secondary education (hastening the proliferation of comprehensive high schools) in England. We can visit these schools, get caught up in the activity, the spirit of creativeness and exploration in classroom after classroom as we observe teachers demonstrating the above competencies. We can see the movement's acceptance on all layers of the onion construct. Then we can judge for ourselves, with the help of a report such as Charles Silberman's *Crisis in the Classroom*, whether we are meeting our educational goals or whether the goals are still tenable.

Such an experience will lead U.S. educators to acknowledge that the range of teaching behaviors structured for preservice and in-service training should include at least some of the aforementioned competencies, depending on the degree of commitment to the open classroom approach. It also seems logical to assume that some of these competencies will be incorporated in programs for secondary teachers as well, as competency-based programs make us articulate the behaviors necessary to accomplish secondary program objectives.

**Implications for Teacher Education**

Viewing teacher education with the onion construct in mind, one realizes that cultivation of open classroom techniques will bring changes. In some institutions these changes will mean penetrating to the core of the onion—initiating new curriculums, adopting new instructional strategies, redefining the role of teacher and the nature of education. Such changes will occur slowly in many institutions because their wheels of curricular decision making are tied to a bureaucratic committee structure. However, the systems approach developed in schools involved with the elementary teacher education models, initiated in 1968 and funded by the U.S. Office of Education, will facilitate and expedite these changes.

The systems approach demands a comprehensive analysis of all processes engaged in by the teacher, plus objectives and procedures for meeting them—in other words, a competency-based approach. It is designed to be adaptive or corrective so that the program is adjustable to its evaluation feedback and curriculum needs. New or additional competencies, such as those demanded by open classroom teaching, can be added in instructional modules.

In addition, the teaming effort that would be required by the schools and the universities to produce more open classrooms and to train more teachers for them is an integral part of the elementary models. They have opened doors for universities and schools to work together in establishing new programs through the development of instructional teams. For example, the multiunit

approach of the University of Toledo (3) could easily be integrated with the open-classroom concept. The multiunit includes an instructional team of teaching aides, secretary, teaching interns, assistant teachers, associate teachers, and master teachers. An instructional team could include a subject matter specialist, curriculum specialists, research specialist, educational psychologist, and counseling specialist.

With the multiplicity of instructional experiences offered by the open classroom, the team approach and systems management seem appropriate vehicles for making open classroom competencies functional in American education.

The above discussion is to emphasize that vital mechanisms for change are operative in these elementary model programs, which are already at work training a new breed of teachers. The open classroom competencies could be included in their instructional modules. The inner layers of the onion construct—the difficult layers to contend with—have been reckoned with through institutional commitment to change, redefinition of the teacher's role, and establishment of a close working relationship with the schools.

For teacher training institutions that are committed to change, the development of open classrom competencies will necessitate action on the following points:

1. Curriculum revision to accommodate the training of teachers for alternative educational plans. Basic philosophies and traditional practices need to be examined in the light of current educational research. The necessary competencies need to be noted, along with methods to accomplish and evaluate these competencies.
2. Curriculum emphasis on developing techniques of individualizing instruction. To practice these techniques, opportunities need to be provided for preservice teachers to work on a variety of grade levels and, where available, in vertical grouping situations.
3. Consideration of changing to a five-year program to include one year of internship in the public school, culminating in a master's degree and initial certification. Such a program could offer the broader academic and experiential background needed to structure the rich interdisciplinary environment of the open classroom. (A bill to inaugurate a five-year teaching degree required for initial certification was introduced in the Ohio legislature in 1973.)
4. Establishment of a teacher education program which models the competencies included in the open classroom approach—i.e., individualized insruction, proceeding at one's own rate, flexibility in course offerings and requirements, professors competent in open classroom techniques.
5. Establishment of close relationships between the college of education and the schools through the university's willingness to work in schools as adviser and program facilitator, encouraging the development of new programs such as open education.
6. Establishment of teacher education programs which are primarily field-based. This arrangement moves teacher education off the campus and into the school so that preservice teachers can learn firsthand how

to function in the open classroom setting. A great deal of responsibility for teacher education is thus placed on the classroom teacher who works cooperatively with the teacher training institution (5).

7. Realization that the education professor must act as a change agent, able to develop in preservice and in-service teachers the attitude that change can be productive. He must be able to establish his credibility as a change agent through his participation in the schools and teacher centers in varying capacities.
8. Development of intensive in-service training programs for schools which express an interest in moving to the open classroom concept. The in-service education must be more than a cursory overview of what open education entails. It must focus on developing the skills teachers will need to work successfully in this type of organizational structure. Thus training will be needed in areas such as individualization of instruction, team teaching, multiage groupings, establishment of interest centers, and so on.
9. Acknowledgement that many of the skills required of elementary teachers to work in open classrooms should also be prerequisites for secondary teachers. As open education begins to flourish and grow in our elementary schools, secondary schools will certainly need to change so that children are not faced with a "separate and unequal" educational system at that level. Indeed, open education can and should be extended into the secondary school in an effort to produce more sensitive and flexible teachers and, it is to be hoped, a complete revitalization of secondary education in this country.

**Conclusion**

The fresh winds of change emanating from the British infant and primary schools are blowing open our educational doors to the open classroom concept. Undoubtedly, the best result from this "northeaster" thus far is that it is making us examine our own practices more carefully. The implications in terms of teacher competencies and teacher education programs discussed in this paper are but a few that the concept has brought to our attention. Let's hope the winds are strong enough to keep the doors open.

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# Chapter 3
# IN-CLASS TEACHER TRAINING FOR OPEN EDUCATION[1]

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The work reported here is from the Fellowship Program for Teacher Trainers in Open Education at the University of Illinois that has been supported by the U.S. Office of Education under the Education Professions Development Act. The project was established in order to provide training for a future leadership group in education, who would be enrolled as doctoral fellows at the University. In addition, the project provides supportive services and teacher training to a group of teachers in many parts of the state who wish to move toward open education. The doctoral fellows, along with additional staff, provide the teacher training and services in our project, primarily on-site.

The project grew out of two prior thrusts—a program to develop teacher trainers in early childhood education and work in the Washington Elementary School in Champaign, Illinois, helping teachers move toward more open classrooms. (The Washington Elementary School is a laboratory school supported jointly by the Champaign Public Schools and the University of Illinois College of Education.) It was our hope to integrate and extend the work of these two projects.

During the 1970-71 school year, the co-directors of the project visited schools in Illinois, describing our program and inviting them to join us. We hoped to work with clusters of teachers within schools on a voluntary basis. Our final sites included a kindergarten center in a rural area, a laboratory school in a midsized city, and schools in three Chicago suburban communities, providing variation in situations, goals, and styles. The commonalities among the schools were an interest in open education and a willingness to become involved in the project and to accept assistance from outsiders.

