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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this paper is to advance an argument for restructuring Alaska's primary school programs, a change that is considered to be urgently needed. A second purpose is to explain the elements that are part of a restructured primary school's learning program. A third purpose is to indicate primary school restructuring models currently under development in Alaska. Discussion focuses on elements of a strong early childhood program, including language development; home language as the initial language of instruction; whole language; developmental appropriateness (in the areas of curricuum, teaching strategies, social and emotional development, parent/teacher relations, and student evaluation); culturally appropriate developmental activities; community-based primary schools; and smaller class size. Appendices provide the National Association for the Education of Young Children's profiles of appropriate and inappropriate education in the primary grades, and a chart of how parent/child interaction affects student achievement. (RH)

Rethinking and Restructuring Alaska's Primary Schools: Kindergarten Through Fourth Grade

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Alaska Commissioner of Education

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A serious nationwide debate to determine how our youngest school children can best be taught is under way.

At stake is the very health of our country's economic and political future. Will America and Alaska enter the 21st Century economically competitive? Will emerging generations have the stuff it takes to carry them into the next century with the ability to maintain the affluence that most of their parents now take for granted? Will our society be able to offer opportunities to growing numbers and percentages of American minority populations so they can break an oppressive cycle of poverty to become meaningful contributors to society?

Since the 1983 report A Nation at Risk was published, a massive school improvement effort has been underway. Most state and local efforts have been aimed at increasing standards in our nation's secondary schools. Despite these efforts serious problems persist in our nation's schools. A recent survey sponsored by Allstate Insurance Company and Fortune Magazine found that 62 percent of executives polled believe they are now encumbered by public education (National School Public Relations Association, 1989). Nearly 70 percent of service-oriented companies feel hindered by schools. Forty-eight percent said it is difficult to hire new employees with good basic skills and 46 percent said that this lack of skills reduces productivity. Seventy-seven percent rated public schools as fair or poor. And over the next 10 years, 51 percent said they expect hiring qualified employees will become more difficult.

In Alaska, about 30 percent of entering high school freshmen do not graduate. The dropout rate is estimated to be double the rate in urban schools for Alaska Natives as it is in rural schools. (Hooker, 1988; Baker-Benally, 1987). Although the dropout rate is not as low in rural areas (Kleinfeld, 1985), scores on national achievement tests are very low, in some cases among the lowest in the nation. (Alaska Department of Education, 1988 and 1989).

What does all this have to do with Alaska's elementary schools, particularly the youngest children in kindergarten through grade four? There is a growing concern that it may be too late when we try to repair the fundamental problems that present barriers to learning while students are in high school or even in junior high school. So instead of intervention and remediation, why not try prevention? Anne Dillman, a member of the New Jersey State Board of Education, captured this concept in a recent cover article on how young children learn in Newsweek magazine: "When the product doesn't come out right, you try to fix it at the end. But we really have to start at the beginning."

Ernest Boyer of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in the same article, said: "We've made remarkable breakthroughs in understanding the development of children, the development of learning and the climate that enhances that. What we know in theory and what we're doing in the classroom are very different."

The knowledge that Boyer was pointing to has been well summarized and promoted by a number of interest groups, most notably the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The theory that Boyer refers to is what NAEYC calls "developmentally appropriate" curriculum and instructional methods for children between 5 and 8 years old. What Boyer identifies as "very different" activities are what NAEYC and other organizations now term "inappropriate practices." (NAEYC; National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 1987).

The National Association of State Boards of Education calls for sweeping reform of the education of children ages 4 through 8. (Right from the Start, 1988). The NASBE report, developed by a task force of influential Americans, including Alaska's First Lady Michael Cowper, boldly recommended that early childhood units be established in elementary schools to provide new methods of working with children ages 4-8 and a central point to improve services for preschool children and their parents. The "early childhood units" that NASBE recommends represent no less than a fundamental restructuring of the system by which our nation's schools deliver educational programs to our youngest students. Specifically, the report recommends:

- A curriculum and classroom environment that responds to learning patterns of children within a given age range, to individual differences among children, and to cultural and linguistic diversity among children.

- A program that actively involves and supports parents as partners in development of their children.

- A program that responds to the comprehensive needs of children for health, nutrition, child care, social and emotional support, and language development as well as cognitive development.

- A program that draws on the resources and expertise of all agencies and informal networks in the community to provide continuity for children in their daily schedules and as they grow and develop.

It is especially important that the restructured primary school build upon the many successes of proven early childhood and parenting programs in Alaska and around the country, particularly Head Start programs. It is equally important that the eventual successes revealed over time in the newly restructured primary schools be applied to the higher grades, i.e., fifth grade and beyond.

The design of the effective early childhood and parenting program was described in 1988 when the Alaska Department of Education called for a "broad based Alaska strategy to address early childhood and parenting issues in as comprehensive a manner as possible." (Demmert, 1988).

