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ABSTRACT

Teaming is a step toward individualization or personalization of learning. Teams should be composed of from 3-6 teachers, one or more aids, student teachers if possible, and 60-150 students of varying chronological ages. The team training program should be designed to make all participants aware of changing expectations, and to build the skills needed to implement the program. The training program should also concentrate on building decisionmaking structures that assure individual teachers, the building principal, and others of the opportunity to make the appropriate decisions within the range of their defined responsibilities. Professional self-improvement is encouraged in a team setting as teachers adopt the strategy of voluntary peer evaluation. The individual teacher diagnoses management or instructional problems and contracts with another teacher to observe and critique his teaching. (Author)

# TEAM TEACHING: INITIATING TEAMING, ORGANIZING DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES, EVALUATING TEAM TEACHERS

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# INTRODUCTION

My general topic today is team teaching -- and I frankly admit that I am a firm advocate of the team teaching concept.

It was not always so. I recall very vividly an incident early in my educational career, when as a teacher, I proclaimed to my school superintendent that team teaching was antithetical to the "ideal" means of elementary school organization - the self-contained classroom! My position reversal was evolutionary. The values inherent in teaming were not revealed to me in a blinding flash; I came to this position slowly, grudgingly, after several years of experience teaching and administering schools.

My commitment to teaming originated when honest self-appraisal of my teaching pointed out to me that:

1. I wasn't the ideal teacher for all students in my classes.
2. I had strengths but also weaknesses in content and process areas.
3. As a teacher in a self-contained class I seldom had the opportunity to relate effectively and professionally to other teachers.
4. And, my solitary classroom environment did not permit the desirable flexibility in allocating space, time, and numbers of students.

Any residual doubts I retained about teaming disappeared when I became a building principal charged with exercising leadership. Studies dealing with the leadership of school organizations usually fail to make a distinction between leadership and administration. It is often assumed that principals and superintendents by virtue of role definition, are leaders in fact. While there is a lack of evidence to support the assumption that all administrators are leaders, all school administrators do have one

important thing in common: they do whatever it is they do, with teachers. Even school superintendents, whose contact with teachers is sometimes remote, recognize that they must have teachers in order to function. Effective educational leadership could be defined as those interpersonal relationships initiated by the administrator that result in organizational goal realization or goal maintenance, as carried out by teachers. Thus the building principal, the school administrator who has the closest working relationship with teachers, who fulfills the role of "educational leader," is one who develops positive goal-oriented relationships with his teachers. Why are these "leaders" in such short supply? The answer to the question can be found, in part I contend, in an examination of the school organization.

Conventionally, teachers have been viewed as a collection of individuals and teaching has typically been seen as the individual act of a teacher and a set of students. While teaching is the primary role performance in the public schools it usually has taken place out of sight of adult contact; both elementary and secondary teachers generally operate autonomously in splendid isolation from their fellow teachers. Although schools can be horizontally and vertically organized in a wide variety of ways, and in spite of the current and continuing interest in some form of team teaching, most teachers perform their tasks before and with their students alone, out of sight, and largely out of sound of fellow teachers. Due to the teachers' relative isolation, administrators find it difficult to exercise leadership. Role performance evaluation and supervision for the purpose of improvement of instruction are not easy to achieve. The conventional organizational structure of schools discourages direct observation and monitoring of teaching performance making it difficult to determine the effects of

particular teaching behaviors. Both assessment of conventional practice and evaluation of innovative behavior are hampered by virtue of the teachers' autonomous behavior being performed to a strictly student audience. How does the administrator, and specifically the building principal, charged with the role expectation of educational leadership, lead a collection of individuals who operate autonomously behind closed doors? How does he even know what they do? How can he be a meaningful part of it all?

In answering these questions and myriad others, I came slowly to the conclusion that schools would not make full use of the potential capacities of their human resources until every person in the organization was a fully functioning member of an authentic team.

