DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 591 EA 024 031

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TITLE Starting New Schools: Lessons for Success.
INSTITUTION Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Madison, WI.; Designs for Learning, Inc., St. Paul, MN.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE May 92
CONTRACT R117Q00005-92
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; *Educational Innovation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Nontraditional Education; School Organization; *School Restructuring

ABSTRACT

Arguments for beginning new schools as a robust alternative to the incremental improvement of existing schools are presented in this paper. The educational improvement approach of starting new schools or programs, rather than making incremental improvements or generating comprehensive change in existing schools, is advocated. Two major types of problems in starting new schools center around systems and client problems. Systems problems include program focus, resource allocation, and staffing, and client problems involve relationships with students and parents. Recommendations are made to empower stakeholders, utilize alternative staffing patterns, improve staff/program allocation, and include staff choice. (8 references) (LMI)

STARTING NEW SCHOOLS: LESSONS FOR SUCCESS

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May 1992

This occasional paper was prepared for the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Grant No. R117Q00005-92) and by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supporting agencies.

STARTING NEW SCHOOLS: LESSONS FOR SUCCESS

Wayne B. Jennings, Ph.D.

The criticism prodding the nation's educators to bring schools into the modern age is reaching firestorm proportions. From President Bush, governors, state departments of education and parents, persistent demands are heard to raise student achievement, increase graduation rates, better serve poor and minority students and reduce self-destructive student behaviors.

Though the sum total of educational experimentation today surely ranks higher than at anytime in history, mainstream school practice has changed little and totally dominates the education scene. Current Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander spoke of the need for new schools as a university president in 1989:

> "I've tried to give leadership to efforts to better educate our children as a governor. And now I see our schools' graduates as a university president. I'm not so sure that we shouldn't scrap the whole system and start over again."[1]

Three major avenues for educational improvement offer promise:

1. Make incremental improvements in schools. For example, alter the curriculum with interdisciplinary approaches or introduce an advisor-advisee program.

2. Generate comprehensive change in existing schools. For example, introduce most of the known effective school reforms all at once.

3. Start over with a new design for learning. For example, plan and implement a totally experiential school.

A good case can be made for any of these approaches. Most efforts to improve education follow the incremental model by introducing a new element or two. I would argue that the need for major reform is so urgent that incremental improvement is too slow and piecemeal. The second approach, wholesale change of an existing school, is a traumatic experience for staff and has had a poor record of success, particularly at secondary levels.

While school reform needs to proceed on all possible fronts, this paper discusses the third approach, that of starting new schools or programs. As Ted Sizer said,

> "Most of the problems that beset education are obvious, well understood, and of long standing. Educators and their critics have been rhetorically hammering away at them for several decades. It is the remedies that seem problematic. None seems to stick. Why? Things remain the same, because it is impossible to change very much without changing most of everything. The result is paralysis."[2]

Sizer's point apprears to support a new schools' approach to change. However, we might note that Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools doesn't involve a comprehensive model for change. The Coalition advocates rather modest curriculum changes to improve the existing model.

The approach of working with existing schools dominates because it is far easier to recruit candidate schools to a new procedure than to totally reorganize an existing school or start a new school. In fact, Sizer,s coalition was oversubscribed immediately and now has about 200 schools. Lessons from history tell us that the improve-the-existing-school-movement ultimately disappoints its sponsors.

However, the education landscape is littered with the dried husks of past programs — successful programs that lasted a few years, then withered and either disappeared or remained in name but not spirit. Examples include: the core curriculum, Unified Science and Mathematics in Elementary Schools (USMES), and advisor programs.

Paul Nachtigal's famous study, *A Foundation Goes to School*,[3] documented what few remnants of the 34 million dollars for educational reform granted by the Ford Foundation's during the 1960s still remained when he visited programs just a few years later. That report led foundations all over the nation to shut off public school education grants for more than a decade, as a waste of resources.

