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ABSTRACT

The school curriculum has been under scrutiny in an attempt to improve the educational experiences of children, often in the form of federal and state control to make schools accountable for students' education. The goal of standardization is to increase minimum standards in all classrooms and to make sure that all students receive a foundation of basic skills. Yet, the result has often been to deny teachers the opportunity to use their professional skills as curriculum planners. When the curriculum is controlled by outsiders, the teachers' roles are reduced to being managers of the learning process. This study investigated the effects of the standardization of a curriculum in one school in a small midwestern public school district, the resulting influences on the implementation process, the deskilling and reskilling of teachers who use the curriculum, and teachers' compliance with and resistance to this process. The fall 1988 study focuses on one fifth-grade classroom in an elementary school that is working toward regulating the curriculum in an attempt to give students uniformity via a predetermined scope and sequence of activities. To this end, a mastery learning program has been established. Classroom observations and interviews with teachers are reported and questions are raised on the trend of a movement away from teachers as curriculum planners in favor of curriculum standardization. (JD)

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Some Effects of Curriculum Standardization on Elementary Teachers and Students

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School houses do not teach themselves- piles of brick and mortar and machinery do not send out men. It is the trained, living human soul, cultivated and strengthened by long study and thought, that breathes the real life into boys and girls and makes them human, whether they be black or white, Greek, Russian, or American. (Du Bois, 1986: 854)

Curriculum building involves setting long-term goals that are based on beliefs and values. Teaching involves factor-analyzing those goals into dependent and independent sequences of learning, diagnosing students to determine what each has achieved in that sequence, and employing psychological principles that contribute to the speed and effectiveness with which each student acquires new learning in those sequences. (Hunter, 1984: 170)

What is good teaching? What makes up good teaching; or is the question what makes up effective teaching that can be reliably measured and evaluated? Teachers have wondered and questioned what their role should be in the teaching process. Administrators, parents, and society have also struggled to define the parameters within which teachers should work, teach, and be evaluated. Conflict can arise out of the dichotomous struggle between developing a personal relationship between a teacher and the students that fosters the positive "human" growth that W.E.B. Du Bois describes, and the scientific, achievement-oriented curriculum that is currently popular in many schools. It is difficult for an elementary teacher to develop both a warm learning environment with an emphasis on each individual and try to teach reading, language arts, math, social studies, science, health, art, music, physical education, etc., in six-and-one-half hours a day while still being accountable for each child's mastery -level achievement and acquiescence to school life and rules.

Increasingly there seems to be a debate over what teachers should do in the classroom and what structure and form the curriculum should have to most effectively teach students. This is not a new interest. Obviously there has always been a concern to have excellent teachers and schools. But recently there has been a renewed interest in schools that has led to a more intense scrutiny of the school curriculum to try and improve the educational experiences of children. This control has partly been in the form of federal and state control in education to make schools accountable for students' education. One of

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the results of this goal has been a movement toward a standardization of the curriculum in American schools.

The background of the movement toward standardization lies in an attempt to make the schools more accountable to the public. The standards are planned and organized by professionals who use the psychology of learning theory and children's developmental stages to write curriculum that can be said to fit the nature and needs of children. The curriculum is often developed by subject area specialists in the various professional fields who use their expertise to develop a scope and sequence of skills that can best teach children their knowledge base. The material is tested on a sample market so that when educators use the material they can claim to the public that their students' grades are valid and reliable.

The "teacher proof" curriculum packages and standardized basal texts divorce the conceptualization and development of learning objectives from the institution of skills in the classroom. The packages supply the objectives, methods, and evaluations. Learning is preset, goals predetermined. All students go through the same basic material varied most often by pace. Students can work their way through various skill levels with success being measured by percentage grades and by "finishing". These curriculum packages can be found at all grade levels and subject areas so that any teacher can use them to develop a curriculum for students.<sup>1</sup>

A goal of standardization is to increase minimum standards in all classrooms and to make sure that all students receive a foundation of basic skills. Yet the result has often been to deny teachers the opportunity to use their professional skills as curriculum planners. When the curriculum is controlled by outsiders, the teachers' roles are reduced to being managers of the learning process. (Apple, 1982; Boston Women's Teachers' Group, 1983) This deskilling of teachers is accompanied by a reskilling process where they are retrained to concentrate on the implementation of the preplanned curriculum and the evaluation of that curriculum often using standardized formats. This not only has repercussions on teachers and their lack of a professional role in classrooms and society, but it can influence the learning process for students. It can put the emphasis on skills to be achieved versus the freedom that teachers could have to develop the curriculum around the needs and interests of individual students in the classroom.

The purpose of this paper is to report on part of an ethnography that observes how teachers actually implement the curriculum in an elementary school. The study investigates the effects of the standardization of a curriculum, the resulting influences on the implementation process, the deskilling and reskilling of teachers who use the curriculum, and their compliance and resistance to this process. The study is of one school in a small Midwestern public school district which is working toward regulating the curriculum the teachers use in an attempt to give students uniformity via a predetermined scope and sequence of activities. The study shows how a standardized curriculum is utilized by teachers and its effect on them. To a lesser degree the study also tries to examine the effects of changing curriculum forms on students and the atmosphere for learning in a classroom. This is an important analysis to be done, for though we know that curriculum use is increasingly being standardized and prepackaged for use in classrooms, we do not know what actually happens when that curriculum is instituted and the effects it has on teachers and students.

#### Bernstein's Analysis of School Knowledge

The work of Basil Bernstein can be helpful in providing a tool to analyze the knowledge presented to students and the structure and form of curriculum in schools. (Bernstein, 1977, 1982) He attempts to relate a macroanalysis of structural influences on knowledge with a microanalysis of the internal working of schools. He says that school knowledge is being produced out of the struggle for control between fractions within the middle class. Curriculum is the product of knowledge selection, its structure, and the message system of its presentation. Therefore, groups strive to have schools reflect their language and views of appropriate school knowledge. The recent debates over content and pedagogy reflect the struggle over definitions of knowledge, the valid transmission of information, and the appropriate evaluation of that knowledge.

Bernstein describes a conflict centering around the control of the classification of content, which is the status of knowledge and the degree of boundary insulation between subjects; and the framing of the pedagogical message system, which is the freedom in the relationship between teachers and students to the principles of control and maintenance over what may be transmitted. Historically in Europe and early

American schools, school knowledge had been determined by what Bernstein refers to as the old middle class. Their classification of knowledge was based on the view that subjects were separate and should be well insulated from other subjects. They were formally presented by the teachers to the students which built formalized relationships between teachers and students. There were overt codes, or regulative principles, determining what was basic knowledge for all students to study, and forms for that knowledge to be presented and evaluated.