I could indulge myself extensively in a discussion of the theoretical rationale for teaming; however, you were aware of the topic when you came and you expect to hear a discussion of the means of initiating teaming, organizing decision-making structures, and evaluating team teachers. This we shall do.

## A DEFINITION

I believe this audience is entitled, at this time, to have a specific definition for teaming. Mine is a simple one. Teaming starts when a group of from three to six teachers is assigned a set of students, numbering 60 to 150. Both the number of teachers and number of students will vary, but the precise number isn't critical. I would want no fewer than three teachers and probably no more than six. I might be willing to extend the upper limit, say to seven or eight, but I would not accept fewer than three.

But why do this? Why form teams? I suggest that there are three basic reasons for organizing a team teaching elementary school:

First, teaming is a step toward individualization or personalization of learning.

Second, teaming encourages professional self-improvement; that is, as teachers work and plan together, they are presented with opportunities and pressures to improve their competency in diverse ways.

Finally, by organizing a school into teams, the principal creates an organization that enhances the possibility that all teachers will be intimately and productively involved in the decision-making structures of the building.

If in fact those three purposes for teaming are authentic, then this morning as we discuss the three topics - initiating a teaming program, organizing decision-making structures, and evaluating team teachers -- those three purposes will serve as operational guidelines for the topics.

We'll treat each of the three topics (initiating, organizing, evaluating) as separate but related segments of the teaming concept.

## INITIATING A TEAM TEACHING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

It is my firm conviction that teaming is not a new and experimental mode of teaching; teaming, when teams are made-up of four or five teachers of equal rank, implies the return to the natural order of things.

I have a colleague who now is a veteran university teacher but who started out in education as the teacher in a one-room school. After listening

to me expound one day on the virtues of teaming, he shook his head, smiled, and commented "team teaching was the way I got started forty years ago." Knowing full well he started in a one-room school, I challenged his assertion. But he was right! He taught 21 students all subjects in all grades, one through eight. His co-teachers were the students. The older, or the more able, helped the younger, or the less able. Individualization was an absolute necessity, not an innovation, and students became teachers as a natural order of classroom life.

My colleague went ahead to describe his experiences in a two-teacher school, and then in a four-teacher school. He described how he learned techniques and teaching strategies from his colleagues, and how the teachers shared professional and managerial responsibilities as well as perceptions of children. He finally commented that it wasn't labeled team teaching - it wasn't labeled anything -- it was merely the normal thing for teachers to do to insure the best learning for students and the optimum professional growth for teachers.

We're all familiar with the story of the evolution of the graded school, an organizational scheme allowing for teacher specialization, an organizational pattern which isolated teachers into self-contained classrooms and imposed upon schools in a most pervasive way the myth of graded materials, graded teachers, and grade-level expectations for student performance.

It seems to follow logically that the teams of students should be made up of a more natural kind of group -- a multiage group. I'm suggesting then that we utilize a multiage grouping plan where students are assigned to teams of teachers on a random selection heterogeneous basis. This very frankly is a strategy. Putting students of different age levels together in

one classroom or one team area is a means of encouraging teachers, parents, administrators, and the students themselves, to look at all students as individuals.

How does this type of teaming get started? Almost all data regarding the origin of change identify the administrator as the source or impetus for innovation. This isn't to suggest that teachers don't want or are incapable of serving as agents of change. Quite the contrary. Teachers, however, lack the authority, the time, and the resources to implement innovations.

Looking at it from another perspective, it would be accurate to observe that any substantial organizational curricular change must have the support of the principal, even though the idea originates elsewhere.

So, Step #1 in initiating a team teaching program is self-conversion or external conversion of the principal.

At this point a most critical decision must be made. Is the principal willing to see the teaming evolve organically from the increasing sophistication of the teachers and the problems and needs as they see them; or, is the principal going to insist on total commitment to the new organization?