It is hoped that this paper puts forth a convincing argument supporting the urgent need to restructure Alaska's primary school programs. A secondary purpose is to explain the elements that are part of the restructured primary school's learning program. A third purpose is to point out primary school restructuring models currently under development in Alaska.

Elements of a Strong Early Childhood Program

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT--The development of a solid language base at an early age is the single most important element for academic achievement and cognitive development. If children do not gain a suitable language base from which to learn a variety of skills and develop essential intelligences they will fail. They will fail in school, they will fail as workers, they will fail to reach their full potential socially, culturally, emotionally, and intellectually. A solid language base, so important in early life, is also the essential ingredient for a student's success in school, and during life after school, whether college, vocational-technical school or work.

Several recent findings support the development of a strong language base:

- Low scores of students taking nationally normed tests in English when it is not their first language and they have not developed the second language skills to demonstrate their knowledge or present an understanding of the subject. (Alaska Department of Education 1988 and 1989).

- Examples of success in circumpolar countries where schools use Native languages as a base for learning the dominant language of their country and for learning other languages. (Keskitalo, 1986; Hakuta, 1986).

- Recent research findings concerning the ease with which students are able to learn more than one language very early in life, and the extent to which they are able to keep the languages separate. (Cummins, February 1986).

- A gradual recognition that an understanding of language and language usage is critical to learning and that a language base must be established early in life. (Cummins, 1986). In fact, research shows that there is a critical period between ages two and four when a child's special intelligence becomes active for the single purpose of learning language (Chomsky, 1966).

HOME LANGUAGE--The importance of using one's home language as the initial language of instruction is becoming more clearly understood. Bilingualism is no longer recognized as a valid cause of minority students' academic failures. It is, rather, the failure to provide students the opportunity to develop conceptual and analytic thought skills in the home language as a base for learning a second language that contributes to academic difficulties. (Cummins, 1986). Again, the complementing influences of the home and school on language and cultural transmission are recognized as very important to intellectual development. It is crucial, therefore, for the school to be very sensitive of the student's home situation. If the student's home language is other than English, then it is appropriate for the school to provide instruction in the home language, introduce English as a second language and continue to develop the student's abilities in both languages. (Cavazos, 1989). If English is not used in the home, it is better to use the first language in school than a poor quality English. Children who have neither a quality first or second language (English) have a language development deficit and may always be behind in school. (Saville-Troike, 1973). Therefore it is extremely important for schools to develop language arts programs with specially trained teachers and well thought out curriculum for these students.

An effectively restructured primary school, whose students are well grounded in the home language and the second language (English), will exhibit a school climate conducive to success in learning, largely due to the acceptance by teachers of the first language of the students and the culture. It must be noted that widespread school failure does not occur in minority groups that are positively oriented towards both their own and the dominant culture, that do not perceive themselves as inferior to the dominant group and that are not alienated from their own cultural values. (Fuererstein, 1979). More bluntly, Fuererstein (1979) attributes academic failure to the disruption of intergenerational transmission processes caused by the alienation of a group from its own culture.

WHOLE LANGUAGE--A "whole language" approach to learning language is based on the premise that children learn language by hearing it, using it, writing it, thinking it and reading it. There is no isolation of words when using language in a natural way. (Hayward, 1988). In addition, whole language integrates oral and written language, and it integrates development in both with learning across the curriculum. (Goodman, 1986).

Where a whole language approach attempts to integrate language instruction, the common way schools teach language is to focus on the separate parts of reading, a departure from the natural way children use language. A common approach will often present separate classes or lessons "in reading, in writing, or in separation of skills from content where individual lessons in uses of comma or noun-verb agreement were taught in and for themselves." (Buckley, 1989). Continues Buckley:

> Whole language learning also refers to the student as a whole, head and heart, feelings and thinking, personal experiences and public. The new curriculum centers on the learner whose prior experiences must be brought to bear on the new information. Only by connecting prior knowledge with the new knowledge can learning happen. The student as a whole human being learns developmentally, through process. If learning is considered a process, then the student begins with 'first draft' thinking and language. Usually a student 'first draft' is personal, ideographic, and emotional. Teachers build on this and advance the student to a more public, substantiated, reasoned thinking and language.

A key to whole language instruction is to build allies of parents to help in their children's attempts at becoming literate. (Fields, 1988). If teachers effectively work with parents to help them understand the whole language approach, "These informed parents will be able to teach children to read as well as they taught them to talk," says Fields.

Taking this strategy a step farther, parents who cannot read or read well also can be useful partners in helping their children learn to read. This can be accomplished through story telling. But the restructured primary school must establish literacy programs aimed at helping parents become more complete and more effective partners in helping their children read.

DEVELOPMENTAL APPROPRIATENESS--According to National Association for the Education of Young Children, the concept of developmental appropriateness has two dimensions, age and individuality.