**Activities**

The activities of the program include in-class teacher training, workshops, consultations, conferences, courses, and seminars, each designed for different client populations. Our basic premise was that many college-based

[1]An elaborated version of this paper can be found in Spodek, B., and Walberg, H., editors. Studies in Open Education. New York: Agathon Press. (In press). This version is printed here with permission of Agathon Press.

teacher education courses are too remote in a spatial sense in that the teacher must travel away from home to be served by the course. But they are also remote in a conceptual sense, for often the content of a course seems to have little relationship to the nature of the task the teacher is involved in on a daily basis. It seemed to us that it might be more sensible to bring the learning experience to the teacher, placing it directly in the school situation and making the content of the learning experience the teacher's own classroom activity, with observation and reflection leading to modification in program or teaching and then to the assessment of change.

We sent out teams of fellows and staff members to our cooperating schools. These teams would spend one or two days a week in a school, at first primarily establishing relationships with teachers as well as establishing their own credibility. Staff members and fellows would visit classrooms, observing and helping teachers, and meet informally with individual and groups of teachers whenever possible. When requested, our staff would bring into schools educational materials not available to teachers or help them make materials. They would suggest readings for teachers; they would demonstrate activities; they would help teachers create learning materials or develop new classroom organizations, trying to respond to their needs and requests.

This aspect of our program—directly related to classroom practice—seemed to have great impact. In fact, most teachers in our network identified our program with the individual coming into their school rather than with the directors or the University. This most successful part of our program also created our greatest problems.

Demands on individual staff members were great and vast amounts of energy needed to be expended on travel. Sometimes we erred in our approach to a specific teacher or in our assessment of local needs. Sometimes the different styles or points of view among fellows and staff members working in the same school would lead to conflict. Sometimes we were too ignorant ourselves, for we were learning from the process much as were the teachers and children.

As a local need arose, we would run workshops in various schools. These usually included a half day or full day of practice-oriented activity and disclosure. We involved the teachers in activities which were adult parallels of those we suggested could be offered to children. The teachers would not only learn from the content of the workshop but from the method employed as well. Art, science, language arts, and music activities were available. Teachers had options in each program and chose from a range of activities at each workshop. They also were usually asked to report in some way about their involvement in activities.

Discussion would take place relating to the application of what each teacher had learned and to ways of extending classroom practice from the workshop activities. Foundational material not directly related to classroom practice would be provided as required, such as demonstrations and discussions to elucidate Piaget's developmental theories. The workshops were requested by the school teachers but were planned and implemented by our fellows and staff.

During the year we felt the need to move teachers out of their schools for some activities. The pressures on teachers and their need to respond to their immediate environment suggested that it would be fruitful to hold a number of retreats. These retreats would take place in a comfortable, nonschool-related environment.

The formal program of the retreats included discussions and activities similar to those of our workshops. Focus, for example, might be on art, music, language arts, or environmental education and its extensions. The informal program included sharing ideas and concerns among teachers from various school settings and systems, developing an esprit within the total program, the interacting informally with staff members of the project. These retreats also communicated to teachers our view of their importance as persons and as focal beings in the educative process.

Our other formal activities include the provision of course work and seminars. Our fellows are in doctoral programs at the University and take a variety of courses both in education and in related fields. These usually are relevant either to requirements of the doctoral program or to their work in early childhood education and to teacher education.

We have also offered extension courses for teachers in our project. The purpose of these courses was twofold; to deal with concepts and implementations of open education in the classroom and to help develop a sense of awareness in the teachers of aspects of the process of change.

We also helped to establish teacher centers that were staffed primarily by teachers. We have provided support via interns who work in children's classes, thus allowing teachers to be released from some of their classroom responsibilities.

Our seminars generally include staff and fellows and take place on campus. Seminars have dealt with the antecedents of open education. Informal seminars are held in which invited faculty and students are asked to present aspects of their work which are related to open education or early childhood education. At times our staff meetings seem to turn into seminars as well, as we try to understand what has happened in the program and possibly why it has happened.

Our evaluation included collecting data through questionnaires and interviews with all those concerned in the program (except the children in the classes affected). Data were collected from a sampling of parents, from all of the teachers in all of the school settings, from staff members and fellows, and from the directors of the project. Our interviews provided us with a great deal of useful material, much of it consistent with our views of the program's process.

**Relationship Between Adviser and Teacher**

The role of the in-class teacher trainer seems to be central to the process of extending open education, with adviser or consultants serving in this capacity. It seemed that it would be profitable to use our experience in our EPDA project to study this role as a way of generating problems and

hypotheses worthy of the use of more formal research techniques. Our strategies for study included informal observation and analysis of our own staff and fellows in action as well as reflection on the problems and issues that were highlighted in our weekly staff meetings and regular conferences.

The difficulty we found in drawing any conclusions about the role of the adviser and his relationship with the classroom teacher was that the role seemed to be a constantly shifting and changing one. The one thing that seemed regularly to characterize it was its characteristic irregularity. However, a number of variables in this role (enumerated below), seemed to emerge, partly from these irregularities.

1. *Locus of Control.* The adviser is always using his role and the way in which he works with teachers as a way of communicating the characteristics of open education and the ways that teachers might work with children. Since noncoerciveness is one characteristic of open education, the adviser is forced to act in a noncoercive manner. This places the control over the relationship between adviser and teacher in the hands of the teacher. The adviser, on the other hand, finds that what he does is a response to the needs or demands of the teacher. Often the adviser feels he is not really in control of the situation. Only as a relationship continues does the adviser function in a more autonomous role, with a greater degree of parity.

2. *The Function of Time.* As the relationship between adviser and advisee continues, changes occur in that relationship and in the adviser's function. Role attributes that are most important in the beginning of an adviser-advisee relationship may be less important later, while acts that would have earlier been considered inappropriate may even be seen as crucial later. The function of the adviser needs to be viewed along a time dimension. In our own project, for example, the time an adviser spent in a teacher's classroom seemed crucial at the beginning. As the year progressed, not only did it seem appropriate for him to spend less time in the teacher's class, but often activities that took place outside the classroom seemed to become more important, and often more appropriate.

In addition, the amount of time between classroom visits seemed an important factor. This time allowed the teacher to reflect, to react to the content of his sessions with the adviser, and to act on suggestions and ideas. What the optimum time between classroom visits is we do not know. Our visits occurred weekly. This was a greater span of time between visits than had occurred in our Washington School project last year, where an adviser was available almost constantly, and a lesser span of time than in other situations we have been involved in where visits have occurred monthly. This span of time seemed to be appropriate for what we were doing.