In the recent history of the United States this has been replaced by a more integrated code system of the new middle class. This is reflected by weaker boundary divisions in subject areas. This could mean, for example, having social studies, which can include a variety of topics, versus having the more traditional subjects of geography and history. The views of the pedagogical relationships also change. The weaker framing system allows the pedagogic encounter to be determined more by the students than by the teachers alone. Though the students are allowed more control, the decreased emphasis on complete control over time and space actually allows for more surveillance of the students by the teachers.<sup>2</sup>

As classification and framing change, so do relevant meanings, realizations, and contexts. Inherent in the classification is the distribution of power; inherent in the framing is the principle of control. . . . Class structure and relationships constitute and regulate both the distribution of power and the principles of control (Bernstein, 1977: 181).

Bernstein's analysis provides us with a theoretical model of some of the changes in the curriculum in schools. There is currently a struggle over the tight classification of knowledge which has been traditionally valued by schools and a weaker classification system that has been more readily accepted in the recent past. Now as the schools are coming under attack for not properly educating the youth of this country, there has been a return to a stronger classification and framing system in the schools. Part of the goal of the standardization movement has been to return to the traditional subject divisions where content is predetermined for each school subject. Teachers are to be in control of knowledge presentation. Teaching and learning is to take place under explicit rules with divisions made between varying hierarchical levels of knowledge.

This study is actually a study of the effects of the conservative push toward a restoration of strong classification and framing systems instituted through bureaucratic control and standardization of

the curriculum over weaker classification and framing systems where teachers and students have more control over content and have a more informal relationship. The theoretical analysis provided by Bernstein is important to an understanding of what the push toward standardization is doing to the curriculum and pedagogy in schools. It results in conflict over what knowledge is to be presented to students and the form that knowledge takes, as the paper will show.

Yet Bernstein's analysis is weakened by his mechanistic account which does not show the struggle for knowledge production and control occurring daily in American schools. The curriculum may be a result of different groups' struggles for control of knowledge selection and presentation, yet one cannot divorce the reasons for this curriculum change from those who must live the experience in the classroom. So often we evaluate curriculum only by looking at test results and measurable factors such as a student's time on task and a classroom's engagement time in actual learning opportunities. There is much more to a classroom than simple looking at the science in the craft of teaching. Teachers may have external controls placed on them which influence what they do in classrooms, yet they also have some role in curriculum planning based on trying to fit the individual needs and interests of individual children in their classroom. They develop curriculum and implement it based on how they interpret those needs and based on the school environment. Students also react differently to various curriculum forms. Bernstein's analysis cannot explain how curriculum is formulated and/or contested at this level. It cannot see the impact of changing curricular forms on teachers, students, the learning environment, and the overall tenor of a classroom.

While employing Bernstein's basic theory, this paper will go beyond his analysis to see how the movement toward stronger classification and framing systems in schools may actually affect what happens in an elementary classroom. It looks beyond the quantitative measures of curriculum by using an ethnographic research format that allows a broader value system to be examined in the classrooms.

#### The Methodology of the Study

The study took place in Burr Oaks Elementary School in the small district of Lake Haven-Burr Oaks located in the Midwest.<sup>3</sup> The district was chosen because it is working toward standardizing the

curriculum in an attempt to improve the overall quality of education for its students. I began by gathering all the data that I could on the background of the school and the school community to better understand the school's history and traditions. I examined relevant documents from the local school board, administration, and the school to get a clearer picture of the setting in which the school was situated. I examined the official curriculum of the school, studying the curriculum guides, goals of the school, basal texts, and other relevant material that the teachers and school officials had.

The focus of the study was one fifth grade classroom. That classroom was observed two to three times a week for four months during the fall semester of the 1988-89 school year. All observation notes were shared with the teacher to receive her feedback and interpretations. This was done to keep the teacher informed of my project development, to let her check for accuracy, to comment on my interpretations, to gain her interpretations, and to keep a good flow of communication during the research process. Six other classrooms were observed for shorter time periods over the course of one month to see how curriculum was being used by other teachers in the school. I also attended staff and district meetings. Interviews of teachers, administrators, and students were another form of data collection used in the study. They helped in my understanding of the data by giving the insiders' views as to what was happening in the classrooms and their reactions to it, which may not be directly observable.

#### The Community and District

Burr Oaks is a small village of a little over 1000 people. The larger surrounding township has 3300 people. It is located near a large city in the Midwest, to which many of its residents commute. The countryside is rolling with good soil. It is partially prairie with some oak openings, hence its name. Most of the people in the community are in business related jobs. Others are involved in government and professional services. A smaller percentage of the population is unskilled labor. Despite the rural setting, there is only approximately three percent of the population which farms, with the largest crops being corn and alfalfa.

The middle-class population of the 130 year old village is all white. The community is proud of its "small town character and lifestyle" and works to preserve that atmosphere. The community is

particularly proud of its school. Many of the community's activities center around the school. They have only one elementary school in the village. Their middle school and high school students attend school in a nearby city; the two districts attached to make a joint school district in the early 1960's called the Lake Haven-Burr Oaks School District. The enrollment of the district is 1800 students, 428 of whom attended Burr Oaks in the 1988-89 school year.

The school district has had a change in its district curriculum over the past decade. At the beginning of the 1980's, the district had a curriculum based on curriculum guidelines which were booklets in the subject areas of language, science, and social studies, and which were divided by grade level and skills within the subjects. Objectives were written as a list of basic instructional program goals.

The curriculum guidelines were given to teachers as suggestions to use in their own curriculum development. They were not prescriptions to follow. The social studies curriculum guideline, for example, specifically stated that it should be simply a guide to provide teachers a framework within which to work, while still giving them the freedom to develop their own units and lessons based on their students' needs.

The curriculum format at the elementary level started to change in the early 1980's. The change started under the initiation of the teachers. The teachers wanted more suggestions of activities in several of the subject areas. Therefore, the teachers and administrators went through careful deliberation of various curriculum packages to consider what best fit the stated goals of their district. Series in math and science were chosen with the understanding that the teachers would still be in charge of their curriculum development and presentation, and the book series would be supplementary. Teachers reported that they were happy with the changes made in their curriculum. They had been involved in the decision-making process and were pleased with their new texts. Yet this was the time when the process of new curriculum development started to change.

The 1983-84 school year marked the arrival of a new superintendent in the Lake Haven-Burr Oaks School District. Dr. Cullen quickly started instituting a mastery learning program into the district. His definition of mastery learning is that all children can learn, given the proper amount of time. Teachers would need to present material, test it, and reteach and retest the material until all children were able to



reach 80% mastery of tested objectives. With the idea that all children can learn, his ultimate goal would be to have a report card which had the grades of 'A', 'B', and 'Incomplete' on it, assuming that all children were on their way to learning what the district defined as important for them to learn.