At the risk of being dogmatic, I would insist that the whole building embrace the concept. My rationale is grounded in the following factors:

1. Schools split between teaming and self-contained classrooms generate too many invidious comparisons.

2. The decision-making structure we will discuss later is based upon the concept of teaming, with every teacher a member of an authentic work group or team.

3. Since the teams will have the privilege and responsibility of allocating time, space, materials, and numbers of students, each team can

decide to give groups of students the amount or degree of self-containedness they desire and need; but each team should make this decision.

4. Any school that contemplates teaming should guarantee reluctant teachers the right of honorable transfer. Reluctant teachers shouldn't be forced into teaming nor should they be allowed to keep other teachers from determining their organizational needs.

Step #2 then is deciding: go or no go?

Step #3 is the process of generating support and assessing commitment among the staff to the teaming concept.

Perhaps the teachers are all ready and willing to convert to teaming. The probability is that there are teachers along the entire continuum ranging from those flatly opposed or fearful to those who can't wait to get started. Some cooperative teaming on an informal basis may already be underway.

The principal, as the primary agent of change, has two fundamental tasks in Step #3. He must clearly and honestly communicate the basic concepts of the program to all staff members. Once the general framework is outlined and the expectations for teacher performance are well understood, and given the probability that there will be resisters, the principal's task is to employ the most appropriate strategies available to reduce the resistance to change.

We're fortunate here in the mid-seventies to be able to delve into the literature and research on change and find substantial agreement on the best techniques for reducing or minimizing resistance. For example, we're told that resistance to change is reduced if:

1. participants feel the proposed change will help them to something they value. Teaming will appeal to those who see it as a step toward individualization and a means of professional self-improvement.

2. participants feel that their superordinates approve and support their efforts. In addition to the principal, support for teaming must be substantial and positive from central office.

3. participants experience acceptance, support, trust, and confidence in their relations with one another. A collection of individuals becomes a group, or team, when there is evidence of trust, interdependence, and cohesiveness; thus the means and ends of teaming are congruent.

4. participants view the change as promoting values and ideals long acknowledged by the participants. If participants see teaming as a step toward individualizing or personalizing learning for students, and as a means of professional self-improvement for teachers, resistance will be reduced.

We could continue at length discussing all the potential methods and strategies a principal might employ in reducing resistance to change. We won't. Time is too pressing. Yet, no principal who intends to effect change can afford to ignore the change research. Even the most charismatic, intuitive leader can learn more effective leadership techniques.

Assuming now that the principal and his staff are ready and willing to initiate teaming, and assuming that the task ahead is clearly defined, Step #4 consists of training the staff. That's right, teaming requires new relationships, different skills, altered procedures and new expectations for the performance of all participants. Time and professional expertise must be allocated for the purposes of providing a training session. Both time and

professional expertise translate into dollars. Unless the school system has the necessary professional talent already on board, it can count on investing time and money into training. The training would focus on the following:

1. Helping teachers learn to function as effective members of a group or team.

2. Assisting teams in grouping and scheduling problems.

3. Initiating a self-improvement process for team members.

4. Organizing the various decision-making structures.

5. Identifying teacher process and content strengths.

6. Determining record keeping needs and developing appropriate procedures.

7. Learning to employ group planning skills as well as individual planning.

8. And finally, producing a plan that will insure an effective, smooth transition to the new approach.

The final point "producing a plan" is a critical step and it focuses on two publics: the students and their parents.

Now what about students? Granted that pupils are resilent and can adjust to almost anything. That isn't enough. If teaming is going to accomplish its objectives, pupil behavior will be novel; teacher expectations for pupils will change. Step #5, orientation of pupils, must have a high priority as school begins. During the training program, as the staff attempts to identify their new expectations for student behavior, a comprehensive plan for student orientation must be conceived and formulated in writing.