> Age appropriateness. Human development research indicates that there are universal, predictable milestones of growth and change that occur in children during the first nine years of life. These predictable changes occur in all domains of development--physical, emotional, social and cognitive. Knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a framework from which teachers prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences.
>
> Individual appropriateness. Each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style and family background. Both the curriculum and adults' interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences. Learning in young children is the result of interaction between the child's thoughts and experiences with materials, ideas and people. When these experiences match the child's developing abilities, while also challenging the child's interest and understanding, learning will take place.

Many schools still do not offer a developmentally appropriate program for young children. Instead many schools continue to deliver education through a rigid lecture style, an educational setting more familiar to younger children's older siblings in junior high and high school (an approach with dubious value at any grade level). Young children are spending countless hours silently filling in notebook worksheets with information learned by rote. Their days are chopped up into 55-minute blocks with subjects taught in isolation from one another. Students' individual learning styles are ignored. So are their cultural and ethnic differences. Their teachers are being evaluated and rewarded if their young students score well on nationally standardized tests that measure an extremely limited base of knowledge and set of skills. In addition these tests are being used to reward administrators, affect the allocation of resources to school districts and result in changes to the curriculum. (Bredekamp & Shepard, 1989). (Meisels, S.J.,in press).

Many of these same teachers have not been trained in the latest research-based theory and practice proven effective for teaching young children.

NAEYC, in a publication entitled Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (1988), describes appropriate practices for primary grade (K-4) children. Since these important practices represent the best and most widely accepted thinking on the subject today, it is tempting to quote the developmentally appropriate practices in their entirely. However, for the sake of brevity and flow, we will instead summarize the practices here and list all the practices as published by NAEYC in Appendix A of this paper. Appendix B will list what NAEYC believes are inappropriate practices.

NAEYC has developed appropriate practices for a number of major areas. A summary follows:

CURRICULUM GOALS-Teaching goals are designed to develop children's knowledge and skills in all developmental areas, including physical, social, emotional and intellectual, and to help the child learn how to build a base for lifelong learning, improve self esteem, and develop positive feelings toward learning. Further, each child is viewed as a unique individual and as such educators need to develop curriculum and instruction practices that respond to individual differences. Different levels of ability, development and learning styles are expected, accepted and used to design curriculum.

TEACHING STRATEGIES--Curriculum is integrated so that children's learning in all traditional subject areas occurs primarily through projects and learning centers that teachers plan and that reflect children's interests and suggestions. The curriculum is integrated so that learning occurs primarily though projects, learning centers and playful activities that reflect the expressed interests of children. Teachers use planning time to prepare an environment to provide opportunities for children to learn through active involvement among themselves, with adults, with older children serving as tutors and with materials. In addition, children should also learn in small groups working and playing cooperatively. Finally, learning materials and activities need to be concrete, real and relevant to children's lives.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM--Teachers provide generous amounts of time and a variety of interesting activities for children to develop language, writing, spelling and reading ability such as looking through , reading , or being read high quality children's literature. Goals are established in math, social studies, science, health and safety, art, music, movement and dance with children's interests considered and learning occurring through group projects, spontaneous play, research, experimenting, exploring, and through other creative and meaningful activities and strategies.

GUIDANCE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT--Teachers promote prosocial behavior, perseverance, industry and independence. They encourage individual choice and provide many opportunities for developing social skills. Teachers at all times facilitate the development of social skills as part of the curriculum.

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONS--Teachers not only view parents as partners in the educational process, but visit with parents at school and at the home of the parent. Teachers are respectful of cultural and family differences.

EVALUATION--Children's progress is assessed through observation and recording at regular intervals. Results are used to improve and individualize instruction. No letter or number grades are given during the primary years.

Other organizations, most recently the National Association of State Boards of Education, strongly endorse the NAEYC practices. "We agree with the developmentally appropriate curriculum approach defined by (NAEYC)," NASBE states in its book Right from the Start (1988).

NASBE suggests the goals developed for primary schools should:

- provide children with a wide range of experiences
- attend to all key aspects of child development
- support effective and appropriate teaching and classroom environments. (Right from the Start, 1988).

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES--Twenty-two of Alaska's 54 school districts each have enrollments that exceed 75 percent Alaska Natives. Nine additional districts have at least 50 percent Natives enrolled in their classrooms and seven more have at least one-quarter of their student body composed of Alaska Natives. It is, however, still difficult to find meaningful and effective culturally appropriate developmental activities for Native children. Only 3.2 percent of Alaska's 6,500 teachers are Natives, indicating a dearth of cultural role models. This is caused in part by a formal system of education that has rejected the need for:

- accommodating and incorporating traditional systems of minority communities, and
- reflecting the traditional community's knowledge base and unique perspectives of the world.