To successfully complete a mastery learning program, Dr. Cullen wanted to develop a common set of objectives. All teachers would be held accountable to those objectives to provide a better overall curriculum program for the students. To make those objectives be the foundation and building block of the district's curriculum would be to have an efficient program. As Dr. Cullen told me:

You have to determine certain goals and objectives for your students. You take a look at your twelve grades and move back to kindergarten, you have all those prerequisites to turn out that human being to be a productive citizen and a person who enjoys life. It's nice to talk about the Chicago Bear football game for two minutes on a Monday morning and that's great, but you can't spend three hours on it. It's nice to deviate and smell the roses, and it is all right to smell them if it is part of your objectives. You can't just do whatever you want to do. You are going to have kids who have an unbalanced curriculum. We hope our kids have a balanced curriculum. That's what our experts are advising and we're developing. And no single teacher has the right to deviate from the curriculum. Is a single teacher more important than all the colleagues that have gone together, including consultants from outside, who say this is our curriculum? You can't have one teacher who says, "No that is not right, here's an objective that I want to do." That places a lot of responsibility on that single teacher. That just doesn't go. That is chaotic.

As part of his goal to work toward mastery learning, Dr. Cullen decided to have the district re-examine its curriculum to have an overall philosophy that the administration and teachers could agree on and work toward implementing. With common objectives they would have continuity across the district about what goals were important to teach and test. Therefore, they started to work on an outcome based education program by planning a more unified curriculum based on predetermined objectives, developing a common set of instructional materials, and an assessment program to accompany the materials.

After the initial institution of mastery learning in January, 1984, the district started looking in more detail at the elementary curriculum and its perceived lack of continuity. Subject areas were considered and new curriculum planned around the mastery learning goals. There was a division among the teachers about what they wanted for the curriculum. Some teachers liked the freedom of the curriculum guidelines and others wanted supplementary materials purchased to help them with curriculum planning. Others wanted more specific materials and series purchased for the subject areas. Yet in language and later in social studies new series were purchased which replaced the curriculum guidelines. The teachers then had textbook series to be the foundation of the curriculum in all the major subject areas.

An interesting paradox is that Dr. Cullen says that the district curriculum is the curriculum guidelines which were developed by teachers and administrators. He feels that the text series, which were chosen because they follow the district's philosophy and guidelines, are supports and resources for the teachers to use. Yet the teachers, particularly those in the intermediate grade levels, report that the curriculum is the texts and nothing else and that the language and social studies textbooks were not chosen based on the curriculum guidelines. Two of the primary grade teachers did report to me that the district curriculum was the texts and the curriculum guidelines, though neither of those teachers say they ever use the guidelines or are even familiar with what the guidelines say. They only use the texts to teach from now.

Many teachers did not use the texts to plan their lessons when the texts first were acquired. As a result Dr. Cullen decided to visit every elementary classroom personally, and watch each teacher teach a lesson from the new language text. Instead of building support for the text by watching teachers teach lessons using it, many teachers reported subtle forms of resistance over the text's use. Several teachers reported that when Dr. Cullen came it would be the only time they would use the text that year. They would use their own curriculum whenever teaching language, and placate Dr. Cullen when he visited them.

During the 1987-88 school year, the teachers had a new coding system to monitor their students' progress which was introduced to them by the administration. For the most part the district had common objectives based on a common curriculum, since each elementary teacher by then had the same texts as all the other elementary teachers in reading, language, spelling, math, and science, with social studies following that year. This enabled the elementary principals to develop class profiles on every child. The class profiles were initially used in science and language and later added in other areas. They were made up of a list of all students in every classroom, and objectives from each test in science and language. The teachers filled them in by keeping track of all problems that students got right or wrong on all test questions. The objectives for each unit were matched up to the differing test questions. This required that the teachers use the texts' tests as their main source of student evaluation, instead of any of their own evaluation tools.

Teachers were required to turn these class profiles in to their principals so that the progress of the children toward an 80% mastery learning level could be followed. The teachers felt that the use of class profiles resulted in a need to use the science and language texts specifically in their curriculum in order to have the students do well on their class profiles. Whereas a year before many teachers were rarely using the language texts, this school year they felt required to use them. Teachers reported that by the time they taught toward the tests they needed to give in science and language, they had little time to present any of their own curriculum goals.<sup>4</sup> The same was true the following year in social studies. When the teachers were introduced to the new text series, they felt that they were responsible for completing the text with the students. The district's elementary teachers met in grade level meetings to plan strategies for finishing the text in one school year, which left them little time to do anything else in social studies.

To summarize, as the 1988-89 school year started in which I spent time observing at Burr Oaks Elementary School, the teachers had a mastery learning program which had an organized set of curriculum goals for their district, a common set of curriculum materials, evaluation tools to use on their children and to turn in to the district, and , also, a teacher evaluation program based on Madeline Hunter's mastery teaching.

#### Some Effects of Curriculum Standardization -

##### The Classification of Knowledge

As was earlier discussed, Bernstein said, "As classification and framing change, so do relevant meanings, realizations, and contexts." (Bernstein, 1977: 181) Therefore, it is important to consider the curriculum documents and their use to more fully understand some of the effects on the curriculum in use in classrooms. This first section will examine the actual curriculum and the classification of knowledge that it assumes.

Lake Haven-Burr Oaks had a standardized curriculum for all intents and purposes. The teachers were responsible for teaching the curriculum of the district and for testing it using the accompanying tests so that the district could examine student progress on the student profile sheets. One would not

assume that that alone would be enough to say that the district had a standardized curriculum. Yet the vast amounts of curriculum that the teachers had to get through in all subject areas made them feel as though they had little choice to use anything but that curriculum. Preparing students for the tests left them with little time for anything else. Joan Schneider, a third grade teacher, told me in an interview:

The formal curriculum in this district is basically the books at this point. Written curriculum isn't distributed to teachers beyond that. I think as part of the process they try to match the textbook with the curriculum that they have in mind, but you never can find a complete match. And teachers, for the most part, aren't aware of what they are suppose to teach beyond, besides, or in lieu of the textbook. So, pretty much, the philosophy I get to teach is the textbook. The prioritizing you get is to teach as far as you can in the textbook. . . . Beyond that there isn't a lot of time, and I think that when people are required to use a textbook real rigidly you tend to not do other things because you know that the textbook is more than you can do in a year anyway.

LuAnn Martin, a fifth grade teacher, added:

I have to say now that the formal curriculum is whatever the textbook is that has been selected. Because when I think of new teachers, now I haven't been a new teacher for several years, when new teachers come I'm sure they never get a curriculum guide that is either a K-12 or even for their grade level. I don't think they are even being reproduced or being shared anymore. So the curriculum is the language book, the math book. . . .

Teachers use the textbooks as if they are the curriculum, so the knowledge presentation in textbooks must be considered. There has been a plethora of descriptions and analyses of textbooks (Women on Words and Images, 1975; Anyon, 1983; Taxel, 1983; Apple, 1986; *Journal of Educational Policy*, 1989). A detailed review of texts and their organization is not possible here. To quickly review, the texts used by the district were organized to present facts and skills to students, present practice opportunities for students in the form of worksheets, workbooks, and suggested activities that teachers could do with students, and offer tests that could evaluate the students' performances on the facts and skills presented.