Parents present a different problem. It is my contention that parents can and should hold schools accountable for teacher productivity. I assert, just as emphatically, that professionals should determine teaching methods and organizational patterns. I would never ask parents for permission to team. Schools should eagerly and candidly explain what they intend to do, why they intend to do it, how it will affect children and parents, and when each step will occur. Parental resistance to change will be minimized if these steps are taken. The school that can anticipate the least amount of resistance will be the one with a good track record. That is, parents tend to trust faculty proposals if that faculty has been open, honest and productive in past efforts.

Some words of caution:

1. Don't promise parents more than you can deliver.
2. Be candid.
3. Don't try to explain something you don't understand.
4. Exhibit your genuine enthusiasm.

These cautionary words imply that you won't make a major effort at Step #6, communicating with parents, until the program is designed.

## ORGANIZING DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES

The title of our second topic "Organizing Decision-Making Structures" might be misleading. It could imply that unless someone assumes the responsibility for organizing structures, decisions won't be made.

The question is not "can we get a decision from someone?" We can and should be concerned, in any school, with making certain that the appropriate

individuals and groups are making the decisions called for by their designated responsibility.

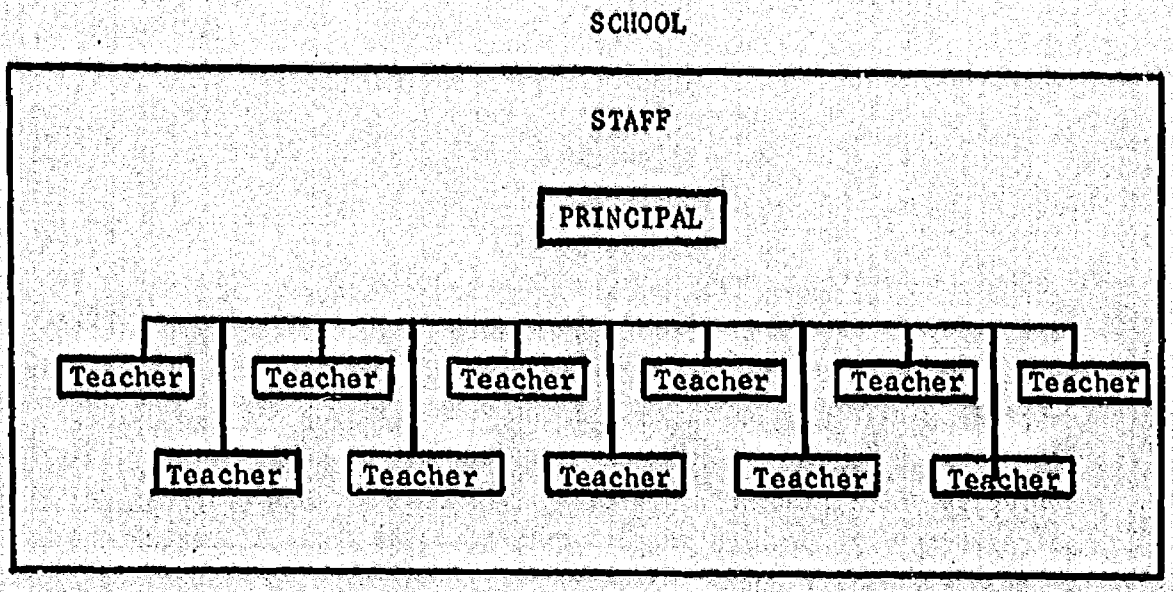
Decisions are made by people; let's briefly examine the responsibilities of the individuals and groups whose decisions play a critical role in the functioning of an elementary school. We'll concentrate on the internal organization of the school; that is, we'll discuss decision-making by (1) individual teachers, (2) teams of teachers, (3) representatives of teams, and (4) the principal. Each of the four groups has clearly defined responsibilities. To fulfill responsibilities one needs the authority to make decisions.