The U.S. Office of Education's Experimental Schools program of the early 1970s, in which multi-million dollar grants were made to schools in each of five districts, yielded few results five years later. Even the extraordinary resources pumped into those schools failed to produce sustained change in existing programs.

Though millions of dollars have funded innovations with little enduring results, we may concede, however, that knowledge about change is accumulating and may yet provide guidance to reformers which ultimately produces comprehensive and lasting change.

I urge more instances of starting afresh, profiting from what has been learned in past efforts to successfully implement new programs. A new school starts with a clean slate and needs only to **develop** the program rather than trying to **change** long-standing, firmly entrenched paradigms and practices.

On first thought, it may seem fairly easy to devise and start a new school. One no longer has to battle old philosophies, staff factions and traditions. At least that's the way a number of us thought some years ago as we worked in conventional programs. We contemplated the joys of working in a new program: eager, self-motivated learners; staff as a smooth, supportive team; and eager, involved parents.

Little did we realize the landmines, barriers and incredibly long hours along the way. That same easy optimism is often heard about starting new programs accompanied by the same

lack of awareness of the problems and stresses of implementing and managing new programs.

Having been a recipient of foundation funding to assist with starting new programs, I can attest that the **real problems of educational change are less a matter of money and more a matter of attitudes and procedures.**

In this paper, I look primarily at starting new schools from the perspective of players at the school site and school district: principals, teachers, parents, students and central office administrators. I shall assume that the new schools depart significantly or radically from the norm, though I am not advocating any particular type of change. Such a school faces major problems of implementation. Suggestions will be given for addressing the problems of starting new schools.

BACKGROUND

More than two decades ago, I was asked to design and start a program for public school students who were, essentially, unwanted by the secondary schools in an urban system. In effect, we ran 12,000 high school students through a sieve to sift out 100 of the hardest to manage. As we began the program, educators in the system predicted its early demise believing that such students couldn't be served. Over the next two decades, we learned that the problems encountered in starting and operating the program, difficult as they were, centered less on managing students than on dealing with the school system.

In 1971, I became the principal of a new public K-12 "open school" for 500 students. A group of politically astute parents had virtually forced the school district to start the school. I had authority to select a staff committed to progressive education practices. The staff met for the first time with the daunting task of organizing a K-12 school two weeks before students arrived. The only thing we had was a general philosophy statement to guide us. We had to generate a curriculum, fast. The school district leased a warehouse to house the school just one week before opening.

Given these conditions we should have fallen on our face — and almost did. We worked impossible hours on the program, policies, evaluation and every other aspect of school operation. There were pitched battles with the school district which though it approved the school's prospectus expected usual operations and procedures to apply. For example, staffing and field trips were determined by district formulas — it didn't matter that we wanted to configure the staff differently or spend more than the normal field trip allotment.

Nonetheless, we learned to choose our fights and to apply the motto of change agents that, "It's easier to seek forgiveness than to obtain permission." Last year the school celebrated its twentieth anniversary. I doubt that many of that original staff would undergo the experience again because of the toll it took. Enjoying the high morale of

students and their amazing amount of learning sustained staff through many difficult times.

In 1982, I helped start a new private school for 150 students in grades 5-12 as part of a nationally known children's theater. The school provided academic learning plus training for all students in drama, vocal music and dance during an eight-hour school day. The progressive nature of the program and the opportunity to develop talents attracted many more applicants than could be accommodated. We also turned many away because the cost of tuition exceeded parents means, although the per student expenditures were about the same as public schools. The program was wonderfully successful by all measures because we were free to staff creatively and adjust the program to individual student needs. It was one of the few opportunities to start a school without battling a school district; we were the district and that made an enormous difference.

Presently (1992), I am designing and implementing a new comprehensive public program for "at-risk" youth, many of whom are already drop-outs. It involves about 2,000 students a year in multiple sites, operates year-round with extended hours (days, evenings, Saturdays), has differentiated staffing and uses technology extensively along with other alternative methods of instruction. The nature of an "at risk" student body confers freedoms upon practitioners. After all, the regular program was not successful.