Each subject was presented as a separate subject. Reading time was a different time from math, science, or even oral reading. Since teachers had books to teach each subject and activities based on the skills of each subject, along with the fact that the teachers expressed difficulty finishing just the book work, there was a tendency to not integrate different subjects. The students were quite use to this and reacted when the subjects were not viewed separately. In Jackie Miller's room, the fifth grade teacher who was the focus of the study, the students were use to their schedule that kept all subjects separate.

Mrs. Miller read aloud to her children from 1:00 to 1:15 each day. She followed this with reading class from 1:15 to 2:00 using basal readers. One day she had been reading from the novel *Bridge to Terabithia*. When she finished reading Trent, one of her students, asked her, "Are we going to have reading now?" Mrs. Miller responded, "You mean this wasn't reading? It's a pet peeve of mine that it can't be a class if it is not out of a (text)book." Trent said, "Yeah, yeah, I know, but are we gonna have reading now?" Helen added, "We feel that way cause other teachers told us reading is out of a book."

Another example of this took place during science class. The students were divided into pairs to read three pages from the science book together and then do a worksheet. Jason and John were working together. John was quite serious about doing the reading, at least in terms of getting it done, and was bothered that Jason, who had some difficulty keeping up academically with most of the students in the room, could not keep up with him. When Jason asked him what things that he was reading meant John was not interested in answering. When John came to difficult vocabulary words, he skipped them. Mrs. Miller had asked me to work with the two, anticipating that they might need extra help. Therefore, I questioned John and Jason about some of the concepts in the reading, but John said he did not need to know them. He told me specifically that it only mattered that they finished. He then realized that the other students were done with their reading and almost done with their worksheets. He skipped over the rest of the reading and said, "Come on Jason, it doesn't matter, we've got to get the worksheet done." Science was not reading and should not be reading, and to John it did not seem important that he actually do the reading. What was important was to finish the worksheet. The two boys did finish the sheet and found some correct answers, though they did not find them based on the reading from the book. From seeing them work together, it seemed as though they guessed correctly to get the answers correct that they did get right.

The knowledge that was presented in texts was usually presented as either skills to master or facts that could be learned. Since knowledge was presented as skills or facts, teachers rarely took time to discuss the ideas that underlay the facts. Then the assignments usually asked students to practice the skills or to recite the facts to show they knew them. Students seemed to accept this view of knowledge.

Students seemed to be most interested in obtaining the correct answer on assignments, whether they understood it or not.

This was evident in Kathy Cooper's fifth grade classroom. She had students correct their own workbook assignments from the Macmillan reading series that they used. They did this as they were seated around a table at group time. The eight students one-by-one read the answers that they had. They did not check spelling, only if the answer was correct. Later the group took a reading comprehension quiz. Mrs. Cooper read the correct answers aloud after the quiz so that the students could check their own work. When students had a different answer they could decide on their own if their answers were right or wrong, because alternative ideas or phrasing of ideas were not discussed. They did not examine the students' sentences though they were to write their answers in sentences. They only checked for the right answer. Students seemed use to this orientation and accepted it without any degree of challenge.

Since the knowledge tended to be presented as skills and facts, the students lacked any discussion of meanings of what they learned. Even social and political concepts were reduced to facts or assignments that could be completed. Avis Gate's second grade was learning about the life of Martin Luther King in celebration of his birthday in January. The assignment on his birthday was to acknowledge the "I have a dream" speech. Mrs. Gates asked each of them to write about and color their dreams. She gave the students an example. She said that it had always been her dream to be able to have a slide out of her bedroom window that led to an Olympic-sized swimming pool in her backyard. That way she could get up each morning and slide right into her swimming pool. That set the tone for the kind of answers that the students gave. Mrs. Gates was able to present who Martin Luther King was and the fact that he made that famous speech, but the political implications of the speech and what he stood for were not discussed. The students did an assignment about Dr. King, without needing to know about his struggle for racial equality in the United States. They were obviously able to get through learning about Dr. King faster without having to go into detail about his beliefs, yet one could question what the students actually learned about him.

Even in presentations on the textbook curriculum teachers had trouble making the time to discuss in detail concepts that were presented. I was able to watch Miss Martin teach her fifth graders about

Native Americans. Miss Martin was taking the lesson directly from the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich fifth grade social studies book. They were reading the seven paragraph section on Indians in the southeastern part of the United States. For each paragraph Miss Martin tried to add more information, since the information from the book was general and did not present that much about the Native Americans. Yet Miss Martin was trying to present an entire culture to the students in one day. They could only spend one day on that lesson if they wanted to keep to the schedule of the social studies chapter. Miss Martin was especially feeling the pressure to do this since she was already behind, that day being December 1, and that unit was scheduled to be done one month earlier based on the fifth grade teachers' meeting at the beginning of the year discussing how fast they would have to progress to get done with the curriculum. The teachers felt the district administration really wanted them to finish and so Miss Martin was trying to not get further off schedule. Several students asked her questions relating to the topic, but she had so much to finish that she could not or would not take the time to build on and discuss their questions.

Miss Martin also had trouble taking enough time to build on the basic concepts, or lack of, that the book presented. The book, too, suffered from trying to present too much too quickly. The result was to present a very narrow picture of history, and in this case, of the Indians of the Southeast. The final paragraph of the reading selection, for example, discussed the arrival of the white people. It reads:

After the arrival of the white people, the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Seminoles were called the **Five Civilized Tribes**. They quickly accepted parts of the culture of white settlers. Many raised animals, had large farms, and became Christians. (HBJ fifth grade U.S. history text, 1988)

To present the culture of a group of people in seven paragraphs is impossible. Yet the book, in its attempt to quickly describe the people in a short time after the arrival of a new and dominant culture, failed to view that group by its own culture. They associate being civilized with the dominant group's definition, thereby defining the culture of the group by a different standard. That works to devalue the culture of the Native American peoples. It makes it seem as though the new culture was accepted as an appropriate lifestyle over their own without the struggle and repression that these people actually had to endure. Miss Martin had spent her fifty minutes for social studies discussing the location of the peoples, their lifestyle before the arrival of white people, and some about their language. Therefore, she did not

have time to even react to that view of the culture. That part of the selection was read by the students and not discussed. Its lack of discussion works to validate its knowledge as accurate and neutral.