3. *The Development of Trust or Credibility.* The basis for any helping relationship is the degree of trust felt between the client and the helper. For the adviser, the trust aspect of the relationship seemed to be less a function of a feeling of safety on the part of the teacher and more a function of the degree of credibility the adviser had. The adviser had to establish himself as one who could be helpful, who had something of practical worth to offer the teacher. Whether this need to test the adviser was a function of the fact that the

adviser was related to a university rather than a school agency is beyond our ability to know. (Universities are not the most credible educational agencies when it comes to the performance of service.) However, the establishment of credibility did seem to be an individual matter.

4. *The Intrusion of Local Constraints.* In each project setting we found that the role of the adviser was determined not only by the individuals in the teacher-adviser relationship but also by various constraints within the local situation. A techer strike and the residue of conflict that resulted from the response of the local board of education severely limited what could be done by an adviser in one setting, as well as how much effort the not-too-willing teachers would put out for any education function. In another situation the relationship between the teachers and the building principal seriously influenced the role the adviser played in this building even though there were no formal ties between the adviser and the school administration.

5. *The Function of Expectations.* Another set of variables that seems to control the relationship between teacher and adviser are the expectations held by both parties. The teacher, in entering the relationship, has already anticipated what will be, as has the adviser. Each set of expectations helps to determine what will be viewed as appropriate or inappropriate. The need to extend the expectations of both parties becomes evident.

The above variables suggest that the attributes of any advisory relationship is a function of varibles without as well as within the adviser. Within the adviser the following variables seem also to be significant and worthy of future study.

6. *The Skills and Resources Needed for the Function of the Adviser.* Advisers, as suggested above, need to be viewed as competent in order to build credibility; they also need competence in order to function. But what are the dimensions of competency that are essential? Is there a body of knowledge or a set of skills that each person must have in order to be effective in this capacity?

Often the literature of education has constructed a dichotomy between a core of process skills that supervisors or teachers might have. This has been separated out from the body of substantive knowledge that is deemed necessary from each situation. The process/content dichotomy is also related to the generalist/specialist distinction that is often made. Should advisers limit themselves to particular areas or age levels, or can they be equally effective everywhere?

While none of our advisers were competent in every area of the curriculum in which they had to deal, or at every grade level, each did have an area of specialization in which their substantive knowledge was greater than in others. Beyond that, however, they had to use what might be called process skills to move people along. Perhaps their performance in one area of the program allowed their credibility to be carried over to other areas. Perhaps the dichotomy is not that strict after all.

7. *Professional/Personal Needs.* A number of different causes seem to motivate persons to join the education profession, and a number of different personal needs seem to be met by those who move up the competency ladder

within the profession. Whether a teacher decides to work with children because of an internal drive to provide help for others, or whether that teacher must feel a degree of control over other's lives, is beyond the scope of this paper, but the adviser seems to be successful because he uses himself in an extending relationship with another human being. These personal dimensions of the role are in need of study, for how an adviser operates seems to be a function of the kinds of satisfactions received from the role. Where satisfactions were less direct, conflict or frustration was often created.

Our advisers all had a background of successful teaching. Often the need to work at influencing another person to provide a particular educational service for children which was obvious to them and could be provided directly without much difficulty caused frustration for the adviser.

8. *Building Autonomy.* While teachers controlled the relationship with the advisers, the advisers were able to influence this relationship over time. One of the needs, we felt, was to help teachers function with a higher degree of autonomy. Over time the adviser should be needed less and less. To some extent, however, the adviser's personal satisfactions were a function of being needed by the teacher. To what extent our advisers will be able to wean themselves from the teachers cannot be assessed at present. If the relationship develops successfully, the adviser should be viewed as one more of the many resources available to the teachor in providing the best educational opportunities for the children in his class. Whether or not this status will diminish personal satisfactions for the adviser is probably as much a function of the adviser's degree of personal maturity as anything else.

9. *The "Layering" of Teachers.* As we have worked with teachers during the past few years in the process of teacher change, we have found that just as the change process is a complex phenomenon, so the teacher as well is a complex phenomenon. Techers who have volunteered to work with us accept change, yet the process of change moves along in fits and starts. At certain periods the process of change moves smoothly as teachers are willing to modify structures and practices. At other times it seems as if a great deal of resistance to change is building up in the teacher even when the change has been accepted verbally. Nor could each teacher change in the same way or at the same rate.

Our original idea of a plateau effect to explain the process of teacher change has begun to change toward what we are calling the "onion construct." Teachers may be viewed as being made up of various levels. The external levels might include accepted room arrangements, specific selected texts, classroom materials, and so on. Closer to the core come specific instructional strategies. Further in come goals for teachers. Within the core of the teacher are a set of professional beliefs and values, beliefs about the nature of childhood, the nature of education or schooling, the role of the teacher, and so on. Further still internally are a set of personal beliefs and values which we feel are outside our domain to deal with and modify. This "onion construct" is consistent with the view of values presented by Wlodarczyk and the map of classroom culture hypothesized by Hirabayashi, both members of our group.

It seems to us that the degree of ease or difficulty associated with the process of change of a particular characteristic of a teacher's method is a function of the distance of that characteristic from the internal professional core of the teacher. Characteristics in the external layers of the teacher are more responsive to external stimuli or pressures, hence they are easier to change. (For example, teachers seldom resist reorganizing the physical structure of the classroom or creating activity centers.) As we move to deeper layers, greater resistance to change is felt. (It is harder to effect the reading program than the science program.) And characteristics closest to the internal layers of beliefs are even more resistant to change. (It is difficult for many teachers to so share real decision-making power with their children.) Understanding the depth of layering of a particular practice might help the adviser to develop mora effective strategies for change as well as to accept resistance and difficulties related to certain kinds of change.

These, then, are the dimensions of the advisory role and its relationship to teachers that we have identified as worthy of study. We have learned some during the past years; we are continually becoming aware of how much more we need to learn. The strategies for studying the open classroom need to extend beyond psychometrics Studies should probably rely heavily on ethnographic techniques. The interrelatedness of these dimensions that we identified, which should be evident, requires that to understand the process adequately they must be observed in a natural setting with a minimum of intrusion from the researcher. This year we are trying to extend our documentation of the process of change toward openness through a number of studies—ethnographic studies of classrooms, documentation of the development of centers, observations of schools and classes, and informal and formal interactions with teachers. The combination of action and study or reflection (a praxeological approach) we find to be an appropriate strategy to use in serving and studying education.