It is critical for the restructured primary school to encourage appropriate cultural role models, just as it is critical for such schools to learn about and integrate cultural differences into programs reflective of the community the school serves. Languages and learning styles distinctive to a given community and use of family and community members to impart content and skills in ways that have worked for centuries are hallmarks of the effectively restructured school. The school also must recognize and respect cultural mores (fixed customs), values and traditions. This can be accomplished, in part, in several ways: by training and hiring more Native teachers and teacher aides in the classroom; by teaching these skills to teachers and teacher aides so that they are knowledgeable about their students' cultural history, cultural arts (music, dance, visual arts, theater), and traditional ways of learning science, medicine, politics, and social organization and structure; and by developing learning-teaching partnerships with respected Alaska Natives knowledgeable about their culture and language. For example, Natives on the North Slope can estimate the distance over the ice pack to open water by determining the distance from shore of dark clouds on the horizon. This important skill requires a sophisticated knowledge of vector triangles.

Alaska Natives who possess expert knowledge of their culture are an important source of this type of training for teachers and their aides.

COMMUNITY-BASED PRIMARY SCHOOLS--Research has long shown the benefits of meaningful parent involvement. In fact it has become almost axiomatic that wherever there is a strong educational program there will be a correspondingly strong planned, systematic program of parent involvement in the child's education, no matter the level of the child's schooling. (National School Public Relations Association, 1986). More recently, the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Association for the Education of Young Children have reconfirmed this notion by recommending that primary schools develop parent partnerships. (Right from the Start, 1988). (NAEYC, 1988).

Stanford Research Institute published research in 1973 which showed the corresponding residual effects of involvement between parent and student in the educational process. (Journal of Educational Public Relations, 1988). The chart in Appendix C shows how active parent involvement, a parent's positive self-image about his or her own competence to participate in the child's education, and how the child's perception that the parent believes education is important all lead to the student's improved performance in school and on tests.

In addition, The National Association of State Boards of Education also recommended that primary schools develop partnerships with other early childhood programs and community agencies to help improve the quality of parent involvement and to build and improve services for young children and their families. (Right from the Start, 1988)

It is important that these partnerships be cultivated. Universities can offer training to teachers and teacher aides; they can help provide research. Local businesses, agencies, and Native corporations can provide additional expertise.

Given the diversity of cultures and languages in Alaska, restructuring efforts in Alaska's public schools must include participation of the Alaska Native community. A good first step would be to ask Alaska Native parents of each community to identify elements of their traditional knowledge that should be part of the school curriculum. This is crucial because growing evidence from research indicates improvement in academic achievement when minority students' language and culture are accepted as part of the school curriculum (Cummins, Feb. 1966). Not only will the development of a partnership in education with the Alaska Native community ensure Native involvement in the education of their children, it will also provide an avenue through which the sophisticated traditional knowledge of the Alaska Native groups can be formally taught.

SMALLER CLASS SIZE--Class size is an important consideration for effective primary programs. NASBE's Right from the Start recommends that local school officials:

> Review the need for additional resources necessary to support developmentally appropriate early childhood programs, e.g., limiting the group size (for 3 and 4 year olds, no more than 20 children with 2 adults; for 5-8 year olds, no more than 25 children with 2 adults or 15-18 children with one teacher.)

The argument for smaller class size is borne out in the research of Gene Glass and Mary Lee Smith (1979). Their meta-analysis of recent class size research shows that significant gains in student achievement are not achieved until a class size of 15 students to one teacher is reached. This 15:1 pupil to teacher ratio has been supported by the National Education Association since 1969. (Tomlinson, 1988).

It must be pointed out that reducing class size in Alaska's kindergarten through fourth grade classrooms will necessitate a large financial increase, not only for the additional numbers of teachers needed to attain the lower class size, but also to build new school buildings to house the added classrooms. Knowing this, the Department of Education believes that attaining smaller class sizes is so important in the early grades that Alaska's policy makers need to seriously consider this issue.

The First Partnership

The first partnership needed for primary schools that aim to restructure is a broad based coalition among the local community to develop a process and a plan for restructuring its primary school or schools based upon local desires. Public school officials should convene the forum. The superintendent, principal or school board president should invite teachers and other educators, school board members, parents, early childhood professionals, language professionals and community leaders. The topic of the forum is to develop a consensus on how to effectively restructure K–4 primary schools. The immediate goal of the forum is to develop a plan for doing so.

Program Models

A number of models for restructuring primary schools are being developed across Alaska. Seven schools from five school districts sent teams to a week long K–4 restructuring conference in June 1989. The teams consisted of the school's principal, teachers, support staff, school board members, and community members, who may be members of the local Congress of Parents and Teachers (commonly known as the PTA). Nine nationally known experts with experience in restructuring primary schools led the teams over the five day period to help each school in attendance build an elementary school restructuring plan. These restructuring efforts should provide Alaska with a wealth of knowledge about restructuring schools in a variety of Alaska settings, from one of Alaska's largest urban school districts to schools in small remote, Native communities. Plans should be completed early in the 1989–90 school year, and will be available from the schools and the Department of Education.