This fact and skills based curriculum was also reinforced in the tests that the students took. The tests were mostly recall items. The tests in social studies were mainly matching, multiple choice, and true-false problems. At the end of some of the tests they had a "Thinking and Writing" section which asked the children to write a small amount about some topic that they learned. Most teachers found the tests difficult enough that they did not emphasize that section, some even dropped it entirely. The teachers tried to help their students prepare for the tests as well as they could. Their preparation was basically a teach-to-the-test format. Mrs. Miller, Miss Martin, Mrs. Cooper, and Miss Schneider all had reviews the day before their social studies tests that allowed the children to hear most of the test items asked to the group in a game situation. Even with that the tests were difficult since they tended to test details and vocabulary presented, not basic concepts of each chapter and unit. Mrs. Miller thought the first two chapter tests in social studies were too difficult for her students, and she said that she had the 'top' students. Therefore, she combined the two chapters and gave them the unit test to cover both chapters. Despite a detailed review and preparation for the test, her students' average grade was a 66.

The difficulty and dependence on tests frustrated the teachers. When teachers discussed their new social studies books, all grade levels commented as to the difficulty of the tests and their trouble getting through with the material to prepare the students for the tests. Some of the third grade teachers discussed the tests one day and commented how they had trouble with the tests taking them as adults. Miss Lynch, a third grade teacher, said in mid-October that she was still on page fifteen because the material was so difficult and she had to get through it for the test.

The same was true to varying degrees in other subject areas. The fifth grade teachers had been able to rewrite some of the fifth grade science test questions over the summer so they felt those tests were fairer. The reading tests were thought to be fairly easy for the students to get through. When Mrs. Miller had some children not reaching 80% on the reading tests, she could briefly present a few concepts and still have the children pass those sections to reach the 80% success rate. She did, however, question whether or not that brief of a presentation actually helped the students to understand the concepts better.



The teachers responded that the tests were becoming so important to the district that they felt that they were teaching to them. Miss Schneider told me that in the past she had always developed her own evaluation devices based on her students' needs. She added, "Now that teachers have to use the book, I feel that they are teaching to the test, as I am." Miss Martin's feelings concurred with this.

More and more when you are told that you will have to fill out pupil assessment or individual student profile sheets on every single student on how they did on that test given in the book then that becomes the guide on what you have to teach. And that has been a real struggle for me because I've never had that much confidence that a national publisher is making the best decision for what the kids in Lake Haven and Burr Oaks need to be learning. What's the most meaningful for them? Or for the fourth graders of our district compared to the fourth graders nationally? . . . You have a group of professionals who up until this point have had a lot of responsibility and trust placed in their judgement and now that trust is getting removed, replaced by an official curriculum, a textbook curriculum, which says to that trusted employee, "We no longer value your opinion or your judgement about what needs to be taught." Because according to the national norms, this needs to be taught, or according to Harcourt Brace this needs to be taught. And this test needs to be taught, not your test. That's where the stress comes in.

There is another side effect of the curriculum that the teachers used that certainly can occur with many curricula, but seemed to be particularly obvious because of the structure of knowledge presentation in the texts that their curriculum was based upon. That side effect is the grouping of students. Since all students learned the same knowledge, varied only by pace, every student knew how far every other student was in comparison with him or herself. It was also something that they kept track of despite the teachers avoidance of the topic.

In the third week of school when Mrs. Miller introduced her students to their new math groups which involved all three fifth grade teachers switching their students, she tried to downplay the groupings. She told her own students, "We did not go by your fourth grade groupings. And this doesn't mean you'll be in that group forever and ever. We do switching. We do more switching in fifth grade than you did in fourth grade. We might have made mistakes or you might have had an off day." After the groups were read and the students changed classes some of the students who stayed in Mrs. Miller's classroom began discussing among themselves. Terry said, "I'm surprised that John is not in a higher group. He was last year." Mrs. Miller responded, "You're all good. You did well on those (placement) tests." When all of the new students were in her room David asked, "What group is this, the middle or low?" Mrs. Miller told him, "In fifth grade we work on skills. We don't go high, middle, and low." She told them that to take the emphasis off their grouping, yet the students were accurate, the groups were

based on how the teachers perceived their math abilities. Terry was also right. John was switched fairly soon in the year to the middle math group. Soon after his move John told Oliver, "I use to be in the top math group in fourth grade, but now I am still switched down a group. Oliver replied, "I worked hard and did real well in math, but I didn't move up from the bottom group."

The use of the textbook curriculum upset many teachers who often complained about their lack of time to do their own curriculum and compared the present with years past in the district when they did have time to do more of their own curriculum work. They discussed it in terms of their lack of freedom and the absence of creativity in their classrooms.<sup>5</sup> They did not view it as anything they had control over and seemed resigned to their lack of creativity and input. Mrs. Peterson told me:

I like to say that I change the curriculum a lot, yet I think that recently I've felt very angry towards what I feel is the loss of creativity because you are trying to do so much just to try and get that curriculum done on time. And like with mastery learning, with the tally marks and all that business, I've kind of started to feel, it's been probably two years that we've been pressured to have the kids make sure that the kids can do okay on the tests, and I think that tests are good in some ways and that they don't show a thing in other ways. . . I like to be more creative and do more hands-on things, and yet at the same time I know that being creative and doing all of those hands-on activities, which I love to do, takes up a lot more time. And yet on the other hand you're feeling this 'Come on, come on, you gotta be done', 'teachers have to be accountable', 'why didn't you get chapters five, six, and seven done in second grade they're ready to go and they can't go because they still have to review what you didn't teach'. . . It ended up being real stressful for the classroom teacher.

Some effects of the process of standardizing the elementary curriculum has been to work toward a stronger classification of knowledge. Bernstein defines this as not referring "to what is classified, but to the relationships between contents. Classification refers to the nature of the differentiation between contents." (Bernstein, 1977: 88) In examining the curriculum used in this school, it is apparent that there is a movement toward a stronger classification system. This means that there is a strong division between elements of knowledge. Different parts of the curriculum are separated from other aspects of the curriculum content.

This is apparent by reviewing how the knowledge was segmented into minute facts and skills that were tested separately from other facts. Subjects were kept separate from other subjects; students did not view the teacher reading aloud to them as being reading, and reading in science as being necessary since reading was done in reading class. This was reinforced by each subject being separated in content and in time when it was presented to the children, by the assignments, and by the tests the students took which

were subdivided into skills areas that further subdivided even parts of the same subject from other parts of the subject.

This stronger classification system also has other effects. This separation segregated students and kept them separated into groups that the students believed were based on their abilities, yet in actuality, were as much based on their degree of progress through the prespecified curriculum. With the division of subjects into discrete units, it was easy to leave ideas as facts which worked to depoliticize the overall concepts presented to students. It also worked to limit the amount of creativity and control that the teachers were able to build into their curriculum. Their time was filled in teaching the curriculum given to them. Though they verbalized their discontent with this format, they had little time and, therefore, freedom to change it.<sup>6</sup>

Bernstein found the schools in the United States during the 1970's to be characterized by a weaker classification and framing system than occurred in Europe. If the occurrences of this school is similar to other schools, then it would appear that a stronger classification system, and the effects it has, is one result of the need for accountability now so prevalent in many schools in the U.S. and the need to have curriculum development and testing mechanisms that can help to ensure this. Next, it would be appropriate to question the influence that this has on the pedagogical message systems shared with students. Therefore, the framing, or the structure of the message system, of the curriculum at this school will need to be examined and considered. By doing this we will be able to examine more of the effects of the changing curriculum form on teachers and students.