# Chapter 4
# AN OPEN CHALLENGE TO TEACHER EDUCATION

James Binko

In recent years, a mountain of claims and counterclaims has accumulated regarding the importance of the open area school in shaping educational priorities. Its supporters are likely to maintain that open area schools make possible an array of educationally significant innovations heretofore considered impossible in schools of conventional design. Skeptics argue, on the other hand, that nothing is currently undertaken in the open area school that has not already been done for years by open-minded teachers in conventional classrooms. Both views are essentially correct, yet neither represents an adequate appraisal of the challenge peculiar to teaching and learning in an open area school. The point to be made here is that the open area school is neither a godsend nor a work of the devil—neither a cure-all nor a curse. It *is* the object of a great deal of attention, the source of much misunderstanding, and a formidable challenge to those engaged in preparing teachers.

Consider this view of an actual open area school in operation. As we enter the building, our eyes and ears are greeted by a flurry of sights and sounds uncommon to schools a mere decade ago. In one section of the school what appears to be a hundred or more students are scattered across a large carpeted area—called a pod, about the size of a small gymnasium. Aside from a few portable bulletin boards, tack boards, and free-standing storage cabinets, there are no visual dividers or walls to obstruct our view across the pod. The pupils appear to be engaged in a variety of activities, some at tables, some on the carpeted floor, some seated in front of a screen, others talking and moving about from one center of activity to another.

Most of the students are clustered around tables in small groups of three, four, or five; two or three of these groups are under their tables, their chairs nested around the tables as if to provide a curtain or screen between them and the blur of activity around them. A close look at the pupils seated at one table reveals one working on addition and subtraction, another writing a report on gerbils, still another writing a puppet play. In another center of activity about fifteen pupils are seated at a screen watching a film on puppet making. In still another area, a group of ten students are busily planting bean seeds in milk cartons under the direction of a teacher. A second teacher is visible, seated at a table listening to a group of students describe their progress on a survey project. We are informed by the principal that there are four teachers on the team assigned to this pod and assured that the two teachers not in our view are "out there in the middle of those pupils, somewhere."

Nowhere do we observe a teacher standing at a chalkboard talking to a group of thirty students. We are easily impressed by the undercurrent of chatter among the pupils and the frequent movement of pupils and teachers throughout the pod. No more than twenty or so pupils appear to be under the direct supervision of the teachers, yet most seem to be engrossed in their tasks, oblivious to the sometimes frenetic activity about them. Other pupils are plainly enjoying the company of their friends in talk and occasional antics while giving casual attention to their school work. A few pupils scattered about the area are, shall we say, "cutting-up"—talking to one another, making observations about and commenting on the activities of their more task-oriented peers; they make no effort to disguise fun-making by hiding behind a book or by looking busy with paper and pencil.

To the educator experienced with the demographic features of an open area school, the picture is a common one: a community of boys and girls engaged in a variety of learning activities monitored by a team of very busy teachers. To the unwary visitor, the impression is usually one of complete chaos. "How does anyone learn here? How does anyone know what is being learned here? Why doesn't a teacher get those children to work? How do you know who is studying what?"

It would be folly, without further research, to attribute many of the differences observed as the influence of the open area facility alone. Teacher attitudes, previous pupil in-school experiences, administrative leadership, community views of the school—all these variables and many more combine to make possible the educational program in each school. Still, evidence exists that something different happens to teachers and pupils in an open area school even when these other variables remain fairly consistent with those prevailing in more conventional facilities. Evidence is incomplete, of course, but the personal experiences of those who work in open area schools make possible some generalizations about what happens in them.

1. Students have experience with more teachers than is common in self-contained or departmentalized programs.
2. Teachers are organized into teaching teams for the purpose of planning, implementing, and evaluating an instructional program for a group of pupils of one hundred or more.
3. Teachers on a team are highly visible to one another during the teaching day and tend to revise teaching behavior after one another.
4. Teachers communicate more with one another and with resource personnel about teaching methods and pupil progress than in a conventional school.
5. Personal contacts among teachers, pupils, and administrators are more frequent than in conventional schools.
6. Use of space, instructional time, grouping patterns, and teaching competencies are decided by the members of the teaching team in terms of immediate learning objectives and time needed to accomplish objectives, rather than in terms of available room size or administrator-prescribed student teaching arrangements.

7. Small group and independent activities are used more frequently than in conventional schools.
8. Teachers work diagnostically with small groups and individuals rather than didactically in front of classroom-size groups of thirty or more pupils.
9. Independent learning occurs as an integrated part of the school program rather than as extra credit activity or an embellishment of the curriculum.
10. Media resources are more decentralized and in greater use than in a conventional school.
11. Integrated (interdisciplinary) approaches are used to introduce and develop major concepts and skills.
12. Students assume more responsibility for cognitive learning and social behavior than in a conventional school.
13. Personal relationships and patterns of movement within the open area school are more informal and relaxed than in a conventional school, resulting in fewer discipline problems among students and between students and teachers.
14. Paraprofessionals, aides, and student teachers have greater visibility to more teaching personnel and other areas of the school than is possible in a conventional school.
15. Learning stations, learning packages, commercial teacher-prepared individualized programs of instruction are more common features than in a conventional school.

These generalizations are not theoretical, incidentally; they are descriptive. That is, they reflect conditions existing in open area schools as experienced and reported by persons actively engaged in such programs. There are, from school to school, notable exceptions to each generalization and no one condition prevails with equal frequency or success throughout all open area schools. The exceptions not withstanding, these generalizations are offered as evidence of the directions in which open area schools are likely to move during the next decade or so.

The challenge to teacher education is considerable: to equip prospective teachers with the competencies required to function effectively under these new conditions. Teacher education programs will need to give greater emphasis than ever before to helping teachers develop competency in four areas: the ability (1) to decentralize learning resources and activities, (2) to apply knowledge about developmental processes to teacher-pupil relationships, (3) to facilitate learning through small group and independent activity, and (4) to participate effectively as a member of a teaching team.

**Decentralization of Learning Resources and Activities**

It is painfully clear that teacher-centered activities, which still dominate most classrooms, will not suffice in an open area facility. To insist on classroom-size groups of twenty five or more as a formula for organizing pupils and teachers is to ignore the reality and potential of the open

environment. For example, when teachers attempt to talk to groups of twenty five or more in an open area, they soon find themselves shouting above one another; the result of this vocal competition is a monotonous thundering in the ears of the pupils and irritated throats for the teachers.

