DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 102 264 UD 014 801

TITLE "How Do You Start a Mini-School?" Mini-School News, Volume 4, Number 6, January 1975.
INSTITUTION New York Urban Coalition, N.Y.
PUB DATE Jan 75
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Decentralization; Educational Administration; *Educational Alternatives; *Educational Change; Educational Needs; *Educational Objectives; *Educational Planning; Educational Problems; Program Development; Program Planning; *School Organization; Urban Education; Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

This issue of "Mini-School News" deals with the first 12 steps involved in starting a minischool. The first and most critical step is to clearly identify the problems that make reform seem necessary. The question then becomes one of identifying the possible solutions and sources of information about them. Then the data must be evaluated from a number of vantage points. The process of reaching a decision to adopt a reform or series of reforms for a school is the fourth step. Most schools will have to turn to higher authority for permission to proceed and, where necessary, additional resources necessary to support the planning process. The process of planning for school reform requires machinery--an organization to which is delegated the responsibility for developing the plan and that has formal status. It is the job of the planning group to look at the overall objective in terms of the problems identified in Step 1. It then is necessary to translate the results into a written document. Adoption of the completed plan, the ninth step, is a three stage process: acceptance by the school community, revision where necessary to insure community acceptance, and only then submission to and approval by higher authorities. The tenth step is implementing the plan. Change must be institutionalized and an evaluation process organized. (Author/JM)

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VOL. 4, NO. 6 JANUARY, 1975

"How do you start a mini-school?"

MINI-SCHOOL

Well, it's all in here. At least, the first 12 steps. This issue of MSN and the next will deal entirely with just that one question: How do you *start* a mini-school. Or several? Or a complex of them?

We owe the excerpted contents of this issue and the February issue to James J. Morisseau, a New-York-based freelance writer, who also provided us with material for the MSN "History" issue (October '74).

As you'll find out as you go through this, Morisseau's forthcoming book will be must reading. For everyone.

Restructuring Your School: A Handbook

The restructuring of a school to accommodate new programs and new teaching methods is at best a difficult process; the possibilities for error are legion. To help educators and others involved in future school reform to succeed and to avoid the pitfalls along the way, the following is offered as a how-to-do-it guide, based largely on the experience of the New York Urban Coalition Education Program and, to a limited extent, on what is known about experiences with other reform programs.

In putting together this handbook, the author and his sources do not suggest that they have learned everything there is to be known about the process of school change. The answers are not all in. And, just as existing mini-schools and mini-school complexes continue to undergo changes in structure, so will the processes of effecting change be altered as experience produces new knowledge and insights.

The handbook is designed specifically for those interested in adopting the mini-school pattern as their answer to school reform. At the same time, however, it should be of interest and value to those exploring other avenues for the restructuring of their schools.

Finally, the handbook is premised on the conviction of its developers the author and the staff of the Urban Coalition's Education Program that piecemeal approaches to school reform ultimately are destined for failure. Only comprehensive reform, involving the total replanning and restructuring of the school e.g., conversion of a traditional school structure into a mini-school complex is likely to succeed. And it is only such comprehensive approaches to reform that are advocated here.

Identifying Your Problems

1

To cite the obvious, the first and most critical step in reforming a school is to clearly identify the problems that make reform seem necessary. The task is more complicated than the simple process of listing your school's symptoms--poor reading scores, behavioral problems, truancy, a high dropout rate, violence, drug use, and the like. What is needed is a clear understanding of the problems that give rise to the symptoms and to what extent the school's existing organization, programs, and personnel may be problems in themselves. In many schools, for example, class schedules are such that teachers who should be planning cooperatively have no time to meet for that purpose. In program areas, students seldom find their studies relevant to real-life problems.

In other words, it is necessary to obtain an accurate picture of all aspects of your school's current situation. To do so, it will be necessary to develop both individual and group profiles of your students; identifying not only the student's academic standing and capabilities but his or her personal objectives and socioeconomic and ethnic background.

Similarly, there is a need to evaluate the total school staff (not only the teaching facility) in terms of who is holding what job and what each individual has to offer in terms of personal interests and strengths. Some guidance counselors, for example, are better equipped to deal with student problems while others are better at career counseling.