I've participated in other start ups of new schools in the last three years: Saturn School of Tomorrow, Chiron Middle School, and EXPO for Excellence Magnet School.

I've also been a teacher and principal in regular public schools, and was a district administrator in charge of staff development. In all of these schools — whether traditional or "new design" — I worked to introduce promising changes that had been successful elsewhere, or where research and theory supported new practices. Examples include: advisor/advisee programs, interdisciplinary approaches, pupil-teacher planning, community-based learning, brain-based learning, learning based on real-life problems and alternative staffing patterns.

Twice as the principal of a conventional school, I introduced schools-within-schools. Any school principal who has traveled similar routes knows immediately how extremely hard it is to introduce such practices, particularly at the secondary level. Most of the practices mentioned in the previous paragraph have been known for decades as important and needed, yet are rarely found to any significant degree in schools.

I mention these experiences because important lessons can be extracted to help implement the next batches of new schools. I believe new schools represent a robust alternative to incremental improvement of existing schools.

MAJOR PROBLEMS IN CREATING NEW SCHOOLS

Two major problems appear in almost all efforts to establish new schools. These problems can be referred to as *system problems* and *client problems*. The major system problems involve focus, resources and staffing. Client problems involve the school's customers: parents and students.

System Problems: Focus

Focus is defined as the articulation of the program's mission and description of how the program will operate. Typically, change agents encounter a plethora of questions about the specifics and structure of the new program as they begin planning: What exactly is the curriculum and what teaching methods will be employed? What instructional materials are needed? What technology will be employed? How will the program be evaluated? What is the student's day like? What precise kinds of facility modifications are needed?

Good questions. But they often overwhelm people proposing a new program or school. In one instance, the response to a request to start a new program, resulted in a memo from the district office with sixty questions about details of the new program. One could picture central office folks having spent the afternoon brainstorming questions saying, "There. That should fix them."

The reformers, who have spent their lives in regular schools, usually have a better idea what they don't want to do than exactly what is to be done. They have had so little experience in an alternative setting, their ideas are vague and incomplete. They identify their feelings with the following statements:

> "...when the great innovation appears it will seem muddled and strange. It will be only half-understood by its discoverer(s) and a mystery to everyone else. For any idea that does not appear bizarre at first, there is no hope."[4]

> "If you are on the leading edge you can't explain everything. If you knew all about it, it wouldn't be the leading edge."[5]

Focus problems become easier after experience in alternative schools. Then the reformer finds it less difficult to articulate a new program, though rarely to the satisfaction of conventional administrators and school board members. Often, the people who have to be convinced to support the change are so frozen in old paradigms that the new words and descriptions aren't meaningful. The reformer is left thinking, "Can't they be more understanding and helpful? They just don't get it."

I remember trying at length rather unsuccessfully to describe open education to a traditional thinking colleague. Finally, the other party said, "Oh, you mean it's like the old one room school." Rather than say, "not exactly" and pursue differences, subtle and not-so-subtle, at some point one just says, "Yes, that's close," and lets it go at that.

The reason the focus problem looms so seriously is that if not resolved in a conclusive way, endless hassles and misunderstandings continue to gum up future interactions between the new program and the system for years. Reformers may view the system as an obstructionist bureaucracy.

The focus or understanding problem extends weblike throughout the school district. Not all colleagues in other schools are thrilled to learn about a new school. If the program is substantially different, rumors and false information start to circulate. "Did you know the kids at New School can do anything they want to? They are never assigned home work?" "That kid that transferred last week from New School can't even write; they don't teach reading."

New schools appear to compete with or challenge conventional wisdom. This threatens some people in other schools and in the district office. Innovators may find themselves excluded from district resource distribution routines, denied supplies and most crucially, called upon to prove their program's worth in the first years more rigorously than is ever expected of conventional schools.

Many a new school administrator has looked up from a mountain of paper work and forms to ask plaintively, "How come the regular schools don't have to do all these evaluation activities? Why don't they expect success of all students at the other schools like they expect of us?" Why not indeed?