Consequently, both teacher and pupil survival, as well as good learning principles, require that teachers be skilled in structuring a diversified learning environment—task-oriented, decentralized, and rich in material resources. Conventional methods in motivation, recall, drill, chalkboard techniques, lesson plans, and classroom management and discipline are irrelevant in a school where (a) there are no classrooms to manage, (b) there are no classroom-size groups to pay attention to the teacher's lesson, and (c) many lessons are conducted simultaneously. Teachers experienced in conventional classroom management will have to give up some old ways if they transfer to an open area school; new teachers will need to be prepared in better ways of dealing with learning resources and pupil behavior than those which dominated classrooms in the past.

Recent emphasis given to competencies in developing learning stations and listening and interest centers is a start in the right direction, but only a start. Many teachers display considerable skill in the mechanics of constructing these teaching aids, but few have much understanding of why or how they are in use. Equal attention must be given to methods of planning and organization which allow these aids to be used as an integrated package rather than as ornaments to the lesson plan. Particular attention must be devoted to preparing learning objectives and methods of evaluation as diversified as the activities themselves. Efforts to diversify objectives and stimulate original teaching are rendered useless when teachers resort to simple true-false and fill-in-the-blank instruments as a basis for evaluating learning outcomes.

Teachers will need to learn how to behave in an environment where there may be as many lessons as there are pupils, where some pupils will be working in small groups while others work individually, where still others are talking, using tapes, viewing films, making models, and the like. The activities of the open area school are characterized by a high degree of ambivalence, where the inexperienced, unskilled teacher may find himself running around like a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking-chairs—never still and never far from trouble. Teachers experienced in this decentralization approach will tell you they enjoy it, even thrive on it; there is much less anxiety about outward signs of productivity, orderliness, and management. However, the apparent spontaneity and informality associated with this environment are the products of hard work and detailed planning, not a laissez-faire, do-as-you-please attitude of the teacher. Teachers will need to be competent in the skills required to provide a flexible yet manageable environment divided into many functional areas rather than a single homogeneous unit.

**The Nature of Developmental Processes**

Teachers, lamentably, do not often know very much about the pupils they teach or how they grow. Either they *don't* know, or they know but refuse to

admit such knowledge as evidence about how pupils and teacher ought to treat one another. School practices and teacher expectations have seldom permitted pupils, or teachers, to become visible to each other as authentic people or to behave naturally in the classroom. Indeed, much of what passes as the relaxed, informal atmosphere attributed to the open area school is so only in stark contrast to the rigid, sometimes unreal restrictions imposed on behavior in conventional schools. There are schools where pupils are not permitted to walk in the hall without a pass, not permitted to talk in the cafeteria while eating lunch, not permitted to leave their seats without teacher permission, not permitted to look at one another's report cards, not permitted to touch the teacher's desk, not pormitted to write "creatively" unless they observe the standard rules of manuscript. This is not the way people behave in the normal conduct of human affairs, but it is precisely the behavior reinforced, even demanded, in children in many schools today. Prospective teachers who believe these restrictions really work, or worse yet, believe they *should* work, are advised to look elsewhere than to an open area school for support of their views. The mindless imposition of rigid rules of conduct just will not work there.

Observers cannot help but be impressed with the physical mobility of pupils and teachers in an effective open area school. Interaction among individuals and groups tends to be more unreserved, more overt, more physical—that is, more consistent with how people really behave in a communal setting than is permitted in conventional schools. The focus of pupil attention is seldom directed toward a teacher for approval or disapproval. Teachers are not always comfortable with either the level of hyperactivity suggested here or the focus of pupil attention on anything other than the teacher and his or her expectations. The implications for modifying our teacher education programs to include more experience with and analysis of human behavior should be obvious.

**Small Group and Individual Learning**

Another obvious characteristic of activity in an effectively operated open area school is the near total absence of classroom-size groups of pupils. The visitor, looking across a sea of children in a pod, children engaged in a variety of activities, will often ask, "Who's in charge here? Do teachers really *teach* anything?" What the visitor actually means, of course, is "Why don't I see a teacher standing in front of the area talking to thirty or forty students? When do the teachers begin to cover the subject?" The questions represent a limited understanding of both the learning process and the effective use of space.

Seldom in real life do people congregate in groups of thirty to learn anything, but in a conventional school it is common practice to group pupils just that way. Outside the school, people engage in a majority of their learning activities either individually or in small groups; in school such activity is viewed as an extravagance to be tolerated only if there is "extra" time and all "required" work has been accounted for. We fail to recognize two things: (1) that the human being begins at birth and continues throughout life to learn the

most fundamental skills and knowledge individually or as a part of small groups, and (2) that the classroom-size group of thirty or more is primarily a matter of economic feasibility, not sound educational judgment. One only need study the dynamics of group behavior to reveal for himself the impracticality of learning anything significant in a group of thirty.

What is required of a teacher in the open area school is that he be able to facilitate the efforts of pupils engaged in small group and individual activities. These learning activities require that teachers be competent observers and listeners. Unfortunately, many teachers, secondary in particular, enter teaching for the opposite reason: they like to tell something to someone else who is expected to listen. In the open area school the roles are reversed: as the pupils become active agents in their learning, assuming more responsibility for decision making and evaluation, the necessary role for the teacher becomes one of observation and listening. The teacher behaves as though he were, in the best sense of the terms, a computer, continuously gathering data about the needs and progress of the pupils and deciding on the basis of such evidence when he must intervene or what the next steps should be.

It would be comforting to assume that teachers would display these skills if only given the opportunity to work with smaller groups than are customarily assigned to them in a regular classroom. Indeed, teachers themselves have long argued they could be more effective if class sizes were reduced. Experience has shown, however, that when teachers are given small groups of pupils, they in fact behave much as they behaved in front of classroom groups—telling, showing, demonstrating, and lecturing. Teachers are even more limited in their skills in counseling with individual students or in prescribing learning activities intended to satisfy individual needs and interests of pupils.

Small group and individual activities are an essential feature of the open area school. Teachers in these schools will need to be able to plan for and participate in such activities, to counsel pupils individually about academic and personal needs, to make valid observations of pupil behavior, to listen effectively to pupils and other teachers, and to ask questions that require more than yes or no answers. These competencies do not come easily to all teachers, and some have had little or no practical experience with them. Professors in teacher education will need to provide good personal models of these competencies in the conduct of their courses, as well as opportunities for the future teacher to develop these skills through practice and subsequent analysis.

**Effective Participation in Team Teaching**

No single development has made team teaching more possible—or necessary—as a strategy for faculty organization than the open area school. Team teaching has been reviewed as impractical in many conventional schools because of limited and restricting facilities. As long as teachers had separate classrooms to rely on, the argument sufficed as an excuse for them to

continue to work in virtual isolation, as if each were in business for himself. The team approach requires teachers to work cooperatively in planning, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum for a group of pupils. It requires talking and listening to other techers, evaluating together the problems and progress of the pupils, learning to compromise, sharing materials and resources, teaching together—that is, working as a professional team.