At the same time, there needs to be an evaluation or profile of the school's programs. Is the curriculum an integrated one in which there is continuity from grade level to grade level and in which courses complement each other? Are you operating a number of programs--in remedial reading, for example--that have identical objectives, duplicate each other, and involve waste? Are program goals or objectives both clear and reasonable? Are those involved in agreement as to those objectives? Are your programs in such areas as attendance, counselling, remedial reading actually achieving their objectives?

Then, it will be necessary to take a close look at the school's organization and its management. How are decisions made? Are there policy constraints that stand in the way of more effective programs or procedures? Can you see a relationship between your existing organizational patterns and what you perceive to be the school's problems?

It should be pointed out here that it is highly possible for an administrator to consider his school to be well organized when, in actuality, there is little or no communication between administration, middle management, and the staff. As this suggests, it is difficult for a school staff to effectively assess its own organizational and managerial structures. Accordingly, it may be desirable to seek outside help in the person of a professional management consultant or a university specialist in the field to assist in the evaluation process.

In fact, outside opinion may be a valuable way to lend objectivity to all phases of the self-evaluation process. Accordingly, it may be advisable at one or more stages in the process to invite administrators or key staff personnel from another school, preferably one that has experienced a reform project, to take an unbiased look at your current operations.

Educating Yourself

2

Once the problems have been identified, the question then becomes one of identifying the possible solutions and sources of information about them. If the initiative is at the teacher level, the first step is to check with the department chairman or assistant principal for whatever information he may have about alternative programs and school reform. From there, the trail will lead to the principal's office and thence to the offices of the local board of education.

Most large school systems have specialized offices at the headquarters level that should be in a position to provide information about existing school reform programs. In New York City, for example, a local high school would be well advised to check with the Office of High Schools, The Office of School Planning and Research, The Bureau of Educational Research, The Learning Cooperative, and the new Bureau of Educational Planning and Support.

At the same time, there are extensive resources outside the school system that should be tapped. Among them are the local and regional schools of education, many of which have faculty and specialized libraries that can offer information on and assistance in the process of school reform. At Indiana University in

Bloomington, for example, the Educational Alternatives Project of the School of Education publishes an occasional newsletter and has issued an international directory of alternative public schools.[1]

Similarly, the Center for New Schools in Chicago offers leads to information on existing alternative programs.[2]

Resources also may be available through the machinery of your local teacher union or association. Both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association are actively interested in school reform and, in some cases, have published materials available.[3]

Meanwhile, don't overlook the corporate world. Many of the nation's major corporations are deeply involved in education. Some operate highly innovative programs for the training and retraining of their own personnel. Others have supported innovation and reform in the school system through the provision of funds, materials and equipment, or managerial expertise. Generally speaking, corporate help will be available only through headquarters offices. In some cases, however, major divisions or regional offices may be able to provide assistance. Corporate help may take the form of information on their own educational and training programs, leads to reform programs in the schools that have enjoyed corporate support, and/or assistance in your school's self evaluation, particularly in the areas of organization and management.

Then, there are a series of private foundations interested in and actively supporting school reform programs. An obvious example is The Ford Foundation, which has been active in the field for years and which recently published a report on alternative programs entitled "Matters of Choice."[4] Another is the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (IDEA), supported by the Kettering Foundation. But don't overlook the smaller foundations. A number of small, community-oriented foundations in cities like New York, Cleveland, and Hartford, Connecticut, are involved in local educational reform programs and relatively well informed on the subject.

Similarly, there are organizations like the New York Urban Coalition,[5] involved in programs to upgrade all aspects of urban life, including education. More specialized are organizations like New York's Public Education Association,[6] which has counterparts in some other cities, and New York's Economic Development Council, a cooperative corporate effort to aid the cities and their educational systems.