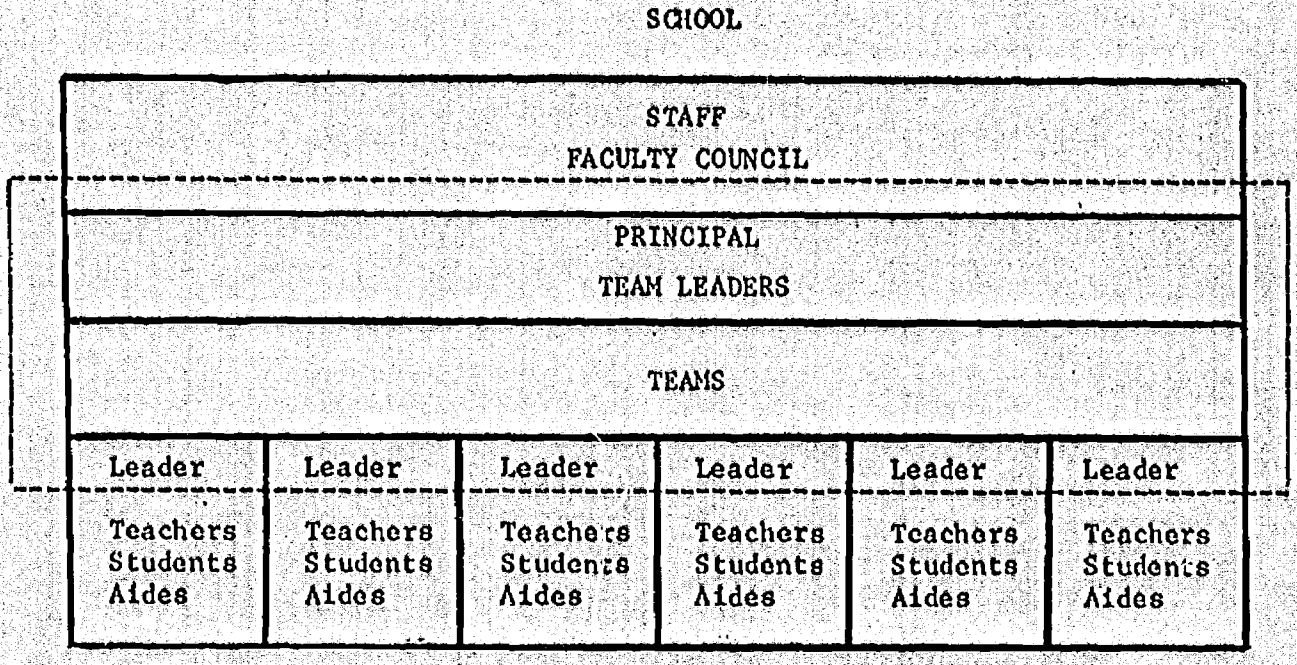
All team teaching schools have individual teachers, teams of teachers, and a principal. Team teaching schools that desire to attain the optimum level of effectiveness will also organize another building group; they will form a faculty council (the specific label isn't important) made up of the building principal and a representative of each team. This group, chaired by the principal, will make decisions which usually relate to facilities, schedules, budget, or other activities and resources that all teams share.

At this time I want you to refer to one of your handouts which has Figure 1, Structure of a Conventional School Organization and Figure 2, Structure of a Team Teaching School.

Let's draw some conclusions about these two organizations. The structure that is evidenced by most conventionally organized elementary schools (Figure 1) creates numerous interpersonal and organizational problems a priori. For example, if teacher X goes to the principal with a problem and a recommendation for a decision, the decision could well have serious implications for teachers Y and Z. And these latter teachers are not usually involved in the decision. Over a period of time such interaction in an

FIGURE 1. STRUCTURE OF CONVENTIONAL SCHOOL ORGANIZATION



organization tends to foster behavior on the part of teachers which has as its object obtaining decisions from the principal which result in personal benefits, but do not necessarily benefit the school as a whole.