#### Some Effects of Curriculum Standardization -

##### The Framing of the Message System

Bernstein argues that the strength of a school's classification system works independently from the framing system (Bernstein, 1977). In this school, however, there was a relationship between the classification and framing system. Even though the teachers did not like the strong classification of knowledge that had developed in recent years, it influenced the way they approached teaching lessons and the way they interacted with their students. In this example, the strong classification system that

developed as a result of the movement toward a standardization of knowledge, worked to develop a stronger framing system which the teachers developed as a method of coping with their curricular limitations and pressures. The result was that their lesson presentations were based on teacher control with little student input or choice. Students received a narrow definition of what school work was. These factors worked to formalize the relationship between teachers and students.<sup>7</sup>

The teachers implemented the district's curriculum despite its limitations. Yet the form that the curriculum took was something that they tried to gain some control over. It was an area that they felt they could use some creativity. They commented that they may have to use the objectives that the books gave them and prepare students for the books' tests, but they felt that they could try and do that in some varying ways that could better promote student interest and give students and teachers more curriculum choice.

That goal ended up being a constant source of tension for teachers. There were so many pressures on them that it ended up making even the form that their lessons took to be not much different than simply lessons straight from the books. The sources of tension came from four different areas. The first area was that of the district testing program. Having tests that were so specific made the teachers feel that they had to use the books to prepare for the tests. The second area was the tally system. Teachers were to keep track of the students' success in language and science by turning in tally sheets including each test objective and how each one of their students did on them. The third area was mastery learning. Students who did not do well on tests were to be retaught and retested until they reached 80% mastery on the tests. Doing this took extra time that the teachers did not want to have to spend, so they were less likely to deviate too much from the curriculum presented in the books. The final area of pressure was the general lack of time because of the diverse demands placed on teachers. Elementary teachers were responsible for reading, spelling, language, penmanship, writing, math, social studies, science, health, and many requirements within each of these areas. Combined with the pressure they felt to make it through most of each of the books during the school year, the teachers did not feel they had the luxury of time needed to develop creative lesson plans to implement textbook goals.

The result of these pressures was that teachers had a conservative use of the textbooks and curriculum. Rarely did they build on them. Rarely did they change the format of the texts to be anything beyond students doing workbook pages and worksheets. They had a level of teaching similar to what Goodlad (1984) and McNeil (1988) describe. The teachers instituted some defensive teaching strategies such as simplifying the knowledge and fragmenting the curriculum. They were not, however, trying to gain only minimal compliance from their students. They were trying to do as much for their students as they could within their limited time.

There were notable attempts when teachers did try to build beyond the curriculum. Some of the examples occurred at times when the teachers were still following the curriculum fairly closely. One of many examples of this was found in Mrs. Miller's class. The basis of her language program was the language text. The text divided the chapters into the grammar and syntax of the English language. Mrs. Miller taught using the language book, yet she also tried to build beyond it and stress writing with her students. The students had a writing project every week or two. Mrs. Miller stressed prewriting, writing, editing, and publishing with the children. They worked on creative stories, poetry, persuasive paragraphs, letter writing, research topics, and writing contests throughout the year. Mrs. Miller provided a variety of topics, but that had the effect of making all of them more rushed. Writing time for the students became a time when you wrote on your own, had the teacher correct your work, and then you corrected your errors. The process, even though Mrs. Miller stressed creativity and involvement in the development of students' ideas in writing, became similar to other language assignments. The assignments became something that could be done correctly, i.e. needing few teacher corrections, had a final product that could be evaluated, and was something else that needed to be done before the students could go out for recess.

Science was another area where Mrs. Miller tried to build on the curriculum. Science was a particularly strong area for her. She had won awards for her creativity and original curriculum development in science, which she often complained she no longer had time to do. She had been named one of the top science teachers in the state and had given presentations on science to teachers at the local and

state level. She tried to include a variety of concepts into science both building on the curriculum and including other topics of interest. One of these topics was the space shuttle.

One day they stopped language class a little early to watch the launch of the first space shuttle flight since the Challenger disaster two-and-one-half years earlier. They watched the launch and the discussion on television for twenty minutes. Then they continued on with their own discussion. Most often when the class had discussions the discussions were actually a teacher-question and student-answer pattern of talking. There was very little interaction that built on what either a child or teacher had to say. This was an exception. Mrs. Miller knew so much about the topic that she was able to talk with and interest her students on the topic of the space program. The students actually interacted with one another discussing their opinions of space travel. This seemed to involve many of the students and could have gone on for an extended time. But after only twenty minutes, Mrs. Miller felt they had used as much time as they could and broke off the discussion to move on to science class. One may question, was the discussion not science? Was it of less value since it did not fit with their curriculum? Mrs. Miller felt that she needed to go back to the regular curriculum. This was all the time she thought she could take on a discussion that did not teach the skills that she needed to teach to prepare students for their next test in several weeks' time.

Mrs. Miller did, however, take a large portion of time early in the year for a unit that was not directly related to the text curriculum. The entire fifth grade was involved in this project which was already becoming an institution in that parents and students enjoyed it and assumed it would be done every year. The "institution" that aroused so much student interest was an environmental unit that included an overnight camping trip for the students. That became the curriculum for the first month of school. It involved an incredible work load for the two fifth grade teachers who did all of the planning, even though extra staff and parents accompanied them on the trip to help manage the children. They had to plan lessons to teach to prepare students for the trip and to teach to present at the environmental center, including what to do to keep students involved and happy morning, noon, and night for two days. They had to provide parent information, organize emergency health information, prepare students on how and what to pack, organize supplies including food and the cooking of food for two days for ninety people, and have

organizational meetings for themselves and all going on the trip. The two teachers who did this worked weekends and evenings for that first month of school to organize and implement the curriculum. This added to their already busy, overworked schedules so typical of elementary teachers.

Once there, the students had two days of living in the woods, examining animals firsthand, hiking, orienteering, working on cooperation trials in the woods, woodcutting, tracking, singing, and story telling. Students who were quiet and those who had less positive attitudes in school were as excited as any of the children. None of the children complained about being bored. Common reactions were that they could not believe how fast their time was passing. When they returned to school they freely shared about the fun they had there, how much they learned, and their desire to return. The papers they wrote for a school newsletter on the trip included things such as "millions of fun", "learning experience of a lifetime", and the woods as a "mansion".