Finally, look to the literature. Check your local public library and, if there is one, your school system's professional library for appropriate publications. Don't miss such recent books as Mario Fantini's "Public Schools of Choice."[7] Tap into ERIC (the federally supported Educational Research Information Clearinghouse system) for the latest bibliography in your area of concern.[8]

*FOOTNOTES: [1]Educational Alternatives Project, School of Education, Room 328, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47401. [2]Center for New Schools, 431 South Dearborn Street, Suite 1537, Chicago, Illinois 60605. [3]Robert Snider, Instructional and Professional Development Division, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 833-4337. Department of Research, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, 1012 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. A National Design for the High School, American Federation of Teachers 1973. Single copy $.50: 25 copies, $.25 each. [4]Matters of Choice, Office of Reports, The Ford Foundation, 320 East 43rd Street, New York, New York 10017, free. [5]Education Program, The New York Urban Coalition, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10003. [6]Public Education Association, 20 West 40th Street, New York, New York 10018, (212) 354-6100. Economic Development Council, 230 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017, (212) 684-2300. [7]Fantini, Mario, Public Schools of Choice: A Plan for the Reform of American Education. New York, Simon and Schuster. $8.95 hardcover. [8]The ERIC system is a nationwide complex of research libraries, most located on university campuses. Generally, they are organized according to levels of education or specialized programs. No ERIC library specializes in alternative schools nor does any one of them store all available information on the subject. For information on which libraries have alternative-program information at appropriate school levels, contact Central ERIC, Office of Utilization and Resources, National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C. 20208, (202) 254-6050.

Analyzing the Data

3

Once you have acquired information on programs that obstensibly are relevant to your problems, it then becomes necessary to evaluate the data from a number of vantage points. The first and most obvious is to determine whether the original program was a success or failure. If success was claimed by the sponsors, has it been documented? Was there evaluation of the program and, if so, are the results available in documented form? The lack of such evaluation and documentation in some cases may not rule out further investigation and consideration for your situation. But it should cause you to proceed with extreme caution.

Successful programs or those that seem to hold promise for success then must be evaluated in terms of your own situation. In effect, there must be a careful matchup to determine whether the available—and viable—alternatives tally with the set of priorities developed during your own problem-identification effort.

Finally, any reform under active consideration must be evaluated in terms of its potential effect on the total operation of your school. It is essential to understand and deal with the fact that change or reform in any one aspect of your school program or operation will

have an inevitable impact on all other aspects. (For a valuable discussion of this phenomenon, see Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight of Seymour B. Sarason's **The Culture of School and the Problem of Change.**[1]

Accordingly it may be helpful to set up a chart or grid on which the impact of any reform can be weighed against such factors as overall costs of operation, ease of implementation, the existing decision-making process, curriculum and teaching patterns, the physical layout of the school, technological capacities, overall objectives, staff strengths and weaknesses, and the availability of outside resources.

[1] Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02210.

Reaching the Decision

4

The process of reaching a decision to adopt a reform or series of reforms for a school in effect is the first step of a formal planning process. As such, its effectiveness depends on the involvement of the total school community so that, once adopted, the reform(s) will have the support and cooperation of all concerned.

This means that the proposed reform or, if such is the case, a series of optional reforms, must be presented to the administration, staff members (both professional and paraprofessional) and their union representatives, students, and parents in such a way that each group clearly understands the potential impact of the proposed changes on their own situations. This effort probably should take place in a series of meetings held by the planning committee for the various groups.

At the same time, it must be recognized that the proposed reforms will need the concurrence and/or support of individuals and agencies outside the school itself. These include the central board of education, the superintendent of schools, appropriate deputy or assistant superintendents, the community school board, if any, the local teacher union or association, potential foundation or corporate supporters, and, in some cases, the principals of "feeder" schools whose graduates will be enrolled in your building.

While it may not be necessary to involve these outside groups in your decision-making sessions, it is essential that they be kept informed of your plans and progress. Accordingly, an information system will be required through which regular progress reports may be disseminated. The key to the system is the development of a mailing list structured to insure that all key individuals, offices, and agencies are plugged into the system. (See "The Information Factor" in Part II of this handbook, in the February, '75 issue of MSN.)

Involvement of the total school community in the decision-making process does not suggest anarchy or veto power for any one individual or group. Students, for example, will be informed, their ideas and reactions will be solicited and, where appropriate, adopted as part of the plan. However, as in any managerial situation, the ultimate decision must rest in one place. In a school, that will be the principal's office. But hopefully, the decision will be made with the assistance of a small planning group representing all elements of the school community. (See Step Five.)

Following the informational meetings, the reactions of each group should be determined, probably in a formal vote. If any major group -particularly the teachers—reacts negatively, it is likely that the proposal will be unworkable and should be sent back to the drawing boards. Experience indicates that, when it comes to school reform, teachers are "the primary constituency." While the new program may be designed to meet the expressed needs of students or demands of parents or the outside community, it is unlikely to succeed if the staff does not feel comfortable with it or competent to teach in the new patterns involved.