However, the team teaching school (See Figure 2) with its separate levels of decision-making reduces the pressure on principals. A team teaching school that implements positional decision-making is complex to administer and requires a professionally sophisticated principal who can feel comfortable when significant decisions are made by teachers, team leaders, and the Faculty Council. Yet, you may still ask "What do principals do if they don't have to make endless trivial and all the critical decisions?" The obvious answer is this: "They'll feel more free to provide the authentic educational leadership that is so desperately needed."

Thus, there are four major purposes in organizing formal decision-making structures in a team teaching school:

First: It is desirable to have decisions made as close as possible to the point of implementation.

Second: Those who share specific responsibilities should share in the decision-making related to those responsibilities.

Third: When an individual member or group within an organization is responsible for making decisions, accountability for those decisions is focused on the individuals or groups.

Fourth: The administrative talent and knowledge of the building principal must be utilized more realistically and more productively.

## DECISIONS NEEDED

One means of clarifying the decision-making process in a team teaching school would be to examine a list of "situations" that require someone or some group to make a decision.

1. An all-school inservice program in group dynamics is recommended. This situation, no matter its origin, is going to affect the entire staff. After a thorough discussion at the team level and faculty council level, with appropriate input from the principal regarding policy and budget, the final decision should be made by the faculty council.

2. A team member, from one of the primary teams, wants to prepare instructional materials in the school library from 1:00-4:00 Friday afternoon. The primary team is responsible for allocating time, space, and numbers of students for its team. This decision affects only one team so the final decision should be made by the primary team.

3. A new team leader is needed for the upper primary team. Existing teams should have the authority and responsibility of selecting new team leaders. After consultation with the principal, this decision should be made by the upper primary team.

4. A teacher wants permission to leave early one day from school; that is, leave with the students. This is a matter of building policy and the decision should be made by the principal.

5. Billy, an intermediate team student, fails to complete his math assignment for three consecutive days; some action with and for Billy must be taken. Billy needs to relate to a teacher. The decision regarding what action to be taken for and with Billy should be made by one teacher.

There are endless decisions to be made in any elementary school. What has been suggested here is that building staffs need to be organized in such a way as to allow and encourage decisions to be made by the individual or group who will be responsible for implementing the decision:

1. Individual teachers make decisions about pupils and their learning programs.

2. Teams decide on objectives, grouping, and scheduling; they also allocate time, space, and numbers of students within the team setting.

3. The faculty council, chaired by the principal, makes decisions that affect the entire building.

4. Building principals enforce school policies, participate in the selection and retention of all staff, supervise non-certificated personnel, and fulfill all responsibilities not delegated to others.

## EVALUATING TEAM TEACHERS

Not many months ago the National Association of Elementary School Principals devoted one entire issue of its magazine to the general topic of personnel evaluation, an indication perhaps of the significance attached to evaluation by these whose job it is to identify the interests and concerns of elementary principals.

Almost all of the articles approached evaluation from the perspective of "establishing techniques to gather data -- data that would be used by some administrator in making a decision about a teacher." In other words evaluation is predominantly viewed as a means of holding teachers accountable.

I do not deny that "holding teachers accountable" is a valid and necessary administrative function. On this very day (April 29) thousands of

probationary teachers will get a formal notification; they've been reappointed for the next year; they've been given tenure status; they've not been reappointed and must join the burgeoning ranks of teacher candidates looking for a position. In order to make such decisions administrators who want to be fair, to be humane, and to acknowledge due process, will make both positive and negative decisions on the basis of the most unchallengeable data they can acquire.

Theoretically, evaluation for the purpose of retention or dismissal is related to program or instructional improvement. And in a real way it is related. We attempt to keep the most effective teachers and dismiss less the least effective teachers.

I don't intend to focus this morning on evaluation as done <u>by</u> the principal <u>to</u> the teacher. My thesis is a simple one: evaluation for the purpose of instructional improvement in a team teaching school should be done <u>primarily</u> by team members.