Next Steps

Earlier in this paper, the hope was expressed that this paper puts forth an argument supporting the urgent need to restructure Alaska's primary schools. It was also stated that a secondary purpose is to explain the elements that are part of the restructured primary school's program, as was a third purpose to provide several examples or models of effective primary schools. It is hoped that these purposes have been accomplished.

The Department of Education pledges itself to continue its efforts to expand the awareness for the urgent need to restructure Alaska's primary schools, and to spur on restructuring activities whenever the opportunities arise, whether at the state level, or, preferably, at the local school level.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES--The following is a list of activities at minimum that readers can expect from the Department of Education on an ongoing basis:

- Nurture the development of seven model primary school restructuring projects that began in June 1989.
- Develop a school restructuring network to include Alaska educators who are involved in school restructuring efforts.
- Promote school restructuring in formal and informal public appearances before groups and conferences.
- Disseminate written materials about school restructuring projects.
- Invite schools undertaking restructuring projects to share their ideas with the Commissioner of Education and his staff.
- Recruit educators and parents as agents of change for the express purpose of expanding the school restructuring effort.

Appendix A

Appropriate Education in the Primary Grades
The National Association for the Education of Young Children

Appropriate Practices for Curriculum Goals:

Curriculum is designed to develop children's knowledge and skills in all developmental areas--physical, social, emotional, and intellectual--and to help children learn how to learn, to establish a foundation for lifelong learning.

Curriculum and instruction are designed to develop children's self-esteem, sense of competence, and positive feelings toward learning.

Each child is viewed as a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth. Curriculum and instruction are responsive to individual differences in ability and interests. Different levels of ability, development, and learning styles are expected, accepted, and used to design curriculum. Children are allowed to move at their own pace in acquiring important skills including those of writing, reading, spelling, math, social studies, science, art, music, health, and physical activity. For example, it is accepted that not every child will learn how to read at age 6, most will learn to read by 7, and some will need intensive exposure to appropriate literacy experiences to learn to read by age 8 or 9.

Appropriate Practices for Teaching Strategies:

The curriculum is integrated so that children's learning in all traditional subject areas occurs primarily through projects and learning centers that teachers plan and that reflect children's interests and suggestions. Teachers guide children's involvement in projects and enrich the learning experience by extending children's ideas, responding to their questions, engaging them in conversation, and challenging their thinking.

The curriculum is integrated so that learning occurs primarily through projects, learning centers, and playful activities that reflect current interests of children. For example, a social studies project such as building and operating a store, or a science project such as furnishing and caring for an aquarium, provides focused opportunities for children to plan, dictate, and/or write their plans (using invented and teacher-taught spelling), to draw and write about their activity, to discuss what they are doing, to read nonfiction books for needed information, to work cooperatively with other children, to learn facts in a meaningful context, and to enjoy learning. Skills are taught as needed to accomplish projects.

Teachers use much of their planning time to prepare the environment so children can learn through active involvement with each other, with adults and older children serving as informal tutors, and with materials. Many learning centers are available for children to choose from. Many centers include opportunities for writing and reading: for example, a tempting library area for browsing through books, reading silently, or sharing a book with a friend; a listening station; and places to practice writing stories and play math or language games. Teachers encourage children to evaluate their own work and to determine where improvement is needed, and assist children in figuring out for themselves how to improve their work. Some work is corrected in small groups where children take turns giving feedback to one another and correcting their own papers. Errors are viewed as a natural and necessary part of learning. Teachers analyze children's errors and use the information obtained to plan curriculum and instruction.

Individual children or small groups are expected to work and play cooperatively or alone in learning centers and on projects they usually select themselves or are guided to by the teacher. Activity centers are changed frequently so children have new things to do. Teachers and children together select and develop projects. Frequent outings and visits from resource people are planned. Peer tutoring as well as learning from others through conversation while at work or play occurs daily.

Learning materials and activities are concrete, real, and relevant to children's lives. Objects children can manipulate and experiment with such as blocks, cards, games, and scientific equipment are readily accessible. Tables are used for children to work alone or in small groups. A variety of work places and spaces is provided and flexibly used.

Appropriate Practices for Integrated Curriculum:

The goals of the language and literacy program are for children to expand their ability to communicate verbally and through reading and writing, and to enjoy these activities. Technical skills or subskills are taught as needed to accomplish the larger goals, not as the goal itself. Teachers provide generous amounts of time and a variety of interesting activities for children to develop language, writing, spelling and reading ability such as looking through, reading, or being read high quality children's literature and nonfiction for pleasure and information; drawing, dictating, and writing about their activities or fantasies; planning and implementing projects that involve research at suitable levels of difficulty; creating teacher-made or child-written lists of steps to follow to accomplish a project; discussing what they read; preparing a weekly class newspaper; interviewing various people to obtain information for projects; making books of various kinds (riddle books, what-if books, books about pets); listening to recordings or viewing high quality films of children's books; being read at least one high quality book or part of a book each day by adults or older children; using the school library and the library area of the classroom regularly.