A final and critical point: the decision must include a commitment to the implementation of the reform and its various elements within the confines of a predetermined time schedule. Without a commitment to timing, there really is no decision.

Getting the Green Light

5

Once the decision to institute reform has been made, most schools will have to turn to higher authority for permission to proceed and, where necessary, additional resources necessary to support the planning process. And it may be necessary to seek support from outside the system—from corporations, governmental and private agencies, and the foundations.

To that end, the decision should be converted into two written documents,

preferably by someone capable of producing clear, concise, and readable prose, free of professional jargon. The first document will be short—no more than two pages in length and will offer a concrete statement of the proposed reform, a statement understandable to even the most uniformed reader. If that statement cannot be made within the two-page limitation, it is likely that you don't know what you actually are attempting. Return to step four and re-examine your decision.

The second document will be more elaborate and lengthier—15 to 20 pages. It will set forth in detail what the reforms are intended to accomplish, the phases of its implementation, all components of the plan, the time schedule, and additional funding requirements, if any. It will be a working document, spelling out the operational plan, and will form the basis for formal proposals for approval and additional resources.

As will be seen later on, it is possible to conduct the planning process without additional funding through ingenuity in the use of staff time and through dedication on the part of planning team members. But, when and if extra funding is needed, it will be necessary to identify possible sources of support. Here, the local school board may be of assistance. Most have staff experts skilled in finding sources of support, such as government agencies, foundations, and organizations like the New York Urban Coalition.

Proposals then are submitted, negotiated, and revised if necessary. If, and when, they are approved, a formal written agreement between the school and the school board or district should be drafted and signed. The agreement, based on the two-page document cited above will commit both parties to the project and spell out the resources of both parties to be employed in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project.

Similarly, written agreements should be concluded with sources of outside support. Such agreements will spell out the nature of the outside agency's involvement and the school's responsibilities, including financial reporting if funding is involved.

Initiating the Planning Process

6

The process of planning for school reform requires machinery—an organization to which is delegated the responsibility for developing the plan and that has formal status, rather than an *ad hoc* position, in the school structure. The planning organization—it might be called the "school development team" (SDT)—should be small enough to be functional yet large enough to be representative. Ideally, it should represent all elements of the staff, the local community, and the student body and number somewhere between eight and ten people.

The SDT will be charged with the responsibility for converting the original proposals into a specific operational plan. In doing so, it will assist the principal in school-wide planning and, at the same time, become a vehicle by which all elements of the school constituency can channel their reactions, suggestions, and resources toward the planning objectives.

In setting up the SDT, it should be recognized that, once started, the planning process will be a continuous one. Accordingly, the SDT should be given an initial mandate covering at least enough time to carry out the plan to full implementation—a period of from two to five years, depending on the complexity of the project. And recognize, that even then, planning still will be required and that the school development team's lifetime, therefore, probably should be indefinite.

This does not mean that SDT membership will be for an indefinite period. Membership should be rotated, possibly on a two-year basis, to maintain freshness of outlook. But the rotation should be staggered to insure continuity in the planning process.

Specifically, the SDT should assist in developing and reviewing proposals for reform or restructuring of the school. It should assist in designing and implementing operational plans, perhaps its key function. And finally, it should monitor and evaluate project activities.

In developing the operational plan, the SDT in effect will be drawing a detailed map of the steps that must be taken to achieve project objectives. In doing so, it will provide answers to a series of key questions:

- What specific set of activities, taken together, will be required to attain project objectives?
- Who is responsible for each of these activities (including non-SDT members who have been delegated responsibility)? What resources have been committed to each activity?
- By what date must each activity be completed in order that later activities can be initiated?
- What are the implications of the failure to implement any one activity on schedule?
- Who is responsible for monitoring overall project activity to insure that all activities are completed on schedule or, failing that, the schedule is adjusted accordingly?

Care should be taken in the selection of SDT members to insure that, in addition to being representative, the group includes individuals who are interested in the project and its success and who appear capable of working well in a task-oriented group. In addition, it must be recognized that, in their new assignments, members will be performing in unfamiliar roles. Most, if not all, will have little knowledge of or experience in the planning function. If they are to perform effectively, they will have to be trained.

