DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 126 608 EA 008 551

TITLE	Schools Within Schools.
INSTITUTION	National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Va.
PUB DATE	Sep 76
NOTE	13p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091 ($0.50, quantity discounts, payment must accompany orders of $10.00 or less)
JOURNAL CIT	The Practitioner; v3 n1 p1-12 Sep 1976
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Experimental Programs; *High School Organization; *House Plan; *Models; Organizational Change; *Program Descriptions; School Administration; *School Size; *Secondary Education

ABSTRACT

This newsletter briefly discusses the question of whether or not large secondary schools suffer from more problems than smaller schools and then examines the possibility of subdividing large schools through use of the "school-within-a-school" approach. Two different variations on the school-within-a-school approach are described, including structural subschools, where students are randomly assigned to different administrative units within a large school, and programmatic subschools, where students enroll in a program that focuses on one particular interest area or stresses a specific instructional approach. The second half of the publication presents short descriptions of seven secondary schools that are currently using some form of programmatic subschools, and of four secondary schools that are using some type of structural subschools. (JG)

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The Practitioner

A Newsletter for the On-Line Administrator

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Vol 3, No 1 — September 1976

Schools Within Schools

In a world beset by bureaucratic bigness, is smaller suddenly better? The presidential candidates are saying "yes." Some British economists say "yes." The conservationists say "yes." Detroit says "yes." But what about schools: Is less really more?

Are secondary schools too large? Do they kill motivation? Are they impersonal? Do they foster cliques and breed crime? Do they create barriers between adolescents and adults? Are they poorly focused for older students?

The "Big" Question

To assert straight out that "big is bad" in schools goes nowhere. Obviously, the question is complex. Bigness can involve many factors. The matter of school size, however, is a growing issue among educators and the public. Assumptions about optimum size are being reexamined. Serious questions are now being raised about the disadvantages as well as the advantages of large secondary schools.

For instance, the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education in a final report observes: "We have exacerbated the schools' burdens . . . by their unnecessarily large size." The HEW-sponsored report further declares: "Operating plants that house upwards of a thousand students are not, in the Panel's judgment, optimal settings for improving intergroup and interpersonal relations. Once more the institutional imperatives of orderly movement and peaceful custody that result from sheer mass of numbers make efforts toward humane consideration of individuals difficult."[1]

The correlation between school enrollment and student misbehavior also causes concern. Evidence is building that large schools typically encounter more problems with vandalism, intruders, and assaults than do smaller schools, on a per capita basis.

1. National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education, *The Education of Adolescents* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976).

Questions about teacher morale, student attitude, and the paperwork blizzard also enter the picture. Consequently, principals speak of the new ABC's—apathy, bureaucracy, and cussedness—as hamstringing school life. The greater anguish comes from the larger schools.

Whatever the alleged shortcomings of bigness, however, the large school campus does exist. Most large schools provide good programs for students. On paper, the curriculum, pupil personnel services, and activities programs are impressive. But are attitude, involvement, and morale what they should be? Are students motivated, even excited? Are teachers interested? Who cares about whom?

Some principals consider these questions overcome by events. Other principals are persistently seeking solutions to these very questions. Subdividing the larger school appears to be one major initiative worth exploring. Whether the objective is to spark students, enthuse teachers, sharpen the curriculum, gain a new sense of community, reduce discipline problems—or all of these—the "school-within-a-school" approach is gaining new advocates.

An Idea Explored

To seek alternatives in education is not new. New York City, for instance, currently operates 11 alternative high schools of 500 or fewer students, each with a different program focus. The range extends from college prep to dropout prevention. In addition, some 50 small satellite minischools operate alongside the "regular" high schools in the city.

But these schools, in sum, enroll less than three percent of the city's secondary school students. What about the remaining 97 percent? How might their education be improved?

These alternative schools serve only a limited clientele. After some years' experience with alternatives, New York administrators feel that, "Clearly, though the alternative schools have a recognized function, they were never meant to be the answer for the bulk of our students. That answer must be found in, and by, the regular high schools. If the large high school can build into its organization and programs the flexibility, the individualization, the intimacy, and the esprit de corps which characterize the alternative schools, it can offer the student much more than can the small school.[2]

Responsible critics must accept that most secondary schools have become significantly modified over the past decade in response to a changing social outlook. The typical school today is no procrustean bed. Yet, too much apathy, absenteeism, disaffection, and monotony remain. Too many students merely endure education. Too few are stimulated by it.

2. Division of High Schools, New York City Public Schools, *Humanization and Involvement: The Small Unit Approach* (New York: Board of Education of the City of New York, 1975), p. 37.