Teachers, parents, and students all expressed a lot of excitement over their trip. They all thought it had been profitable for the children. Yet it took one month of science time and the fifth grade teachers felt they could not spend more time. One, the teachers were exhausted because it took many hours outside of school to prepare. Secondly, they were also concerned about how far that put them behind with the regular curriculum. Mrs. Miller and Miss Martin, who did their science planning together, even commented during one of their planning meetings as to whether they would have less time for experimentation and development of lessons separate from the book in the future because they were already so far behind in science. They sacrificed future opportunities to build on lessons and units by having the environmental unit. The end result of this is that teachers often commented that they could not do lessons much less units like this very often for they could not afford the time.

The tension for teachers was the pressure to get through the curriculum, which meant that they would be less likely to branch off from concepts that the books presented. Yet equally important is to consider the effect of the pedagogical message system on students. Learning can take on many diverse meanings for children. The form that the curriculum takes in its presentation greatly influences how children define learning and their role in the learning process.

### The Framing of the Message System and Student Reactions

Miss Martin reflected the worry that many teachers had about children's views of learning with the current use of curriculum in Burr Oaks School:

The part I see most, I guess, is in attitude. Because the message is being received earlier and earlier that only the surface is important and only the immediate is important. And the long term and long range is not as important because we are not spending any time on it, you know? Kids come in to school with issues that they wonder about, that they learn really fast to shut off and shut down because there is not time in the day to talk about it. There is not time in the family because both parents are working and everybody is on a schedule. . . they come to school and there is not time because the teacher has to get a certain amount covered in the curriculum, or is feeling pressed to move ahead, or whatever. So there is not time. I hear kids worrying more and more how they're doing on a test or how their grade is going to be, like your concern is for the material, the immediate evidence. And the learning isn't recognized as meritorious anymore and the experience, the process of learning isn't recognized anymore. It's not validated because there's no time for it. So if you're a quick learner, someone who can regurgitate, have quick recall, picks up on trivia, puts things in a framework that you can spit back on a test, then you succeed in school. That's what schooling has become. It's the quick answer and let's move on.

Watching students' reactions to and involvement in lessons, and speaking to them about school, would seem to validate this reaction. Students at this school were well behaved students, yet to them school was viewed as work; school was their job which demanded that they finish certain activities. They did their school work with little, if any, questioning of the expectations placed on them or what was taught.

This attitude was constantly evident in the way students approached their school work. Students were quick to try to finish their work, even if they did not understand the work. One day while Mrs. Miller was teaching reading and had one reading group at a table with her, I noticed many from another group having some problems on a workbook page. I offered to help the students individually. As I helped Tom, Ted, Brent, Alice, and Trent, it was apparent that they all had the same questions. Usually the workbook pages follow such a pattern that students did not need to read the directions in order to do the pages, yet this time it was a bit different and so the children could not solve it. After questioning them about it, I found that not a one of them had bothered to read the directions on how to do it. When they did, it became clear. But that was not something they initiated on their own until I helped them to read the directions. Instead they had been simply circling answers at random in order to finish the page.

This is easier to understand how children can do this when one realizes that to students what seems to be important is that they finish their work, not necessarily understand how to do it. A different



day I was working with a fifth grade student named Karen. She had been having problems in math with the concept of place value. On a multiple choice worksheet that had been assigned she immediately colored in answers, not taking time to look at the problems. I looked at her a bit mystified and she said, "Well, I have too much other work to do." I told her that most of her problems were wrong and that I would help her in working through the problems. She responded, "I know they're wrong. I want to get it done. Who cares?"

It is an oversimplification to say that students were only interested in finishing, especially at the expense of accuracy. Yet it was an important consideration to many of them. To Karen what was important was to finish. If she finished on time she could go out for recess, though she did realize that at some point her corrections would have to be done. This attitude can often be subtly reinforced by the structure of the lessons. For example in Mrs. Peterson's second grade the students had math before recess each afternoon. The students knew how much of their work had to be finished before they went outside. Therefore, it was easy enough for them to get the pages done so that they could go outside. Though students would obviously prefer to have the work done correctly the first time, for those students who see that they have only a couple of minutes left until recess, they could still rush to get done. They could play along with the, 'You must be finished to go out for recess' rule, thereby putting the need for accuracy behind the need to be finished.

Students' definitions of work seem to have other limitations. Since all work had a product, many of the activities that they did in school did not fall under their category of 'work'. On Tuesday's from 10:00-10:30 in Mrs. Miller's room, the students had work time. They were to finish their spelling and start on their writing project or else their centers which were assigned each month. Those projects had to be finished and the students accepted that without comment that I ever heard. At 10:30 the students watched a television show on history. To many of the students, watching the show did not seem to be work. The students sat fairly quietly during the show, yet some would occasionally hit another, make faces, and play with little toys that they would not do during their work time. Whenever there was not a final product that had to be turned in to the teacher, the students did not seem to take the idea as seriously as work that had a final product.

Another time in Mrs. Miller's class, she handed out worksheets to the students in math. Normally they would be done and turned in that day or due the next day as homework to finish. This time, however, Mrs. Miller told them that the work was only for practice, not an assignment that they had to turn in. The students finished in an average of one to two minutes after looking at the sheets, with most seemingly not attempting to do the sheets.

Reading aloud was another example of a class activity that the students did not seem to take seriously. One day I was observing in Miss Martin's class when the students were taking turns reading aloud from their social studies books. Many students' hands would go up at the end of each paragraph when Miss Martin would choose a new reader. Yet when one child was chosen the others seemed to relax and go back to what they were doing which included coloring, doing other assignments, and playing with toys that they had at their desks.

The students' definition of school work was based on their experiences. They knew that certain assignments had to be turned in and therefore done. Other school assignments did not. All of the teachers observed had certain rules on the amount of work that had to be done. Basically the students accepted this. This made other school work seem not as important by comparison. It worked to trivialize the potential value of television shows, discussions, oral reading, and presentations of new material that did not directly result in the assignment of particular work to students. Since there was no product the activities did not demand serious attention or commitment.

This subtly discourages students from developing outside relationships with other forms of knowledge or relationships with real world issues or issues in their lives. Though doing this could have stimulated interest in the children, it was not something that could be measured on assignments or tests and therefore was beyond the scope of the curriculum that teachers could usually take time to develop. This reinforced students' conceptions of work not being fun. At times when the teachers made it fun and turned assignments into games the students could play, then that was not work they had to take seriously.

The students' conceptions of work carried with it an overall lack of emphasis on learning. Their formal and informal interviews showed a curious lack of questioning of what they do in school and what they would like to do and learn in school. Their responses showed acceptance of school as work and their

role as workers, and they did not consider doing anything differently. Learning seemed to take second place behind getting work done. Second place also seemed rather distant considering that getting done did not always mean getting done correctly.

Students also had a lack of any degree of carryover of what was studied to other concepts or other times. One day students that I observed had a language class in the morning that talked about prefixes and what they mean. That afternoon some of those students had an end-of-the-book test in reading that tested them on the same prefixes and they did not know what they were. Another day I worked with two students on their centers project on animal classification. I had heard them both the day before answer similar questions in large group in science. Yet when it came to actually having to identify and use problem-solving skills to identify animals, these two girls, who both did very well in school, were stumped as to what to do and how to even get started. Learning occurred as isolated concepts in subjects, which reinforces the concept of learning as assignments to finish.