The first step in training a planning group is to provide its members with a

clear statement of the assignment—what they are going to do and why what they are going to do is important. The group then should be offered a thorough briefing—possibly extending over several sessions—in the nature and logic of the planning process. If specialized management tools—flow charts, the PERT system, GANTT charts—are to employed, the SDT should receive specialized training in their use. Finally, the group ideally should run through one or more hypothetical planning projects to test their mastery of the process.

Few schools will have staff personnel equipped to conduct such a training program. It is possible but not probable that the local board of education can provide the necessary expertise. If not, assistance can be sought in the business community, which might be persuaded to provide help on a voluntary basis. Or the services of a university-based management expert might be obtained. Failing all that, consideration should be given to the hiring of a management consultant, preferably one with an interest in education and school operations.

Finally, remember that a critical function of the planning group will be informational. The school community and its broader outside constituency must be kept informed of the SDT's efforts, decisions, and progress if the ultimate plan is to win acceptance, cooperation, and support. Accordingly, the group at the onset must reach agreement on a reporting system that may include meetings, formal reports, bulletins, or a combination thereof and that functions on a predetermined schedule of frequency.

Setting Your Objectives

7

Obviously, the ultimate objective of any school, no matter how elaborately stated, is the education of its students. If the school is successful in meeting that objective, there presumably would be no need for reform or for the planning process. But the fact is that few schools—even those enjoying presumably ideal conditions in the affluent suburbs—are totally successful with all their students and, therefore, without a need to improve. And no school is immune to the pressure of changes in the world around it and the need to adapt to those changes.

In any reform project, then, it is the job of the planning group to look at the overall objective in terms of the problems identified in Step One. What specifically needs to be done to solve the problems—what are the goals that must be achieved if the objective is to be met?

The first goals will deal with students. Is there a need to improve achievement levels? If so, in what subject areas and to what extent? Is there a need to improve student attitudes and behaviour, as reflected in truancy and dropout rates, attendance patterns, disruptive behavior, vandalism, drug use?

Attention then must be turned to the learning environment. Does the school have the resources in curriculum, teaching and guidance personnel, materials, and equipment, to achieve the student goals already established? If not, goals will have to be set for these areas. If, for example, student goals call for the creation of smaller learning environments on the mini-school pattern, individualized instruction, and interdisciplinary programs, goals probably will have to be set for the appropriate retraining of teachers, development of new curriculum, and the production or acquisition of new industrial materials and equipment. Similarly, if the new educational programs call for new patterns of student grouping, goals probably will be required for the rearrangement and renovation of the physical plant.

Next, the school's organizational structure and managerial arrangements must be examined to determine if they are adequate in the light of the new programs and teaching patterns. If, for example, interdisciplinary programs are called for, it probably will be necessary to assign new roles to the chairmen or assistant principals in charge of traditional academic departments, if mini-schools are in the plan, it will be necessary to establish an administrative structure for them. If continuing change is contemplated (as it should be) it will be necessary to establish machinery by which it is accomplished in an effective and orderly manner.

Finally, there should be a concern with the change process itself. Are all those involved aware of the changes being proposed and of the effect of the changes on their own situation? Are they prepared to accept the changes and to help implement them? Do they understand and accept the new roles they must fulfill? If not, a school-wide program to develop a consciousness of the change process is called for.

Once the goals are established, it is necessary to identify the specific steps—"activities" to the planning specialists—required to achieve them. If, for example, the goal is to improve attendance, it will be necessary to generate an across-the-board improvement in student attitudes toward school. One step in that direction might be an increase in the number of out-of-class activities attractive to students but still relevant to the educational program.

Activities like this, then, can be broken down into specific tasks, responsibility for which will be assigned to specific staff members when the plan is implemented. Ideally, the tasks involved in each activity should be charted subsequentially and a predetermined deadline assigned for their completion. If the knowledge or talent required to carry

out a specific task is not available within the staff, it probably will be necessary to seek help from the school board, local universities, or other outside sources, to assist in its completion or to train staff personnel for that purpose.

The Written Plan

8

Once the objective-setting process is complete, it then is necessary to translate the results into a written document of 20 to 30 pages, clearly stating the objectives, goals, activities, and steps involved in the total plan. The completed document ought to provide a very precise picture of what will have been accomplished a year or even two years after the plan has been adopted and the implementation process begun.