Some children read aloud daily to the teacher, another child, or a small group of children, while others do so weekly. Subskills such as learning letters, phonics, and word recognition are taught as needed to individual children and small groups through enjoyable games and activities. Teachers use the teacher's edition of the basal reader series as a guide to plan projects and hands-on activities relevant to what is read and to structure learning situations. Teachers accept children's invented spelling with minimal reliance on teacher-prescribed spelling lists. Teachers also teach literacy as the need arises when working on science, social studies, and other content areas.

The goal of the math program is to enable children to use math through exploration, discovery, and solving meaningful problems. Math activities are integrated with other relevant projects, such as science and social studies. Math skills are acquired through spontaneous play, projects, and situations of daily living. Teachers use the teacher's edition of the math textbook as a guide to structure learning situations and to stimulate ideas about interesting math projects. Many math manipulatives are provided and used. Interesting board and card games, paper-and-pencil and other kinds of games are used daily. Noncompetitive, impromptu oral "math stumper," and number games are played for practice.

Social studies themes are identified as the focus of work for extended periods of time. Social studies concepts are learned through a variety of projects and playful activities involving independent research in library books; excursions and interviewing visitors; discussions; relevant use of language, writing, spelling (invented and teacher-taught), and reading skills; and opportunities to develop social skills such as planning, sharing, taking turns, and working in committees. The classroom is treated as a laboratory of social relations, and children explore values, learn rules of social living, and respect for individual differences through experience. Relevant art, music, dance, and games are incorporated in social studies.

Discovery science is a major part of the curriculum, building on children's natural interest in the world. Science projects are experimental and exploratory and encourage active involvement of every child. The science program takes advantage of natural phenomena such as the outdoors, and the classroom includes many plants and pets for which children provide care daily. Through science projects and field trips, children learn to plan, dictate, and/or write their plans; to apply thinking skills such as hypothesizing, observing, experimenting, and verifying; and many science facts related to their own experience.

A variety of health and safety projects (such as nutrition, dental health, handwashing) are designed to help children learn many personalized facts about health and safety; to integrate their learning into their daily habits; to plan, dictate, and/or write their plans; to draw and write about these activities; to read silently and aloud; and to enjoy learning because it is related to their lives.

Art, music, movement, dance and opportunities for other physical activity are integrated throughout each day as relevant to the curriculum and as needed for children to express themselves aesthetically and physically, and to express ideas and feelings.

Specialists work with classroom teachers and children. Children explore and experiment with various art media and forms of music.

Multicultural and nonsexist activities and materials are provided to enhance individual children's self-esteem and to enrich the lives of all children with respectful acceptance and appreciation of differences and similarities.

Outdoor activity is planned daily so children can develop large muscle skills, learn about outdoor environments, and express themselves freely.

Appropriate Practices for Guidance of Social-Emotional Development:

Teachers promote prosocial behavior, perseverance, industry, and independence by providing many stimulating, motivating activities; encouraging individual choices; allowing as much time as needed for children to complete work; and ensuring moments of private time alone with the teacher or with a close friend.

Children have many opportunities daily to develop social skills such as cooperating, helping, negotiating, and talking with the person involved to solve interpersonal problems. Teachers facilitate the development of social skills at all times, as part of the curriculum.

Teachers promote the development of children's consciences and self-control through positive guidance techniques, including setting clear limits in a positive manner; involving children in establishing rules for social living and in problem solving about misbehavior; redirecting children to an acceptable activity; conferencing with an individual child who is having problems or with children and their parents. Teachers maintain their perspective about misbehavior, recognizing that every infraction does not warrant attention and identifying those that can be used as learning opportunities.

Appropriate Practices for Parent-Teacher Relations:

Teachers view parents as partners in the educational process. Teachers have time for periodic conferences with each child's parents. Parents' visits to school are welcomed at all times, and home visits by teachers are encouraged. Teachers listen to parents, seek to understand their goals for their children, and are respectful of cultural and family differences.

Appropriate Practices for Evaluation:

No letter or number grades are given during the primary years. Grades are considered inadequate reflections of children's ongoing learning.

Each child's progress is assessed primarily though observation and recording at regular intervals. Results are used to improve and individualize instruction. No letter or number grades are given. Children are helped to understand and correct their errors.

Appendix B

Inappropriate Education in the Primary Grades
The National Association for the Education of Young Children

Inappropriate Practices for Curriculum Goals

The curriculum is narrowly focused on the intellectual domain with intellectual development narrowly defined as acquisition of discrete, technical academic skills, without recognition that all areas of children's development are interrelated.

Children's worth is measured by how well they conform o group expectations, such as their ability to read at grade level, and their performance on standardized tests.