The problem, aside from the overload of work, may lie in unreasonable expectations for the new school. These may have resulted from the school's initial application documents which seemed to promise to solve almost all the problems in education and to do so quickly. Reformers soon learn the wisdom of the adage, "under promise and over deliver."

System Problems: Resource Allocations

The second system problem is the allocation of resources which profoundly impacts what the new program can and cannot do. If the same formulas for staffing, technology and textbooks apply to the new program, then operating differently becomes nearly impossible. The school district's message to the new school says, in effect, "Yes, start this innovative program but follow all usual practices."

New programs run smack into middle management administrators with set processes and standard operating procedures. Seemingly, only dynamite will dislodge the formulas for allocating staff and other line items of the budget.

For example, the new program may wish to install a dance program and contract for a professional dancer two hours a day. That makes sense to the new program people but not to the personnel department who inquire about licensure, benefits, posting the job; nor to the payroll department who have no staff category for a non-certificated teacher; nor to the union; nor to the administrative staffing division who have no provisions for

instructional services by outside contracting.

By the time the harried new school administrator works through the morass of procedures and regulations, the school year is over and the administrator is exhausted and angry. Even the patrons of the school may begin to wonder about the administrator's managerial effectiveness in being unable to handle such a simple task.

The three Rs of school management should be Redesign and Reallocate Resources. It is unlikely education will receive the vast new resources educators say they must have to lower class size, pay competitive salaries, provide new specialists for hordes of troubled youth, buy computers, etc., etc. If new schools could spend existing resources differently, they might obtain better results.

It astonishes educators, particularly teachers, to learn that the pupil to certificated personnel ratio is under 16 to 1 in the U.S. and the ratio of pupils to all personnel, under 10-1. This figure holds in most districts. Education must do what business and other institutions struggle with: doing more with less, or at least, more with the same resources.

If additional resources flow, so much the better. Waiting to make changes until more money gushes to education is like waiting for Godot. Educators must learn to think more about reallocating present resources and less about obtaining vast new resources. The new school is often prepared to do this but the traditional system hasn't caught up to the concept.

System Problems: Staffing

The third system problem involves staff recruitment and retention. Obviously the new program wants what every program wants, able staff. It also wants control over releasing them if necessary. A saying goes that strong staff will find a way to make a weak design work and weak staff will demolish a strong design.

The staffing problems new schools face involve seniority, bumping privileges, reduction in force, certification, interchangeability of staff with the same certification, errors in the original selection of staff, and filling vacancies.

Once staff are aboard the new program, some may not work out well for one reason or another. An ugly impasse develops if the errant staff member doesn't want to leave and decides to hang on to the job. Some people stay in a program even if unsuccessful because the work site is conveniently close to home. Few school districts have tackled the problem of weak staff in an effective manner; nor have they addressed the special staffing needs of an alternative program. An art teacher is an art teacher – an interchangeable part.

System Problems: Summary

The three system problems, focus, resource usage, and staffing encompass the usual

problems of bureaucracies with many rules and rule enforcers. In any system there will be rules and monitors. Long standing rules need periodic housekeeping, not just an accretion of more rules and procedures. Unfortunately, the people carrying out their duties of compelling compliance to rules and procedures can get a little officious and sometimes more than a little mysterious about exactly how one can satisfy them. This is less a problem in regular schools where each year is about the same as the last and few changes are made. For new schools, the situation can be a combination of a nightmare, Catch 22 and Kafka.

Client Problems

In contrast to system problems, client problems involve students and parents. If students are assigned involuntarily to the new program, they or their parents may object strenuously if they don't like the new program. For example, in one new junior high school organized under Lloyd Tromp's plan (modular scheduling, student choices, large and small group instruction) most parents accepted the program. But a vociferous group of parents, aided by a few dissident staff members (one a janitor), constantly harped on problems. After four years of this, the school board closed the program and installed a conventional program.