The process will not exclude principals - far from it. Principals will be expected to continue their conventional board-of-education-legislated program, whatever that may be. I'm suggesting an additional set of tasks. As I describe the self-improvement process for team members, I want you, the principals in this audience, to try to determine how you fit into the program. That will be our final discussion topic.

Now let's look at one model of the self-improvement process for individual team members.

This is a six-step process involving an individual teacher and one or more observers.

The six steps are:

One, initiation

Two, pre-teaching conference

Three, teaching and observing

Four, report preparation

Five, post-teaching conference

Six, the critique

Now let's take an example of this process. I'm going to describe how the process worked on one team. It is an intermediate team consisting of five teachers, one instructional aide, a team leader who is a full-time teacher, and 130 students ranging in chronological age from eight to eleven.

One of the team members, Betty, feels she is unable to manage several small groups at one time. She asks Helen, another team member, to observe. See if you can help Betty improve her management skills. Step #1, the initiation, is controlled by the one who wants the help. Thus we avoid the problem of someone doing something to someone else.

Then the two teachers agree to meet and plan the evaluation cycle. During the pre-teaching conference, Betty tells Helen what she plans to teach and describes the activities her pupils will be pursuing. Betty clearly identifies her objectives and the activities that are designed to help the students achieve the objectives.

Betty asks Helen to observe three things - one, do the individual pupils and pupil groups function effectively without her direct involvement; two, do the pupils understand what is expected of them; and three, do the activities seem directly related to the objectives.

The pre-teaching conference is held to make certain that teacher and observer agree on the objectives of the observation. The observer will restrict her observations to those items the teacher asks to be observed.

The actual observation then ensues. Betty is managing her group of students and Helen is observing - and making written notes on what she observes. Helen's job is to prepare herself to grasp the situation as completely, accurately, and objectively as possible. Helen will want to know:

what the teacher did

when she did it, and

what the students did.

Here are Helen's notes:

Betty participated in a small group discussing the reasons for the pollution of the local water supply. Betty dominated the discussion 75% of the time. There appeared to be no student discussion leader and when Betty left the group the pupils ended up discussing the city council election, a point brought up by a student in the discussion.

Betty next observed another small group. In the second group the students were sharing the products of their independent research. Betty sat in on the discussion as an observer, and only commented at the conclusion of each report. The students were not listening attentively to each other. They were quiet but those waiting to report were quietly reviewing what they were going to say when their turn came.

The third group of students consisted of individuals and groups of two's and three's involved in various projects, all related to the general study pollution. When the observer questioned the students about their tasks, the students were able to tell her what their objective was and how they were going about it.

After the session was concluded the observer organized her notes with reference to the purpose of her observations. She planned what she was going to tell Betty -- in what order and to what ends. She then added her own recommendations that she believed would be helpful to Betty.

Later, the two met for the post-teaching conference. Each of the three original questions were reviewed.

"Did the individual pupils and groups function effectively without her involvement?"

Helen pointed out that as the students went about gathering information, they evidenced good understanding of their objectives and used good techniques in acquiring information and ideas.

However, their groups didn't function very well. The students did not have a clear idea of what the groups were to accomplish. The two teachers agreed that groups must have definite assignments.

The two teachers further agreed that the students would profit by being trained as discussion leaders, and discussion participants. Helen pointed out that these roles must be learned and if discussion groups are tools, the students must learn to handle the tools. Betty decided to organize some small group training sessions, using what the students were studying as content, and train various types of group leaders and group participants.

The final step in the self-improvement process is the critique. The teachers asked themselves, "How was I helped?" "How did I help my colleague?" "How could more help be provided in the future?"

Thus we have in a team teaching school, two distinct but related formal evaluation programs. One type is conducted by the principal in order to retain good teachers and eliminate ineffective ones, and the second is the peer evaluation process where team members help each other become better teachers.