Children are evaluated against a standardized group norm. All are expected to achieve the same narrowly defined, easily measured academic skills by the same predetermined time schedule typically determined by chronological age and grade level expectations.

Inappropriate Practices for Teaching Strategies

Curriculum is divided into separate subjects and time is carefully allotted for each, with primary emphasis given each day to reading and secondarily to math. Other subjects such as social studies, science, and health are covered if time permits. Art, music, and physical education are taught only once a week and only by teachers who are specialists in those areas.

Instructional strategies revolve around teacher-directed reading groups that take up most of every morning: lecturing to the whole group, total class discussion, and paper-and-pencil practice exercises or worksheets to be completed silently by children working individually at desks. Projects, learning centers, play, and outdoor time are seen as embellishments and are offered only if time permits, or as a reward for good behavior.

Teachers use most of their planning time to prepare and correct worksheets and other seatwork. Little time is available to prepare enriching activities, such as those recommended in the teacher's edition of each textbook series. A few interest areas are available for children who finish their seatwork early, or children are assigned to a learning center to complete a prescribed sequence of teacher-directed activity within a controlled time period.

During most worktimes, children are expected to work silently and alone on worksheets or other seatwork. Children rarely are permitted to help each other at worktime. Penalties for talking are imposed.

Available materials are limited primarily to books, workbooks, and pencils. Children are assigned permanent desks, and desks are rarely moved. Children work in a large group most of the time, and no one can participate in a playful activity until all work is finished.

The goal of the reading program is for each child to pass the standardized tests given throughout the year at or near grade level. Reading is taught as the acquisition of skills and subskills. Teachers teach reading only as a discrete subject. When teaching other subjects, they do not feel they are teaching reading. A sign of excellent teaching is considered to be silence in the classroom and so conversation is allowed infrequently during select times. Language, writing, and spelling instruction are focused on workbooks. Writing is taught as grammar and penmanship. The focus of the reading program is the basal reader, used only in reading groups and accompanying workbooks and worksheets. The teacher's role is to prepare and implement the reading lesson in the teacher's guidebook for each group each day and to see that other children have enough seatwork to keep them busy throughout the reading group time. Phonics instruction stresses learning rules rather than developing understanding of systematic relationships between letters and sounds. Children are required to complete worksheets or to complete the basal reader, although they are capable of reading at a higher level. Everyone knows which children are in the slowest reading group. Children's writing efforts are rejected if correct spelling and standard English are not used.

Math is taught as a separate subject at a scheduled time each day. A math textbook with accompanying workbooks, practice sheets, and board work is the focus of the math program. Teachers move sequentially through the lessons as outlined in the teacher's edition of the text. Seldom is time available for recommended hands-on activities. Only children who finish their math seatwork are permitted to use the few math manipulatives and games in the classroom. Timed tests on number facts are given and graded daily. Competition between children or groups of children (boys versus girls, Row 1 versus Row 2) is used to motivate children to learn math facts.

Social studies instruction is included occasionally after the reading and math programs are completed. Social studies projects are usually related to holidays, are brief activities from the social studies textbook, or a commercially developed weekly newspaper is read and the accompanying seatwork is done.

Science is taught mainly from a single textbook or not at all. Children complete related worksheets on science topics. Science consists of memorizing facts or watching teacher-demonstrated experiments. Field trips occur rarely or not at all. A science area may have a few plants, seashells, or pine cones that have been there many months and are essentially ignored by the children.

Health is taught with the aid of posters and a textbook. A health lesson is scheduled once a week or a unit on health is completed once a year.

Art, music, and physical education are taught as separate subjects only once a week. Specialists do not coordinate closely with classroom teachers.

Representational art evaluated for approximations to realism is emphasized. Children are expected to follow specific directions resulting in identical projects. Crafts substitute for artistic expression.

Cultural and other individual differences are ignored. Children are expected to adapt to the dominant culture. The lack of a multicultural component in the curriculum is justified by the homogeneity of the group, ignoring the fact that we live in a diverse society.

Outdoor time is limited because it is viewed as interfering with instructional time, or if provided, is viewed as recess (a way for children to use up excess energy).

Inappropriate Practices for Guidance of Social-Emotional Development

Teachers lecture about the importance of appropriate social behavior and use punishment or deprivations (such as no recess) when children who become restless and bored with seatwork whisper, talk, or wander around, or when children dawdle and do not finish their work in the allotted time. Teachers do not have time for private conversations with children, and only the most able students finish their work in time for special interests or interaction with other children.

Little time is available for children to practice social skills in the classroom because they are seated and doing silent, individual work or are involved in teacher-directed groups. The only opportunities for social interaction occur on the playground, but the teacher is not present unless it is his/her playground duty day, and therefore children don't have a consistent, familiar adult to help them with problems.