Obvious as it is, new school staff need to realize that complainers make themselves heard more than satisfied people and can bring a program down even when most parents are happy with the program. Thus, there is a need for systematic evaluation procedures and an official representative council to speak for the school.

For example, in a large prestigious suburban high school, a school within a school developed along the lines of the Summerhill philosophy where students had an equal vote with staff and had great freedom to determine their program. The program came under attack on the basis that students were wasting time and not learning anything. Ordinarily, such a program is easily eliminated but in this instance, several parent advocates convinced the school board to take the time to evaluate the program. Strong support for the program emerged and the program survived a few more years.

When students or parents complain about a standard school program, not much sympathy is extended — school is school; it doesn't claim to make everyone happy, so people ought to simply adjust. In the case of a new program, involuntary placements create big, virtually insurmountable problems. With voluntary enrollment, different, though substantially fewer, problems arise.

Although students complain about regular schools, students in new schools will find that everything is not perfect. Students most successful in the old system often resist change because they realize they have to the most to lose. They knew all the right buttons to push in conventional classrooms, and they fear losing out in any realignment. The new program may not employ standard classrooms or use report card grades. Students used to being told what to do are now expected to shoulder initiative and personal respon-

sibility. It takes time — for some students, a long time — to assume responsibility for their own learning.

If the new program is progressive, some parents will feel it isn't progressive enough or it isn't structured enough. I remember two parents within the span of an hour complaining about our open education program. One said it was like a prison; the other said it was a zoo!

A common client problem under voluntary enrollment arises when the student likes the program and the parent or one of the parents doesn't. In my experience, the more traditional parent usually wins the argument but at considerable cost to family tranquility. Staff will anguish over losing a student who was thriving in the program.

A serious client problem faced by many new schools is becoming overloaded with "problem" students. New schools soon discover that schools are eager to cast off their difficult students and will counsel them to enroll in the new school. If a school becomes over burdened with more than its share of such students, parents of other students exit the program and the school will lack a representative student body.

New program staff, concentrating on substantive teaching and learning issues, hardly expect client problems to loom in their face. They expect the new program, by virtue of its greater responsiveness and more effective curriculum, to satisfy clients. While that happens for many, staff need awareness of potential problems to avoid the surprise and shock that not everyone is thrilled about their new program.

The two types of problems, focus and client, if anticipated, can be managed to reduce discouragement and the enormous energy drain of constantly responding to problems.

IMPLEMENTING NEW PROGRAMS

So far, we've delineated the harsh realities of school transformation: the whispered rumors, the bureaucratic NO, and client complaints. New schools address everything at once, as they must for major change. A few important lessons can help new schools be prepared and manage change with less difficulty.

MAJOR LESSON # 1: The key remedy to solving almost every problem rests with **empowered stakeholders.** Empowerment means the authority to make important decisions. Stakeholders are those who have a stake or claim in the school — students, staff, parents and the community.

Empowered stakeholders means that people affected by decisions participate in making those decisions. This requires that stakeholders have genuine access to the knowledge required to make decisions. Stakeholders can exercise their decision making power

through a constitution, which spells out the shared mission, official membership of a site management council for the school, duties and its powers.

Some question the formalism of a council, a constitution and parliamentary procedures until they recognize that jobs are at stake. A council of parents and staff with significant power over program, staffing and budget, needs scrupulously fair decision making procedures. For example, without a quorum and membership provisions, advocates could pack a meeting and overcome orderly decision making.

Stakeholders in new schools must make the decisions about 1) budget, 2) staffing and 3) program. These three areas almost always present huge stumbling blocks in relations with the school district who control these areas now. Authority to make decisions in all three areas is rarely granted and rarely made explicit.

A critical area for decisions is program, the heart of what the new school is about. Yet, virtually every important program change carries budget and staffing implications. Too often central administration say, in effect, "Make all the decisions you want but you can't change budget line items."

Staffing configurations are formula driven. That is, a school is granted X number of teachers, a librarian, a secretary, etc. based on student enrollment. The teachers at secondary levels are further configured by certification levels with each required subject area allocated X number of teachers according to enrollment.