Hence the move toward a small unit organization within the mainstream secondary school. The objective is to rekindle the motivation of students, to capture the excitement and esprit that rightfully should be a part of the life of the school.

Some principals believe that by restructuring with subschools the atmosphere of the school can be dramatically improved. Smallness fosters personalization, goes the argument. "Create a group of people who know one another, and many of the discipline problems vanish," states one advocate. "Get your units small enough so students are acquainted and so teachers can greet every student by name. Form groups of people who belong to one another."

Looking at Models

Originally, subschools were formed as administrative units. Students were assigned at random to two or more "halls." Many secondary schools are successfully operating this structural model, for instance Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School in Massachusetts with five units of 400 students each. The units are led by hall directors. A counselor, counselor assistant, 25 teachers, and secretarial support constitute the staff of each hall.

Recently, however, enthusiasm is growing for the concept of programmatic subschools. Lincoln-Sudbury, for instance, has just added five different alternative programs, one for each hall. The programmatic subschool may focus upon a particular interest area, for instance the fine arts or health careers, or it may focus upon various approaches to instruction, perhaps a traditional or flexible schedule. As an example of the "instructional strategies" approach, Broken Ground Intermediate School in Concord, N.H., has formed three units: the conventional school, the continuous progress school, and the activity-centered school.

Quincy High School in Quincy, Ill., has formed subschools by interest area as well as by instructional approach with a total of seven separate units. These include: (1) the Traditional School, (2) the Fine Arts School, (3) the Flexible School, (4) the Project to Individualize Education School, (5) the Career School, (6) the Work-Study School, and (7) the Special Education School.

Muscatine High School in Muscatine, Iowa, has developed a unique "communities-within-a-school" approach to the programmatic subschool. Muscatine offers five choices of program, each a special community of teachers, students, parents, and courses. The five communities are: (1) the Traditional Community, (2) the Flexible Individualized Learning Community, (3) the Career Community, (4) the Fine Arts Community, and (5) the Work-Study Community. Admission is by family application.

The term "schools-within-schools" applies to a wide variety of approaches, all aimed at improving the quality of student life. Many refinements, however, fall beneath the banner of either a structural model or a programmatic model. While no line cleanly separates the two models, their essential features can be summarized as follows:

Structural Model

- Units are equal in size
- Administrator assigned to each unit
- Units support similar goals and organization
- Subject area teachers assigned to each hall
- Special area teachers serve all halls
- Students divided heterogeneously or by grade level
- Focus upon pupil personnel and improved management

Programmatic Model

- Units of various sizes
- One administrator may supervise several small units
- Administrators may be assisted by team leaders
- Teacher-advisers often used
- Each unit may have unique goals
- Units may organize in a variety of ways
- Units may operate alongside the mainstream school
- Students or families select the program
- Focus upon student interests or learning styles, and upon developing a "community" of students and adults

A pioneer to the programmatic subschool is the cooperative education program, of course. Essentially, students with a common interest were provided with a group identity. Programs in retailing, health services, data processing, or whatever took students out of the mass and provided them with purpose and a home base. Students gained a sense of participation and identity as well as being allowed to concentrate on an area of special interest.

This approach has evolved in the programmatic subschool to a larger plan, with each group of students organized around a cluster of courses and activities which share a common theme. This commonality, in turn, is enhanced by a small faculty with similar interests and inclinations. Add a leader, a home base, and support services, and the subschool is born.

"Hard" or "Soft" Motivation?

The student retention rate for cooperative education programs is impressive. Few co-op students drop out of school. The interest-oriented subschool appears to enjoy a similar holding power. Rather than relying upon extrinsic motivators (i.e., counseling, student activities, etc.) to overcome the vagueness of the large school, the subschool stimulates students by focusing upon strong, inherent motivators such as recognized opportunity, sense of identity, peer group esteem, active participation, and acceptance of responsibility. To achieve a high level of intrinsic motivation, one New York City high school offers nine subschool programs, now enrolling over half of its 2,500 student population. Included among these subschools are Goal Orientation and Career Exploration for all new entrants, College Discovery, and Health Careers in Geriatrics.

Other large high schools in New York City have developed several additional themes. The particular focus of a successful subschool will depend upon the nature of the student body and the resources of the community.

Many students have a common hunger for the individual attention and warm personal relationship that they find in the subschool environment. Part of this feeling comes as a product of the recognition of special interests and because students have an excellent opportunity to voice individual opinions in the subschool community.

Staff enthusiasm tends to be high because teachers feel a sense of accomplishment when working with interested students. A greater number of preparations may be required of faculty in a subschool, however. These are willingly assumed by teachers, as is an expanded counseling role arising from the more intimate student-teacher acquaintanceship, according to persons with subschool experience.