Reliance on the standard curriculum in books reinforces certain definitions of what work means to students. Yet it also reinforces certain roles for the students. Students' jobs were to finish their work. Teachers' jobs were to give the assignments and correct the students' work. This type of a pattern does not demand a high degree of teacher-student interaction since real work was defined by students as something they do by themselves. The result was that there was little interaction between teachers and students beyond the teacher-question and student-answer pattern. There was also little real interaction among students about academic work.

At about mid-year, Mrs Smith reported to me on the progress of a trade book unit she had been using with her students. She happily told me about a particularly exciting lesson she had that day. She said it had been the first time that year that she felt her students had been really creative. It was also the first time they had actually discussed topics and were supportive of one another. She attributed it to the fact that she had taken time to have them learn to discuss and relate to one another using activities, such as trade books, which gave them the time to really discuss their feelings. She went on to add she would not be having much time to do activities like this and she would soon be moving back to the use of basals. She

was an older teacher who reminisced about days gone by when she had more freedom to do what she thought was best for the students and had more "fun" with the students.

Observations made in other classrooms seemed to validate what this teacher said. Most of teachers' interactions with children were based on teacher-question, student-answer patterns. Rarely did they engage in real discussions where the teachers and students could express their feelings and ideas. When it did happen, the teachers seemed to feel guilty about the amount of time the discussions took at the expense of curriculum coverage. The interaction that took place between teachers and students needed to be based on the standards set by the curriculum. Teachers were busy enough getting the curriculum done that they did not have a lot of time to interact and discuss with their students.

Bernstein says, "...frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship." (Bernstein, 1977: 89) Observing this school, it is apparent that teachers and pupils possess little control over these choices. Teachers control the selection of lessons, based on the textbooks. Students have only occasional selection over the order in which they do the work. Teachers organize the lessons based, again, on the textbooks' assignments to prepare students for the tests. For students, the organization of work means that they have an assignment with a product for which they are responsible. The biggest factor in pacing and timing for both teachers and students is to get through the vast amount of work that they are to do in a day and in the year.

### Conclusion

After observing this school's movement toward a more formalized curriculum several issues must be raised. It is apparent that this school responded to the district's curriculum plan by building a stronger classification and framing system in the curriculum. This had a great impact on teachers and students. It worked to limit their options and freedom to explore and actively participate in the teaching and learning process. Though teachers struggled to try and build on the curriculum pattern, they had little time to be able to do it. Students also accepted the definitions of work that the standardized curriculum prescribed. If curriculum is so organized and presented that it prevents teachers from having

creative input into lessons, to build on them, or to make them more applicable for their students, then we must seriously consider the ramifications of such a curriculum. In this case, most of the teachers and students' concentration was on finishing work at the expense of an emphasis on learning and on the development of a strong teacher-student relationship.

If this is common, then we must question the trend toward a movement away from teachers as curriculum planners in favor of standardization of curriculum which attempts to maintain accountability via the scope of curriculum coverage and the reliance on test scores. This results in the deskilling of teachers, reducing their roles to managers of the learning process. (Apple, 1986) The effects of the intensification of teachers' work should not be underestimated. Such results may well occur at the expense of teachers developing an in-depth curriculum study to challenge and involve students. The results can also limit the freedom of teachers to build the rapport and teacher-student relationship that is thought to be the foundation of elementary schools. The teacher-as-manager role is evidence of the curriculum demands and time limitations on teachers. The role makes it very difficult for teachers to play a nurturing role as facilitators and mentors for their students.

Bernstein relates the classification and framing of curriculum to issues of power and control in schools. (Bernstein, 1977) Power and control are being directed away from those actors who are living the school experience. Can learning be made to fit children's needs and interests without teachers and students having some power over curriculum formation? Will curriculum be as likely to present varying definitions and perspectives of knowledge without their input? Can teachers and students be active and involved participants in the learning process without greater control over the form of the curriculum? These questions must be seriously considered. Their answers will greatly influence our movement toward a democratic curriculum and pedagogy.

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<sup>1</sup>An interesting analysis of this is found in a review of a Milwaukee Public Schools Outcome Based Education program. The program included objectives for courses and subjects at all grade levels, instructional materials, and an assessment program. The review, however, critiques the program as being "built on the belief that it is dangerous to allow teachers to continue to decide what goals or methods of instruction and assessment are appropriate for their students. It is a giant step toward a standardized curriculum which centralizes control in the hands of central office administrators and supervisors and reduces teachers to semi-skilled technical workers." See Levine, D. (1988, December, January). Outcome Based Education: Grand Design or Blueprint for Failure? *Rethinking Schools* 2 (2).

<sup>2</sup>A good example of this can be seen in the study by Sharp and Green (1975) of a British school which worked under the guise of a progressive child-centered approach, yet in reality worked to reproduce unequal class relations in the classroom.

<sup>3</sup>Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of all the people involved. It is important to note that many of the teachers felt it was very important to be honest and open in their interviews with me. They said that they understood the importance of critically observing and commenting on the standardization of curriculum occurring in their district. They did not, however, always feel free to express themselves as to what their true feelings were about their teaching and use of the curriculum. At their request, I changed the names and some grade levels of the teachers observed and made them all women in the text of the study to help protect their anonymity and to enable them to be able to speak freely to me about their feelings.

<sup>4</sup>During the 1987-88 school year while the new tally system was being incorporated, the teachers were working without a contract. I spoke with the teacher union president about any union efforts over the curriculum. She said that the union was not trying to do anything about it. The school board and the administration, which acts as the board's representatives at negotiations, say that curriculum issues are non-negotiable.

<sup>5</sup>Every teacher interviewed made reference to the fact that they felt as though they no longer had the time to be creative and do their own curriculum planning. One teacher even commented that if she hurried through the year she could have hopefully one week to plan and design on her own at the end of the year where she could do whatever she wanted with her students.

<sup>6</sup>Teachers were able to add elements of their own curriculum goals or activities based on the goals of the curriculum with varying success. When some of the teachers did add their own curriculum ideas it put increased pressure on them to finish the school curriculum. And when they added their own activities they still felt a need to use 'the books' activities so that their students would be prepared for the tests. Therefore, the extra activities were usually reduced to small lessons or activities that did not take up a lot of time.

<sup>7</sup>As the use of curriculum is discussed, it must be mentioned that it is next to impossible to summarize months of observations in a short paper. Teachers worked hard at this school to make the curriculum exciting and involving for students even though they had limitations placed on them. There were

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contradictions in students' reactions and in their acceptance of school work. The resulting discussion cannot do justice to the tensions experienced and resolutions found by teachers and students in this school. For a fuller and more detailed discussion, see my dissertation.

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