Many teachers find team teaching to be a pretty risky business; it requires them to become visible to one another in ways considered unnecessary in self-contained and departmentalized programs. It means that teachers must become aware of their own needs, talents, prejudices, and weaknesses. A teacher who is easily disturbed by noise, constant movement of children, flexible physical arrangements, and a diversified schedule of learning activities is not going to be comfortable in an open area school. Likewise, if a teacher is annoyed by the special needs of another teacher, easily intimidated in the presence of teachers with greater talent than his own, uncomfortable with group decision-making processes, and inexperienced in cooperative planning, he is going to be perturbed as a member of a teaching team. The personal requirements for functioning as a member of a team are considerable. One could argue reasonably that what every teacher needs to be is a master in human relations. Team teaching is an open area school demands precisely that.

Where does the prospective teacher learn these skills? There is not much presently in teacher education calculated to develop them. Four or five years of participation in a college education is no assurance that the future teacher will enter teaching as a fully functioning human being, totally in touch with his inner resources, aware of his limitations, and comfortable in his relationships with other people.

Currently, the most valuable experience for future teachers in preparing for a role as a member of a team appears to be a student teaching experience which permits them to work with a teaching team. Student teachers assigned to teaching teams usually cite the opportunity to work with several teachers simultaneously, not just one, as the most valuable feature of their laboratory experience. The regular team planning sessions provide a vital source of information to the student teacher about the why as well as the how of teaching methods.

Providing team experiences in open area schools during student teaching is a promising development; however, more provisions need to be made in the teacher education program. The daily contact of college students with college teachers provides one model for the student which may in turn influence how he will teach. Therefore, team teaching and open area facilities ought to become regular features of the program if it is to have a positive influence on the students' later skills as a techer. Students need to view college faculty as members of teaching teams sharing responsibility for scheduling, grouping, and selecting objectives and methods of teaching. They need to experience their professors in open-area facilities, working most of the time in small groups and individual activities in a flexible space divided into many functional areas. If functioning as a team member is an important competency

of teachers in open area schools, then we must do more than tell them how it goes.

**Summary**

Dealing with the needs of open area schools and of those who prepare to teach in them will not be an easy undertaking. The problem is threefold: (1) The teaching competencies required in the open area school do not reflect the practices which have dominated classroom management for the past fifty years; (2) teachers have not been adequately prepared in the competencies peculiar to the open area school; and (3) the commitment of more school systems to build open area schools, will make the need for these competencies all the more critical during the next decade. Add to these demands the claims by teachers and administrators in conventional schools that they, too, intend to implement the best of these trends wherever possible, and the need for realignment of priorities in our programs of teacher education becomes more compelling.

# Chapter 5
# OPEN EDUCATION IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM: A PROFESSOR'S MEMO TO HIS STUDENTS

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When I returned to teacher education in 1971 after serving on the staff of a professional association for several years, open education was a much discussed topic in educational circles. Conferences and books and articles and speeches and films were focusing on this "new" British approach to the education of children. My own association had just completed a most successful flying seminar to England which allowed our members to have a firsthand look at open education and to study the implications of this approach for American educators. Charles Silberman's controversial book, *Crisis in the Classroom*, had been released the previous year and included a plea from the author for American educators to consider the British example (10:265-322). Open education was definitely the newest educational movement, and as I prepare this memo to you two years later the movement still appears to be strong.

During the period since the concept of open education was thrust upon the American educational scene in the mid-1960's, I have listened and read and talked with those knowledgeable about this new approach to the education of children and have found it to be most similar to the child-centered point of view that I was exposed to during my own undergraduate teacher education program in the early 1950's. My professors had been greatly influenced by the writings of John Dewey and passed his progressive philosophy on to their students. According to Roland Barth, in his excellent new book entitled *Open Education and the American School*, others besides myself have called open education a "neoprogressive movement." He points out, however, that the emphasis on the "cognitive development of the child, upon a rich availability of materials, and upon the complex, difficult role of the teacher distinguishes one approach from the other" (1:5-6).

Whatever the specific differences may be, the general goals of open education are ones that I have supported since I began my career as a professional elementary educator fifteen years ago and that I have tried to share with students since becoming a teacher educator.

Unfortunately, during a previous three-year period as a college professor I had never felt satisfied with my approach to sharing with students my philosophy of an informal, child-centered, open classroom. Nor had I felt that I provided the type of college classroom that would help my students to

understand and appreciate the effectiveness of open education and to consider this approach in their own work with children. I was determined that when I returned to the college campus I would try to do things differently. I wanted my students to experience open education so that they would have a better idea of the advantages and disadvantages of a classroom conducted from this philosophical point of view.

The purpose of this memo is to share with you where I am in this search for a way of providing an open education in the college classroom and to give you some idea of the types of experiences you'll have this semester. To accomplish this purpose, I'd like first to clarify what I mean by open education. Then I'll show you how I've tried to apply this concept to the college classroom. Finally, I'll share with you some of the benefits that I believe will come to you through this approach.

**What Is Open Education?**

Although much has been written about open education, there is no commonly agreed upon definition of this term. I know this seems strange, but one of the justifications for not attempting a precise definition is due to the very nature of this type of education. If open education is to be truly based on the developmental needs and interests of a group of children, then a formal definition could lead to a very prescribed and limited set of practices. As we work together this semester, I hope you will understand better why the lack of an official definition is an advantage rather than a hindrance.

This does not mean, however, that definitions have not been written. Barth has developed one based on his study and work in England and the United States. He believes that open education is "a way of thinking about children, about learning, and about knowledge. Open educators assume that children learn by exploring living things, inanimate materials, and quite animate persons—in short, by exploring the real world in all its richness and variety. Learning is not distinguished from living, nor living from learning" (1:55-56).

Rather than attempting a definition, other educators have identified the distinguishing characteristics of open education. I have drawn from two of these sources (3, 7) in preparing the following list of characteristics which I hope will give you a visual image of what an open classroom might look like:

1. *Classrooms are decentralized and the familiar rows of desks and chairs replaced with separate learning areas.* In varying degrees, the use of space and the movement of persons, materials, and equipment within an open classroom is less routinized, fixed, or invariable as compared with the traditional classroom.
2. *Children are free most of the time to move throughout the room, talk to each other, and choose their own activities.* The range of encouraged and permitted activities is wider, less fixed or bounded, and more open-ended in the open classroom. Activities in an open classroom may transcend the classroom itself. The more open or informal the classroom, the more likely that children's activities will be pursuits, extensions, or elaborations of their own spontaneous interests rather than selected by teachers

or others. Time for specified categories of classroom activities is more flexibly assigned in open classrooms than in formal-traditional classrooms.