Managing Subschools

Subschools tend to differ widely in size, organization, and distinctness. Some general principles of administration, however, ordinarily apply to the subschool plan:

- Each subschool must have identifiable leadership. This may be an assistant principal, a director, a program leader, etc.
- Office space and clerical support should be reserved for each subschool. The benefits are functional as well as psychological.
- A proper balance must be kept between the separate identities of the subschools and the mainstream school.
- The principal's role resembles that of the superintendent of a small district. The principal administers the centralized functions of the campus, and supervises, coordinates, and supports the various subschool programs.

- Sufficient time must be allowed the subschool's coordinator for the key task of getting to know the students and teachers to build a group identity and esprit.
- Whenever possible, the subschool's classrooms should be reserved for the group and should be clustered near the group office.
- Teachers should be scheduled within the subschool. Identification is further strengthened if teachers are also assigned to homerooms or advisories in the school.
- Teachers should become front-line counselors. Their guidance function must be coordinated with that of the general counselor.
- Resource counselors should be assigned to the group rather than be retained in a central unit. A number of small subschools may be pooled for guidance and related services.
- Principals should retain their role as supervisors of instruction, school-wide.
- Student opinion should be recognized. Student requests are frequently a sound basis for initiating new programs.
- Insofar as possible, students should be assigned to a particular subschool throughout the year.
- Subschools should provide for a variety of extra-class activities.
- Subschool leaders should meet regularly, as a group, with the school's principal. Faculty meetings should be held both at the subschool and at the school-wide level.

To Conclude

Can students be helped by combining the best of largeness with the best of smallness in a single school? Is the subschool approach the best way to create a personalized, humanized environment in the larger school? Will identification with a smaller unit create self-confidence and stimulate interest?

Some administrators say "yes." While claiming no miracles, they are convinced that subschools respond well to the special interests of students, improve student behavior, provide a missing sense of community, enhance student and faculty morale, raise the quality of parental input, coordinate separate subjects in the curriculum, and generally encourage a more mature atmosphere on campus. In short, subschools help reestablish the human dimension to the larger school. In the student's struggle to "be somebody," these gains may overcome the disadvantages of growing up in an anonymous and transient society where the only true neighborhood youth may experience is a special neighborhood created in school. It's a concept worth exploring.

To Illustrate Programmatic Subschools

Muscatine High School
Frank E. Allen, Principal
Muscatine, Iowa 52761

Muscatine High School's "Communities Within a School" approach presents some unique dimensions to learning. Muscatine offers five alternative programs, each a community of teachers, subjects, parents, and students. The students, working with their parents, choose the educational environment that most accurately reflects their individual learning styles. This approach provides an intimate community in which the students, parents, and teachers may function.

The five communities are: (1) the Traditional Community, which provides structure for students and teacher responsibility for student learning; (2) the Flexible Individualized Learning Community, which provides students with a moderately structured program with some variance in learning methods and with some opportunities to work independently; (3) the Career Community, which assists students to acquire the academic and the occupational skills necessary in today's world of work, and which provides the background for economic independence as well as preparation for higher education; (4) the Fine Arts Community, which provides an environment for artistic work in a relatively unstructured environment; and (5) the Work Study Community, which provides a highly structured block-time program for students requiring the services of special education.

Division of High Schools
New York City Schools
Roxee W. Doly, Superintendent for Richmond-Brooklyn
110 Livingston Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

The New York City high schools, 111 in number, are dedicated to the subschool approach. New York believes that the schools-within-schools idea encourages principals, with their Consultative Councils, to set up new student groups with common interests which nourish a sense of warmth, identity, and purpose among the youngsters, the team of teachers, and the coordinator. This produces good student achievement for all levels of ability.

In addition to 50 minischools for "turned off" youngsters, the High School Division sponsors several other types of schools-within-schools. A most successful variety is the career-oriented "Educational Option" program. The 16 high schools offering this approach open the subschool to the entire city for registration, although each school's own basic population is geographically zoned. Examples include the School of Oceanography at Beach Channel High School, the School of Politics and Government at Tilden High

School, the School of Criminal Justice at John Jay, and the School of Agribusiness at John Bowne. In every case, all levels of ability from various parts of the city are joined in a subschool of about 400 students with common career interests. The program opens doors from entry-level through college-level work.

Haaren High School — 899 Tenth Avenue
Bernard V. Deutchman, Principal — New York, N.Y. 10019

An inner-city school of about 1,800 students, Haaren High School evolved as a result of a redesign effort mounted cooperatively by the Board of Education, the Urban Coalition, and some large corporations.