If the planning group has the capability to handle such managerial tools as GANTT and PERT charts, a flow chart should be developed to provide a graphic and readily understandable road map for the project. In addition, charts should be developed showing the school's existing organizational structure and the structure that will apply after implementation of the plan. If comparison of the two charts does not indicate significant organizational change, the plan probably will not succeed. (New programs and new structure require new organizational arrangements.) Return to Step Seven and re-examine your organizational and managerial goals.

The written plan should be prepared by a member of the School Development Team who: 1) has demonstrated writing ability, 2) has been interested and involved in the planning process from its outset, 3) has preferably acted as a recorder, transcribing the group's decisions about processes, procedures, and formats during the planning process or was responsible for reporting back to the school community on planning progress and decisions, and 4) sees an advantage to himself in the success of the plan.

The document initially should be prepared in draft form and submitted to the full planning group for approval and revision before a final version is drawn up for adoption.

Adopting the Plan

9

Adoption of the completed plan is a three stage process: acceptance by the school community, revision where necessary to insure community acceptance, and only then submission to and approval by higher authorities.

The acceptance stage should be an extension of an informational program started at the outset of planning, under which the community has been kept informed by progress and of all major decisions along the way. Once the written plan is available, it should be made available to everyone in the administration, staff, student body, and local community. This does not mean that there need be the expense and effort to distribute copies of the full document to every individual involved. But copies should be available for inspection in the principal's office, faculty lounge, the school library, and through key organizations and agencies in the community.

Care should be taken that all concerned are notified that the plan is available for study and sufficient time should be provided for interested individuals to avail themselves of the opportunity. And an effort should be made to publish highlights of the plan either in the local newspaper or in a widely distributed special newsletter or bulletin.

Once the community has had the opportunity to study the written plan, a meeting or meetings should be called at which the full planning group offers a verbal description of the plan and opens the floor to a full discussion of the details. Such meetings are most critical for the faculty and staff, who will have to implement the plan. It may be advisable to hold separate meetings for the students, who will participate in the transition. And, depending on the level of involvement and interest, it may be desirable to hold sessions for community groups.

It is essential, in conducting these informational meetings, to make sure that all elements of the school's constituency clearly understand the plan and its implications for themselves. Formal votes may or may not be necessary, but it is critical that the planning team satisfy itself that no group is substantially opposed to the plan or any of its major elements and that every group understands the plan, is in general agreement, and is prepared to lend its unqualified support when it comes time for implementation.

Based on discussions at the informational meetings, revisions to the plan may be required to secure formal acceptance by faculty and staff or desirable to insure maximum support for its implementation. Such revisions should be made by the individual who prepared the initial written plan and submitted to the full planning group for final adoption. At the same time, supporting documents such as requests for budget revisions or additional resources needed to implement the plan should be prepared for submission with the plan for approval by higher authorities. Similarly, revisions or appendices may be required if the document is to be used to seek financial assistance from foundations, government agencies, or other outside sources.

Implementing the Plan

10

The new structure and new programs called for by the plan will mean new roles and new tasks for most, if not all, of the school staff. Accordingly, the first step in implementing the plan will be to retrain the staff so that each member is familiar with and comfortable in his or her new role and prepared to carry out the new responsibilities. To reverse the procedure and attempt to implement a new structure before your personnel are prepared for it is to court failure.

Separate training programs will be required for administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and perhaps clerical and other support personnel. And, within those categories, it probably will be necessary to develop further breakdowns in the program. The training of assistant principals, for example, will differ from that for mini-school coordinators. And streetworkers require a different program than that provided for teacher aides.

But, in assigning personnel to their programs, avoid any attempt to lock individuals into specific staff assignments. As training progresses, it can be expected that individual skills and traits will be found that will affect ultimate job assignments. Among teachers, for example, some may emerge as better equipped by background and attitude to work in a team or interdisciplinary setting while others may be more comfortable in a more traditional role. If, as is the case in some projects, coordinators are elected by the mini-school staff, some teachers may emerge as leaders in the eyes of their colleagues, win election as coordinators, and require further training to fulfill that role. In the case of streetworkers and guidance counselors, some may work better with college-bound students while others may be challenged by the need to help those with serious learning disabilities.