3. Teachers work mostly with individual children or groups of two or three. In the open classroom, the teacher is more likely to work with individual children than with large groups. The more open the classroom, the less often the teacher addresses the whole group as an instructional unit. In the open-informal classroom, the teacher is more likely to be seen giving suggestions, guidance, encouragement, information, directions, feedback, and clarification or posing questions primarily during individual teacher-child encounters.
4. Heavy stress is placed on designing a classroom environment rich in learning resources, including plenty of concrete materials as well as books and other media. The range of topics of content to which children's attention and energy are guided is both wider and more open-ended than in formal-traditional classrooms.

It is possible that at this point in your program of field experiences you have had the opportunity to visit a variety of classrooms in which some or all of these characteristics were observed. Most likely not all of these learning situations were in new, open space, carpeted schools with paid instructional aides. I'll bet many were in older, traditionally planned buildings where self-contained classrooms were still in use. Open education does not require a new building but a new viewpoint about the way children can best learn and develop in a school setting.

Many American educators have shared the open education philosophy for years. My favorite description of the American version of the child-centered, informal, open approach to education appears in a 1953 publication, entitled *A Public School for Tomorrow*, by Marian Nesbitt, a former teacher in the Maury Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia. In the preface to her book, Dr. Nesbitt describes the philosophy behind the success of this remarkable school, stating that "those at Maury have believed and do believe in the worth and integrity of each individual; that learning takes place in a process of growth where the ends are always open; that learning occurs everywhere the child is living; that the curriculum is a plan of living, cooperatively conceived and continually revised by the same cooperative process; and that the essence of the school's value lies in its qualitative effort to create challenging, rich, interesting, environmental conditions upon which each child may draw, and in the zestful attack which each child makes upon this environment" (6:xvii).

So open education is not as new as one might be led to believe. Although it is true that there is more research currently available to support this point of view, sensitive teachers through the years have intuitively felt that an informal, child-centered approach was the most appropriate one for planning experiences for children in the elementary grades.

Now that you have, I hope, a clearer idea of what the term open education means for children, let's turn our thoughts to how I am attempting to practice this philosophy in the college classroom.

**Can the College Classroom Be an Open Classroom?**

Is it possible to apply the philosophy and basic characteristics of the open classroom on a college campus? This was the question I asked myself when I returned to teacher education two years ago. Based on my previous experiences in college teaching, I had no reason to think that it was not. The major question was how to do it.

I began reading some of the more recent books and articles that had been written on this topic (4, 5, 9, 11). It was good to learn that many college professors in disciplines other than education were actively seeking new ways to accomplish the goals of open education with adults. One of the books that most influenced my own thinking was Carl Rogers' *Freedom To Learn*, which describes the experiences of several teachers, including himself, in their attempt to "open up" the education of those with whom they are working.

Rogers, who is a resident fellow in the Center for the Studies of the Person at La Jolla, California, believes that the "facilitation of learning" is the central role of the teacher and that this role is appropriate from early childhood education through the graduate school (8:105).

Other psychologists and educators agree with him. One of these is Joel Burdin, director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, who believes that preparation programs "must become learning laboratories wherein school personnel experience diverse teaching-learning processes and practice their own personalized, productive styles and processes. The goal is to have them become internalized to provide a sense of professional maturity and security which in turn can give school personnel courage to experiment, to adapt and to grow while encouraging children and youth to do likewise" (2:150).

Thus I have found nothing in my study indicating that the open education approach should not be used with adults. If the goals of open education for children are to provide more freedom of choice, more individualized instruction, more opportunities for personal growth and discovery, then these goals seem just as appropriate for the college classroom.

At George Mason University there are no major restrictions on the approach a professor may want to pursue in his course and thus nothing to prevent me from moving ahead with my concept of the open college classroom. The only limitation has been the fact that we are on a traditional time schedule and often share our classrooms with other professors before and after our own sessions. In spite of this, I have been moving each semester on my own toward what I hope will be a more open approach to the teaching of Education 402: Teaching Methods in the Intermediate Grades.

In attempting to make the college classroom an informal, student-centered, open one, I've kept before me the general goals and characteristics discussed earlier in this memo. I'd like to review these characteristics with you now and explain some of the ways they will be applied to the college classroom in which we will be working together.

1. *Classrooms are decentralized and the familiar rows of desks and chairs replaced with separate learning areas.* Although the classroom in which we

will be working is in an old, renovated high school building and shared with numerous other classes, it is equipped with tables and chairs which comfortably accommodate groups of four students. We can quickly arrange these tables to fit our needs for each class, whatever the activity may be.

Frequently the room will be set up in separate learning centers for small groups. In each learning center you will find a kit of materials that I have prepared for your use in accomplishing the performance objectives for the course. These objectives, as you recall, are in the course guide that I gave to you at the opening session of the course. In each learning center you will find aids such as books, pamphlets, filmstrips, color slides, audio cassettes, and models. I will be available to work with you, to answer questions and offer suggestions as you use the kits. The materials are also available to you on a loan basis to use outside of class.

At other times, we may meet as a total group to talk to a special resource person invited to share his ideas about teaching, to discuss together your observations in the public schools to which you have been assigned this semester, or to share ideas about a specific aspect of the course not effectively communicated in your text or other available materials.

Whatever the learning activity may be, careful attention will be given—by myself and by those of you who are assisting me on that day—to the planning of a room arrangement that will contribute to the overall effectiveness of our time together.

2. *Children are free most of the time to move throughout the room, talk with each other, and choose their own activities. Children from different grades work together in the same classroom.* Much of your time also will be spent in independent study, working toward the completion of activities you have selected within the general framework of the course's purpose and specified performance objectives.

As you recall, the specific performance objectives focus on such skills as developing a learning center, preparing plans for a learning activity, developing long-range plans, using audiovisual equipment, using a teacher-pupil interaction inventory guide, and about a dozen more. Although the basic performance goals for the course are prescribed, the specific topics or curriculum areas you wish to use in accomplishing these goals are your individual choice. So is the sequence in which you wish to accomplish these goals.

You will also be given the opportunity to work with one small group of students consistently or to meet with a variety of individuals who will assist you in reviewing your work according to established criteria for each performance goal. Or, if you prefer, you may work almost completely on your own with no review of your materials by your class members.