The school consists of 10 "minischools" which range in size from under 50 to somewhat over 300 students. Each minischool is headed by a teacher-coordinator elected by the minischool staff, and each is under the supervision of an assistant principal (supervision). Each has its own area in the building: an office, a student lounge, and classrooms clustered nearby. All share the use of a few large facilities: cafeteria, gymnasiums, shops.

Most of the minischools have a specific career or occupational focus. After an exploratory freshman year the student selects a minischool in line with interests. Choices include the automotive, aviation, electronics, cooperative education, and college-bound minischools. Students who have not developed a clear career goal may go into the unspecialized senior school in the tenth year. This minischool includes preparation for the high school equivalency diploma. If a student's academic or career interests change, he may transfer to the appropriate minischool.

Within each minischool, decision making is patterned on a "college" model. In curriculum development, for example, the staff agrees on a proposed change and the subject teacher works out the course of study. The new course is subject to the approval of the minischool's director, who may in turn call on the advice of the assistant principal.

Broken Ground Intermediate School — Concord, N.H. 03301
Robert J. Ross, Principal

Broken Ground has established three alternative schools on one campus. The plan calls for the three schools to be administered by the school principal working with three team leaders and three parents. Each school will function with a team leader and four or five classroom teachers. Support comes from specialists in art, music, physical education, reading, learning abilities, guidance, and media.

Parents will select one of the three subschools for their child. The three choices are the conventional, continuous progress, and activity-centered schools. The conventional school will be characterized by self-contained classrooms and teacher-directed programs. The continuous progress

school will emphasize multi-age grouping, multi-media approaches, and team teaching. A core curriculum will be required of all students, but the pace will be individually determined. In the activity-centered school, learning activities will be planned cooperatively between student and teacher as an outgrowth of student interests, needs, and abilities. The atmosphere will be informal. Students will practice decision making and assume an increasing responsibility for their own learning.

North Hunterdon High School District · Annandale, N.J. 08801
Robert Kish, Principal
Bill Conwell, Principal

About half of the 2,400 students in North Hunterdon are now attending 17 "Learning Communities" in two high schools. Each LC is an administrative unit with a particular curriculum focus, and consists of 20-125 pupils, a counselor, and a teacher team.

Upper-class students normally spend four hours per day in an LC on studies that appeal directly to their interests. Freshmen are required to enter an LC in one of five areas: humanities, liberal arts, vocational-business, mathematics-science, and general education.

Each LC creates its own daily schedule and determines its own budget. According to a Title III evaluation, the outcomes are impressive. Parents appreciate the decentralized clusters; failure rates have dropped; class cutting has "all but vanished," and student attitude is much improved.

The 1,200 students not selecting an LC take the regular elective program.

Quincy Senior High School II. Quincy, Ill. 62301
Richard Heitholt, Principal

Quincy Senior High School II is divided into seven separate sub-schools, each with different courses and styles of teaching. Called "Education by Choice," these programs range from highly structured to almost totally free. The options allow all 1,500 juniors and seniors to choose the subschool they wish to attend. The seven subschool programs are as follows:

1. The Traditional School - A teacher-directed program where students work on conventional assignments, listen to lectures, receive grades, and take required courses.
2. The Fine Arts Schools - A student-directed program with new schedule options each week. Students work at their own pace and enjoy a choice of over 50 courses, one-half of which are arts oriented.
3. The Flexible School - A program similar to the traditional school except that after the teacher's presentation each period, students may leave class to pursue individual projects.

4. The Project to Individualize Education (PIE) - Here students select their own courses and determine the frequency of class attendance.

5. The Career School - This program is designed for students seeking work after high school. They attend regular classes half the day and hold jobs part-time.

6. The Work Study School - A variation of the Career School, the program is geared to students who are on the verge of dropping out and need extra help in academic subjects. The curriculum is divided into eight abbreviated periods to fit the students' shorter attention spans. Students also work part time.

7. The Special Education School - A program geared for slow learners and students with learning disabilities.

Destrehan High School — Destrehan, La. 70047
Frank Caliri, Principal

A four-school concept was developed to allow students to choose a curriculum which best suits interests and abilities. The four schools are:

1. The School of Business Careers, designed for students who would like to work in a business or an office upon graduation. The school includes Distributive Education and Cooperative Office Education.

2. The School of Career Exploration, designed for students who have little knowledge or inclination toward a vocation. The curriculum focuses upon the exploration of various career fields.

3. The I.T.S. School, developed for students who have a desire to develop skills in some trade or service. It includes a work program for older students who will get on-the-job training while receiving credit at school.