Teachers place themselves in an adversarial role with children, emphasizing their power to reward acceptable behavior and punish unacceptable behavior. Their primary goal is maintaining control of the classroom. Teachers spend considerable time enforcing rules, giving external rewards for good behavior, and punishing infractions. When social conflicts arise, the teacher intervenes, separating and quieting participants and avoiding the social issue. Whether intentional or not, the teacher's attitude often feels demeaning to the child.

Inappropriate Practices for Parent-Teacher Relations

Teachers are not given time for work with parents. Subtle messages convey that schools are for teachers and children, not parents. Teachers view parents' role as carrying out the school's agenda.

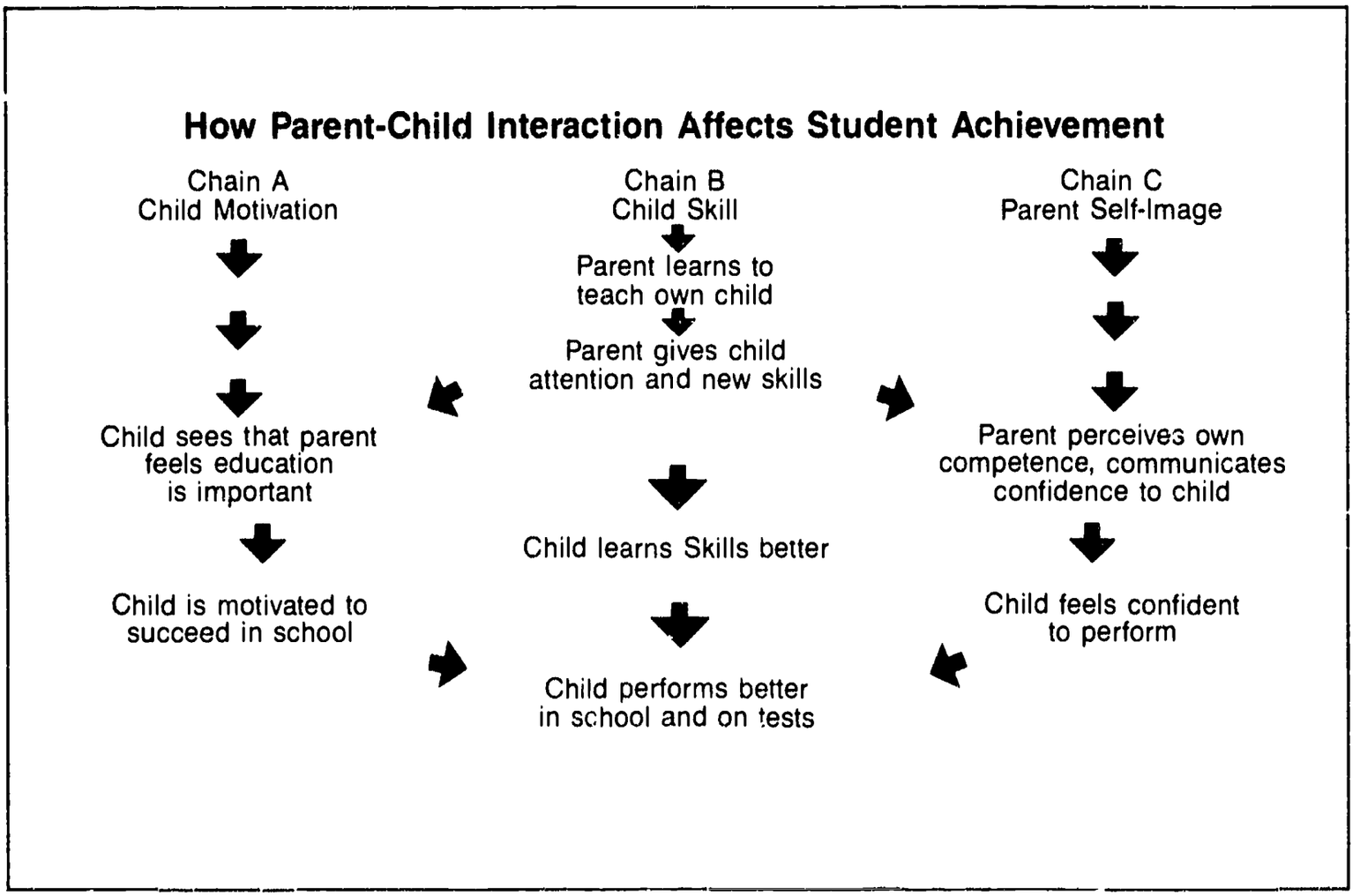
Inappropriate Practices for Evaluation

Grades are seen as important in motivating children to do their work.

Children are tested regularly on each subject. Graded tests are sent home or are filed after children see their grades. To ease children's stress caused by the emphasis placed on test scores, teachers "teach to the test."

APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY-BASED PRIMARY SCHOOLS



SOURCE: Mariam Sherman Stearns and Susan Peterson, "Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education Programs: Definitions and Findings," Menlo Park Educational Policy Research Center, Stanford Research Institute.
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