In an important sense, the training program will be an extension of the learning process begun when the School Development Team first was organized. In addition to requiring new skills, staff members will be working out details of the operation of their respective mini-schools, administrative offices, or other school function.

Training programs can be conducted after school or over the summer. But it must be recognized that, in most cases, such a schedule will involve expense, since union contracts will require payment of teachers and others involved in the program. An alternative, proven feasible in at least one case in New York, is the imaginative scheduling of staff time so that training/planning sessions can be held regularly during school hours. And, given sufficient staff commitment and enthusiasm, it may be possible to stretch such sessions somewhat beyond the normal school closing hour without incurring union opposition.

Either way, the training process will take time--perhaps as much as six to nine months--and actual implementation should be scheduled accordingly. In fact, progress of the training effort should be monitored continuously, preferably by a subcommittee of the School Development Team. If, for any reason, any element of the training effort falls behind schedule, the implementation plan should be revised accordingly, and the revisions reported to the principal.

As in earlier project phases, the training program may require the assistance and support of people from outside the school. It may be possible to borrow from the expertise of principals and staff personnel from schools that have undergone similar restructuring projects. Or, it may be necessary to acquire help from local universities or educational consultants.

Outside help or not, it is critical to insure that the time devoted to your school's training/planning sessions is effectively employed. It is all too easy for a group of teachers (or any other group, for that matter) called together for planning purposes to drift into meaningless discussion of the *status quo* or to lose themselves in minutiae. Careful planning and effective leadership are required if the training effort is to be productive. For some particulars, look for "Promoting Interaction and Growth" in Part II of this manual in the next issue of MSN.

Once the training program, or appropriate phases of it, is complete, final job assignments are made and actual implementation begins. The schedule may call for simultaneous implementation of all phases of the plan or for a gradual, step-by-step approach. Either way, the SDT monitoring team must keep a close watch on progress to insure that implementation is effective and orderly and that unforseen problems can be resolved as they occur.

Institutionalizing Change

11

To effectively restructure a school is to set in motion a process of continuing change. Continuing change requires a mechanism for continuing planning. At the same time, it requires mechanisms for the continuous retaining of personnel affected by the changes and for the restructuring of the management systems and procedures that support and direct school operations.

If, as recommended earlier, you have employed a School Development Team to plan your project, the machinery for continued planning already exists. What now is required is that the SDT be accorded a formal and permanent status in the school structure. And, as suggested earlier, a system for rotating SDT membership should be established to insure both continuity of planning and freshness of input.

As a permanent and legitimate planning arm of the school, the SDT will continue to monitor programs (see Step Twelve) and, where improvement seems desirable, recommend appropriate changes. At the same time, it should function as a link between the school administration and the sources of new ideas, whether they come from within the school, from the local board of education, or from outside agencies.

In that role, the SDT will receive proposals for new programs or changes in structure and elevate them in terms of existing operations and available resources. It may then approve or reject the proposals outright or suggest revisions. Once a proposal or revised proposal wins SDT approval, it is forwarded to the school's top administrative body--e.g. the school cabinet--for final action.

The need for a continuing training effort again suggests the need for a formal and permanent mechanism responsible for that function. That mechanism--which might be called the Professional Services Center (PSC)--will be responsible not only for the retraining of teachers and other staff personnel but for the development of curriculum to meet the needs of the school's new programs.

The curriculum-development effort can and should be an integral part of the training process. (That effort, incidentally, probably should not begin until the new organizational structure is in place and functioning. The curriculum should take advantage of the new environment; if the new environment is not in place curriculum developed outside it is not likely to "take.") As was suggested earlier, "planning equals training." The PSC should be so organized that it provides individual teachers or teacher teams from a mini-school or similar new unit with the means and materials with which to develop new curriculum.

It should be a center where, to the extent possible, all available information and guidance needed to develop or introduce new programs, teaching techniques, and curriculum, is at the staff's disposal. It should provide or offer access to the hardware necessary to develop and utilize software for audio-visual equipment, television, and other new teaching technology.

The center also should be in a position to tap outside resources for both the curriculum development and teacher-training efforts. If, for example, help is needed in developing new remedial reading programs and the training of teachers in their use, the center might bring in consultants from a local university. But, to lend legitimacy to and facilitate acceptance of the consultants' work, care should be taken to insure that they work through the PSC and its director rather than deal independently with individual teachers.