4. The Advanced Study School, providing an academic program and utilizing independent study as a major method of instruction. Students must demonstrate an academic proficiency and a willingness to achieve beyond minimum academic standards to be admitted.

School selection is made in August of each school year and reviewed in May for possible change. Transfers between schools can be made only once a year.

Structural Subschools

Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School — Sudbury, Mass. 01776
David L. Levington, Superintendent/Principal

Ten years ago, this regional suburban school community developed a decentralized environment for its students. Five autonomous units called halls have evolved in a school population of 2,000 students. Hall personnel include a hall director, a hall counselor, an assistant counselor, a hall secretary, support staff, 25 teachers representing respective departments, and 100 students from each of four classes.

Each hall has a freshman curriculum, an alternate school-wide program, administrative and counseling offices, a student-faculty lounge, student mailboxes, a teacher-advisor program, a student government forum, and an intramural program.

Steuben Intermediate School
Donald C. Luebke, Principal

2360 North 52d Street
Milwaukee, Wis. 53210

The unit is the basic organizational and instructional component at Steuben Intermediate School. Each unit consists of four teachers, an aide, approximately 120 students and their parents. These four groups are directly involved in the development of the educational program for their unit.

Steuben operates six academic units: two for seventh grade pupils, two for eighth grade pupils, and two that are ungraded and contain approximately equal numbers of seventh and eighth grade students. In addition, three service units support the six academic units. Two of these units are composed of special teachers—industrial arts, physical education, music, art, home economics—while the third consists of teachers for exceptional students.

The students are heterogeneously grouped. Teacher assignment is based upon individual teaching styles and personality. Each unit functions as an independent group and is free to develop programs well suited to the unit's student population. Curriculum coordination and guidance function directly under the supervision of the principal.

School planning and decision making is carried out by the Instructional Improvement Committee (IIC). The committee, which meets weekly, consists of the principal, the curriculum coordinator, a teacher representative from each of the six academic units and three specialist units, a union representative, and an aide representative. Teacher involvement is one key to the program's success.

Dunham Junior High School
Robert L. Roth, Principal

St. Charles, Ill. 60174

Dunham Junior High School is organized into four academic teams, each with a team leader, and an allied arts team, again with a team leader. These academic teams are supported by a curriculum service team consisting of the learning center director and the reading coordinators; and by the student services team consisting of counselors, the nurse, the special education teachers, the psychologist, and the social worker. All teams report directly to the school principal.

The academic teams are interdisciplinary in nature and serve about 120 students each. Each team is responsible for the total academic program of its students. Each team also plans coffees, open houses, and various student activities to help build group identity among students and parents. In addition, each team is given a one-hour block of time in the Commons, daily, to meet informally with students and to build a "helping relationship." Members from the curriculum service and student service teams, along with the principal, meet each week to discuss problems, programs, and approaches with each of the four academic teams.

Dunham is now considering keeping one interdisciplinary team with the same group of 120 students for two years of school. The rationale for this pattern is to benefit from a team's working experience. The knowledge gained about individual students during a team's first year could be put to immediate use during the second year of instruction.

West Bend High Schools — West Bend, Wis. 53095
John M. Sheehy, Principal

The West Bend High School's complex consists of five connected units: (1) West High School, (2) East High School, (3) the auditorium and music facility, (4) the vocational and applied arts facility, and (5) the physical education and field-house facility. West Bend is master planned for four schools of 1,250 students each, housing grades 9-12. The common facilities are scheduled for use by all schools.

Each school operates a full co-curricular program embracing yearbook, newspaper, student government, clubs, and even interscholastic athletics, providing increased opportunities for student leadership and participation.

Students identify with a particular school through their homeroom, their counselor, and their co-curricular program. No conscious attempt is made to keep students separated by course enrollment except during the ninth grade. Starting with the sophomore year, students are separated primarily in physical education. Provision is made for children from the same family to attend the same school.

An executive principal oversees the schools and the common-use facilities. A staff assistant, the educational program coordinator, provides overall leadership for curriculum and instruction.

This *Practitioner* was prepared by Bernard Davis and Scott Thomson of the Research Department, NASSP. A note of appreciation goes to all schools supplying descriptions of their programs. A special "thanks" is extended to Roxee W. Joly, Superintendent, High Schools Division, New York City Board of Education, for providing an extensive description of that city's schools-within-schools program.

The Practitioner is a publication of the Research Department of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091. *The Practitioner* is distributed quarterly without charge to all NASSP members. Additional copies may be ordered: single copies 50c each, 2-10 copies, 30c each; prices for larger quantities on request. **Payment must accompany orders of $10 or less.**