Though the new school may change the program to one emphasizing interdisciplinary learning and community service, the allotment of teachers may still be granted as though the old single subject matter mastery model applied.

Under real "school based management," (the term commonly used) stakeholders make major decisions about the big three of school administration: program, staffing and budget. Vesting decision authority about program, staffing and budget in a site council is rare even in districts claiming to be site managed.

One can test this easily at the local level with a few hypothetical questions. Could, for example, a portion of the school budget be re-allocated from personnel in order to increase technology expenditures? Could a budget for leasing a van be authorized for frequent trips to community learning sites? Could staffing be shifted to reduce the number of professionals and increase other types of personnel?

School or site based management poses extremely difficult issues of control and accountability for a school district. At base is the faith that stakeholders will act professionally and with accountability. What school boards need to do, is to separate factors of **what** and **how**. It is entirely appropriate for the school board to specify **what** is to be learned by students and to hold schools accountable for those results. They need

to leave the how to accomplish the what to the professionals at the program site. The professionals at the site need to enlist the collaboration and ownership of the other stakeholders in cooperatively accomplishing the tasks.

The lesson for the new school is to accept the school board definition of what is to be learned. There is seldom disagreement about the broad goals of education. The new school promises to accomplish those goals and retains for itself the method for achieving the goals.

Stakeholders rise to the challenge as people generally do when given major responsibility. However, they must be given training to develop an understanding of the new rules and the accountability standards under which they operate.

This means they need training in decision making, team building, conflict management, exercising initiative and the limits to their authority. They also need training on collecting and using data for feedback to gauge progress and for making mid-course corrections. School councils need to understand quality indicators and accuracy of data for decision making. Omit any of these and the program will suffer.

One way to build good relations and spirit (team building) among staff, students and parents, is to use a retreat setting for a day or two. This brings divergent views into the open, helps people understand each other and makes it easier to agree on goals. The value of the group cooking its own food and planning for recreation time together brings forth talents and breaks down barriers.

People come to see each other as people like themselves as they play and solve simple problems together. This breaks down roles and reduces stereotypic thinking, blaming, finger pointing and scapegoating. The formal agenda can include ice breakers and get-acquainted exercises. An experienced group facilitator knows how to structure such events mixing formal agenda work with lighter, but fulfilling interpersonal growth items. Retreats build relationships and trust — utterly essential ingredients in successful shared decision making among diverse groups about momentous topics.

The training doesn't end with site stakeholders. District administrators would be indignant to be considered blockers of progress rather than vigilant guardians and monitors of district policy and standard operating procedures. District office personnel must understand that the old standard operating procedures may need modification. It is better to assume that they want to help and that training in central office supportive roles is the remedy.

This all points to getting what's agreed upon in writing, including a process for handling difficulties and conflicts between the new school and the school district. Superintendents haven't the time to get in the middle of every dispute, after they have approved the formation of the new school. In large school districts, the new school must have a channel

to individuals with the clout to get action anywhere in the system.

This lesson of using empowered stakeholders for success with new ventures should not be seen as strange or limited to education. Businesses see decentralized decision making, delegation and participatory management as essential to high morale, productivity and quality for competing in a global economy. Even in such a bottom line activity as business, decentralizing decisions has followed a rocky course because it collides with managers' limited views of what empowered employees can do.[6]

This lesson of empowerment is not new. Ronald Lippitt, W. Edwards Deming and others preached it for years with stunning success for those few institutions that acted on it. New schools must have the authority and accountability to function in these new ways in order to realize their goals.

Site councils can bring considerable pressure to bear on school bureaucracies. While school principals can be silenced by line authority, site councils of parents cannot. They are free to visit with the school board and superintendent about their school's needs.

MAJOR LESSON # 2: **Program choice for clients** solves many problems of resistance to change. When students and their parents exercise choice, commitment to the chosen program increases. Take away choice by assigning people at random to different programs, and hostility and resistance rises. Many a new program or school has run into the reaction of even a small minority who like the old program better. Usually, the vocal dissenters bring an end to the new program. That's often the case because dissenters are louder and more active than satisfied clients who fail to see or underestimate the opposition and act too late.