Finally, the center should be designed as a place where teachers and other staff members will gravitate when in need of information and where they will gather to share their experiences and discuss new teaching techniques and curriculum. Accordingly, the center should be conveniently located and comfortably and attractively furnished.

Existence of the center of course will not obviate the need for other teacher training opportunities. Teachers will continue to require or desire advanced training in the traditional university setting or want to take advantage of special programs offered by the local board of education, state and federal education agencies, private industry, or agencies like the Education Program of the New York Urban Coalition. The PSC, however, can and should act as clearinghouse of information on such opportunities and assist interested teachers in availing themselves of them.

A possible mechanism for restructuring or returning management structures and procedures may be found in what one New York school calls its Management Development Office (MDO). Headed by an assistant principal for management, development, and planning, the office concerns itself with budget; inventory control; studies of total school resources in personnel, equipment, and materials; the development and maintenance of management manuals; systems studies of other activities affecting day-to-day management of school operations.

The MDO is organized to make effective use of outside talent--such as business loanees--in its operations. Working through the office, the loanees have a legitimate channel through which to contribute their knowledge to the solution of the school's managerial problems. (See March/April '74 issue of MSN.)

Evaluating Progress

12

Without a continuous process of measurement and evaluation of progress and feedback of the findings, neither the continuous planning effort nor the retraining program are likely to be effective. As suggested earlier, the evaluation effort should be assigned to a subcommittee of the School Development Team.

The subcommittee will monitor all school programs and check their progress against the operational plan, reporting back periodically to the full SDT. Where progress does not measure up to intentions and schedules as set forth in the plan, the SDT will consider and recommend changes in the plan, the schedule, or both.

In carrying out its functions, the subcommittee will not be a judgement agent. It will not be empowered to evaluate the performance of individual teachers or to involve inself in the process of granting teacher tenure or promotions or in recommending suspension or dismissal of teachers who fail to perform. Rather, its role will be that of "a supportive set of eyes," empowered to look at the overall project and its component parts and, where necessary or desirable, recommend structural, programmatic, or policy changes.

The subcommittee will be—and should be—an in-house entity, made up of school personnel, and carrying out the process of continuous evaluation. But remember that, as staff people, its members may be too close to the project to recognize all of its problems. It therefore may be advisable to periodically call in an outside team of evaluators from other schools, board of education headquarters, a local university, or an educational or management consulting firm. These outside evaluators should have the advantage of distance from the project and the ability to identify problems not perceived internally and produce suggestions and proposals that might not have been generated by an in-house team.

——To Be Continued——

What We Do

The New York Urban Coalition is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for all people living in New York. Created in 1967 in direct response to mounting urban disorders, the Coalition's membership includes representatives from three major areas: business, the poor and labor. It's primary areas of focus includes education, housing, jobs, community affairs and economic development.

Since 1969, the Coalition's Education Department has sought to develop all its programs through the Board of Education rather than outside the school system. The initial partnership project was a single mini-school at Hughes High School. Other Board of Education/Coalition projects in subsequent years included a second mini-school at Wingate High School and Haaren High School's total reorganization into a complex of mini-schools. Each mini-school is generally self-contained in its own area within the whole school, thereby promoting closer relationships between students, teachers, administrators and street-workers. Prime emphasis in the mini-school concept is given to in-service staff development to foster capabilities in planning, management, curriculum development, and attention to students' non-academic needs. There are now over 50 schools in New York City either having single mini units or totally converting to all mini units.

In 1974, the Coalition entered into agreements with several new schools. Together with university and federal support, these new purtnerships are focusing efforts on developing local organizational resources to sustain a process of school improvement and renewal.

The Mini-School News (MSN) is published to increase public and private sector awareness of these school renewal processes and programs. It (the MSN) is catalytic and is directed at those who can affect changes to improve the level and quality of education in New York City schools and elsewhere.

It is a publication of the Education Program, New York Urban Coalition, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10003, (212) 741-6000. President: Eugene S. Callender; Program Director: Louis B. McCagg; **EDITOR: Nate Moore.**

This issue is Vol. 4, No. 6, January 1975. All layout and design in this issue done by Richard Maize.

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New York, N.Y. 10003

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
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