One performance objective, however, does require that you work with members of a team on at least one class project. This is included because the faculty coordination team for Ed. 402 believes it essential that as a future teacher you learn to work effectively with other members of a small group even though this may not be your preferred way of planning. In most schools

today, however, few elementary teachers are placed in situations where skills in group planning are not needed.

During the course you will also have opportunities to pursue your goals in settings other than the college classroom and library. It may be that many of your projects for the course will be completed and used with children in the classrooms where you will be involved for the fifteen hours of field experiences that accompany this course. Trying out your new competencies with children will be the best way of evaluating whether or not you have developed an effective skill or merely fulfilled a requirement. I hope that you will be able to make full use of your experiences in the classrooms of Northern Virginia.

In addition to the resources of the school in which you are participating, you'll want to take advantage of the resources available in the Washington area as you work on your long-range plans and make detailed plans for a field trip. In the past my students have discovered many novel materials and locations for trips and in the process have learned quite a bit about the area in which they live. I hope you'll take advantage of this opportunity as well, for an open college classroom allows and encourages this kind of freedom to move beyond the resources of the individual professor and the college library.

3. *Teachers work mostly with individual children or groups of two or three.* Although there will be some time practically every session when I will be working with the total class by reviewing plans, summarizing progress, clarifying announcements, and occasionally presenting content that I feel can best be shared as a large group presentation, I will spend most of my time with individuals or small groups of class members who have elected to work together.

My work with you will be based primarily on your expressed needs, and at the beginning of each class sesison you may sign up for my assistance. I'll then judge my time during that session so that I will be able to assist all who ask for help and those who run into difficulties during the session.

In addition to the individualized assistance you will receive throughout the course, there will be a minimum of three conferences planned for the purpose of assessing your progress toward the stated performance objectives.

The first conference will help me to learn what experiences you have previously had with children and to help you plan a program of activities for the course that takes these experiences and your particular style of learning into consideration. It will also give you an opportunity to know me better as a person concerned about your growth as a professional and to ask any questions you may have about the course.

The second conference will come about midterm and will be primarily for the purpose of reviewing your progress up to that point. To facilitate this conference, I'll ask you to review the performance objectives and prepare a written statement indicating how you think you're doing in reference to each. I'll share my own assessment with you also.

The final conference will be to review your progress during the semester and to discuss future activities for improving your competencies as a teacher

of intermediate-grade children. Your final grade in the course will be shared with you at that time.

During each conference you will be encouraged to share with me your personal evaluation of your work as well as the comments of the small group that has reviewed your projects. I will share my assessment with you based on my work with previous students in the course and offer constructive suggestions for improvement if needed. Final grades at George Mason, however, must reflect a student's placement within a class as compared with the other members. Your work in the course will thus be rated either excellent, good, satisfactory, or poor in comparison with the other students.

4. *Heavy stress is placed on a classroom environment rich in learning resources, including plenty of concrete materials as well as books and other media.* In addition to the learning centers that will be established at appropriate times within the classroom, other resources will be available for your use there or to check out for use at home. These will include professional journals, equipment catalogs, curriculum guides, and art supplies. As needed, I will secure audiovisual equipment for your use in previewing new materials. In the process, you'll be learning how to use the standard pieces of equipment found in most elementary classrooms.

Resource people will also be invited to visit our classroom when their assistance appears to be appropriate to accomplishing the stated goals of the course. In the past we have invited classroom teachers, area supervisors, and representatives of commercial publishers whose experiences provided the necessary input for class members.

In addition you are encouraged to use the facilities of the new curriculum laboratory, which includes sets of textbooks, commercial units, and instructional materials. All of these materials may be checked out for use in your field experiences. This laboratory is a welcome extension of the resources found in your college classroom.

**What Are the Advantages of the Open College Classroom?**

By now you may be saying to yourself, "Why doesn't he teach this course in the traditional manner with lectures, a term paper, and two examinations on memorized content? This sounds rather loose."

My primary reason is because, from my personal experiences and study of the knowledge currently available to me as a professional educator, I don't believe in the traditional conception of teaching. As I said earlier in this memo, I believe in the goals associated with an open approach to education, and I would like my teaching to reflect this philosophical point of view, especially in my work with future teachers.

Charles Silberman lends me his support for attempting to practice what I preach, in the final chapter of his book. "Faculties of education will not be able to touch the lives of their students," states Silberman, "unless their own lives have been touched—unless their conception of education is reflected in the way they teach and in what they teach" (10:473).

Open education, or any philosophical viewpoint or instructional approach for that matter, should only be thought of, however, as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. My assigned goal in this course is to assist you in the development of increased competencies in teaching, with a specific emphasis on general methods that will apply to a variety of curriculum areas and philosophical viewpoints, including open education. If this goal has not been achieved by the end of the course, then I have not fulfilled my responsibility to you as your professor.

My experiences up to this time have led me to believe that the stated goal for this course can be reached through an open, informal approach and that there will be some definite advantages for you, such as—

- a program of activities that has been planned cooperatively and based on your current interests, with consideration given to your previous experiences and your own style of learning
- individual assistance from your professor based on your needs in fulfilling this program of activities
- regular opportunities to interact with other members of the class when such interaction will contribute to your personal growth
- personalized evaluation of your activities through individual or small group meetings at appropriate stages throughout the course.

I hope the greatest benefit to you, however, will be a clearer understanding of the teaching-learning process and the necessity for some philosophy or consistent point of view that will guide you in your work with children.

Silberman again points out, in his excellent chapter on the education of teachers, that the "central task of teacher education . . . is to provide teachers with a sense of purpose, or, if you will, with a philosophy of education. This means developing teachers' ability and their desire to think seriously, deeply, and continuously about the purposes and consequences of what they do—about the ways in which their curriculum and teaching methods, classroom and school organization, testing, and grading procedures affect purpose and are affected by it" (10:472).

As we work together, I will try to keep you as informed as I possibly can about all that we will be doing and why we are doing it. This memo is a start in that direction. I hope that when this course is over you will feel that every effort was made to provide a college classroom consistent with what I believe we should be providing for children.

At the end of the course you will then judge whether or not the experiences really did allow you freedom to learn, and you will decide if you want to pursue this approach in your future work with children.

I will also be reviewing our experiences together, for just as there is no prescribed way of approaching an open classroom in an elementary school, there is nothing sacred about the procedures that I will be using with you this semester. That's why you'll be given the opportunity to evaluate my work with you and help me to understand better how my goals can be achieved.

For a teacher must always be a student of teaching if he is to be an educated man according to Carl Rogers' definition. Dr. Rogers believes that an educated man in a continually changing society such as ours "is the man who

has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security" (8:104).

I look forward to sharing and seeking knowledge with you in our open classroom this semester.

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