Educational choice has been a controversial topic because some say it doesn't solve all the problems of education. It isn't within the scope of this paper to review the entire topic of educational choice. In the context of new programs, choice confers special benefits by reducing the numbers of people taking pot shots at the vulnerable new school or program. This assumes real differences among programs, the very point of this paper.

What has been said about providing choices of schools or programs to students and parents extends to staff members as well. Why not deploy staff to programs where they will be happier and more effective? Simple and common sensical as this seems, it is not the case in many school districts. For example, principals and teachers are often treated as interchangeable parts. If the certification is correct, the person can be assigned to a vacancy in the new program. If a teacher or principal is ineffective, they are moved around each year or so. Crazy, but these are the real problems in the public education business.

New programs need the power of choosing appropriate staff and of choosing to remove staff who don't meet standards and expectations set by the site management council.

To solve this problem at Open School, we used a powerful process which every staff member agreed to on entering the program. Each year, all staff, all students and all parents were given forms to evaluate al. taff. This data was reviewed by a confidential committee of staff, parents and students. Staff members received the findings about themselves for their edification. Where serious problems were indicated, the committee met with staff to review the meaning of the findings.

In some cases, the findings were so egregious, the staff member had no choice but to leave the program and the committee so advised the staff member. It wasn't a case of the principal having evaluated and possibly having misjudged the staff member or the principal acting on dislike or whim. It was, in effect, the entire school saying the staff member was inappropriate with the data to back the judgment. Few dare stay in a school under such conditions even if the school is close to home. Probably only a new school could establish such a procedure.

Choice as a strategy for new programs must be a two way street. Students, staff and parents can choose to join or leave the new program and the program has a way of choosing an inappropriate staff member out. It is also appropriate to counsel parents about their child's choices and the availability of specialized programs that may better meet the child's needs.

MAJOR LESSON #3: **Doing more within the same budget** describes a way to increase efficient use of resources by budget flexibility. Educators want more resources but it appears unlikely that significantly more resources will be available. This means using current resources more effectively. New schools will have a much easier time reallocating resources than existing schools which are frozen by time honored patterns.

Tor Dahl, a world expert on productivity, examined education, specifically teaching. He says current teacher tasks fall into three categories:

1. Tasks that teachers should do because the task requires professionally trained expertise.

2. Tasks teachers do that others could do because the task doesn't require professional training.

3. Tasks that no one should do. Such tasks could be dispensed with.[7]

His analysis suggests providing helpers for teachers to assist with non-professional level tasks.

The most expensive component of education is staff, about 90 percent of the budget. With national student to professional staff ratios of 16-1 and all employees ratios of 10-1, it's no wonder teachers complain about lack of money for field trips, computers, dark room

supplies, training, etc. Very little budget is left after personnel costs have been paid. New schools can experiment with different ways to configure staff and use resources.

In many schools, teachers and students typically have little to work with in science, audio-visual equipment, word processing, data analysis hardware and software, video studios, and computers. The differential between staff and instructional equipment is about 100 to 1 ratio according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education. This means a one percent reduction for staffing yields a 100 percent increase for equipment.

If some of the budget is reallocated in this way, instead of teachers being equipment poor, students and teachers could be empowered with modern technology. This is the equivalent of capitalizing employees in business to increase productivity. Education today is still too much like agriculture was in 1890 — labor intensive. Education is a people intensive activity, but corrections must be made to provide for modern learning tools.

In a second example of reallocating budget, consider that typically most of the dollars are used for professional (certificated) staff with a very small expenditure for paraprofessionals (instructional aides). For instance, a school may have twenty professionals and one paraprofessional for a total of twenty-one people to work with students. The same dollars could fund thirty people if we reduced certificated personnel and used those savings for employing paraprofessionals.

The most expensive people, experienced teachers, would be elevated in status to facilitators of learning and there would be an essential core of them. The reallocated dollars would employ a larger number of paraprofessionals who would, at the teacher's direction, do many of the tasks that teachers shouldn't do because it doesn't require that degree of training.

Teachers' critical roles can be supplemented enormously by effective use of a largely untapped resource: the student body. If we are serious about harnessing the energy and idealism of youth, then we must give them important roles. This extends the practice in every school of having student helpers in the office or library. Now students will be expected to help operate their school in many ways: tutoring, cooperative learning activities, school beautification, greeting visitors, maintenance, discipline, gathering evaluation data, etc. Each of these tasks are performed under the direction of teachers and other school personnel and made into important learning experiences.

A critical cost-effective strategy involves contracting for critical services, largely aimed at improving a student's readiness to learn. While many students have high needs for health and other social services, it is unduly expensive to employ full-time certificated teachers for the social needs of students. Contracting for just the right amount and kind of service increases flexibility and control. For example, a chemical health specialist could be contracted for several hours a week to advise staff. Another chemical health specialist might specialize in support groups for youth in a contract for several hours a week.

Another cost effective measure involves co-location of non-school social services. This means cooperative programming among school services, other governmental services, (such as mental and physical health, probation, recreation) and private service providers. The Cities in Schools program has a well developed model.

This discussion suggests how new schools can adopt strategies for doing more within the same budget by reallocating resources and cooperating with untapped services in the school community.[8]

Summary

The nation's educators face calls for major school restructuring. A good case can be made for starting new schools rather than tinkering with old ones. While starting over seems a clean and attractive alternative, it has its problems. These include two major categories: 1) system problems of focus, resource allocations and staffing and 2) client problems involving students and parents.

Based on my experience, I suggested:

1. How the school's stakeholders can be empowered to make key decisions about the school's mission and program, budget and staffing. Through a representative and trained site council considerable power can be amassed to confront the education bureaucracy and harnessed to generate creative solutions. Stakeholder ownership and resourcefulness enhance program effectiveness, particularly where good data guide decisions.

2. How resources for education are considerable and can be reconfigured rather than waiting for the unlikely scenario of more resources. I suggested that present staffing patterns eat up most of the resources and that alternative staffing patterns can fund the many other needs.

3. How the critical dimension of appropriate staff for radically different programs can be manageed including how to handle inappropriate staff.

4. How new schools should be optional programs, that is chosen by students and parents to avoid or reduce the inevitable criticism of the new program. Staff should be in the program not only because talents match needs, but also because of their commitment and choice.

We are at a peculiar crossroads in history. The world and its institutions are undergoing unprecedented amounts of change. Schools must also change to ensure greater success in their missions.

Deputy Secretary of Education and former CEO of Xerox, David Kearns said,

> "Public education in this country is in crisis. At a time when our pre-eminent role in the world economy is in jeopardy, there are few social problems more telling in their urgency. Public education has put this country at a terrible disadvantage."

It's acknowledged that I have said little about the instructional process, the most important factor in student and teacher lives. However, for schools to improve or for new schools to survive, attention to structural details cannot be overlooked. The issues of starting new schools or programs, if anticipated and managed, will make the real work of schools — learning — more likely to succeed and more fulfilling for all.

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He gratefully acknowledges the editorial assistance of the Dr. Fred Newmann, Director of the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Madison, Wisconsin.

NOTES

1. L. Alexander, unpublished approximation of remarks to a meeting of The Business Roundtable, July, 1989.

2. T. Sizer, Editorial, *Phi Delta Kappan* (June, 1983).

3. P. Nachtigal, *A Foundation Goes to School*, (New York: Ford Foundation, 1972).

4. N. Bohr in *Neils Bohr: A Centenary Volume*, edited by A.P. French and P.J. Kennedy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

5. Attributed to Karl Pribrim, source unknown.

6. W. C. Byham, *Zapp! The Lightning of Empowerment* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991).

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8. See for example, Cities In Schools projects.