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AN APPRAISAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION
WITHIN A COMPREHENSIVE CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

PH.D. 1982

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PREVIEW

AN APPRAISAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION
WITHIN A COMPREHENSIVE CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

by

Weldon A. Beverly, Jr.

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Edgar A. Kelley

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 1982

TITLE

AN APPRAISAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION WITHIN

A COMPREHENSIVE CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

BY

Weldon A. Beverly, Jr., Ph. D.

APPROVED

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

*This Dissertation Is Dedicated to
Cora Maude Beverly*

PREVIEW

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Completion of a task that I set for myself may be considered an individual accomplishment; however, I owe considerable debts of gratitude to many persons.

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Finally, I pay tribute to the pioneering efforts of my grandmother, Pauline Porter Gregory, who was the first college graduate in my family. She and her brother, William Andrew Gregory, were committed to advanced education and established a standard of excellence to be followed by others. He was a member of the first faculty of Tuskegee Institute and she was a graduate of Spellman College soon after the school was founded. Her profound influence on the direction of my life and the impact of her teaching during my formative years are made manifest in the realization of this ambition.

W.A.B.

PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Philosophically, comprehensive high schools were designed to provide educational opportunities for all students in a single institution but adequate accommodations within the same building were not always available for alienated, dropout-prone adolescents. Alternative models of instruction in completely independent schools did make legitimate efforts to meet needs presented by alienated students but usually in environments which fostered isolation and increased the possibility of further alienation. Making adequate provision for students who had demonstrated difficulty in adjusting to a general high school program became a challenge to be faced by secondary public high school educators in the 1980's.

The program which is described in this study was established as a voluntary option for high school students, 14 to 17 years of age, who had not functioned productively in the regular high school course of study. Any secondary school student enrolled in the Chicago Public Schools was eligible to apply for membership in the program; however, 95 percent of the available spaces were reserved for students from the local general high school. Enrollment was limited to 100 students and selection was based on consideration of the following criteria: (1) failing grades, (2) poor attendance, (3) truancy, (4) antisocial behavior, and (5) specific problem behaviors. Referrals were made by classroom teachers, counselors and administrative staff

through the guidance department.

Enrollees participated in four program components: (1) academic instruction, (2) counseling, (3) career education, and (4) group activities. The components were designed to assist students reenter the regular high school program and achieve success. Reentry could take place at mid-year or year-end intervals. Two years was the maximum period of participation.

Seven professional personnel were the assigned staff for the program: a program coordinator, a counselor and five instructors for the major subject areas of language arts, math and social studies. All staff members were school certified and formally trained in human behavior and guidance. The annual staff cost of \$169,944.00 was 95 percent of a total annual program cost of \$178,044.00.

Staff meetings were held on a weekly basis to discuss educational, social, counseling and individual activities. Other school personnel were invited to meetings periodically and the program administrator coordinated all activities with other segments of the school program and disseminated information to all departments (see Figure 1).

Teachers developed and maintained profiles for each subject. These contained written, narrative descriptions of the behavior patterns and individual characteristics of students. This cumulative record was a history of each student's high school social and academic performance (see Appendix A).

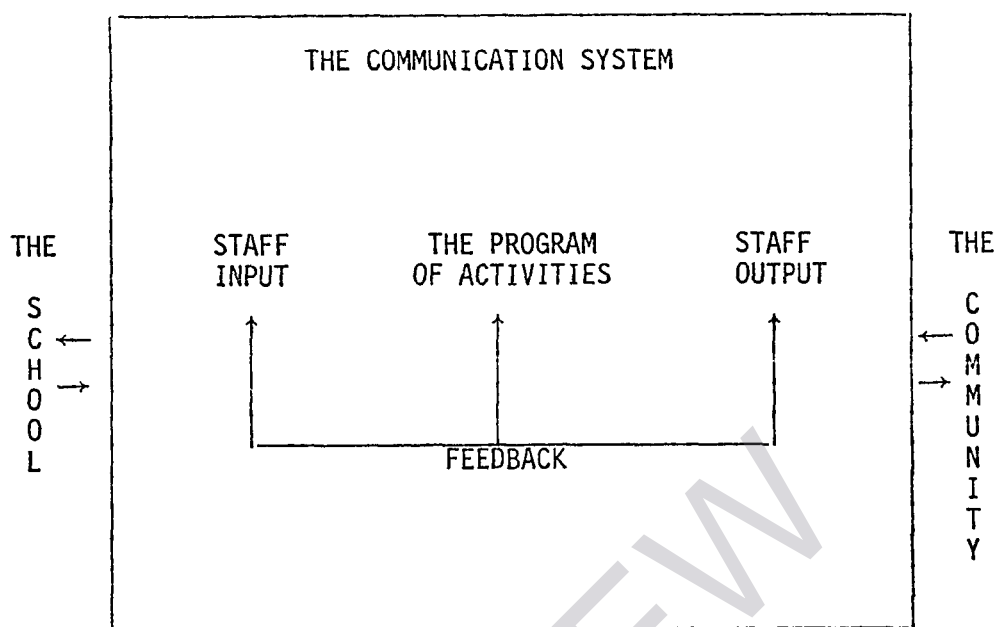


Figure 1

The Communication System

Program Components

Academic Instruction

A recommended course of study included the same requirements as the regular high school. Courses were taught in English, language arts, social studies and mathematics as the basic program of instruction. Students were allowed to take courses in the general high school program while enrolled in the transitional program. These included minor subjects and selected majors needed to complete the requirements for graduation. Each student's program was personalized

and individualized. Programmed, supplemental materials were used to allow students to work at their own pace and teaching strategies included one-to-one instruction and positive reinforcement.

Career Education

Students were provided with instruction in basic job readiness skills; activities included filling out job applications, job hunting and job interviews. Career information was made available through printed matter and audiovisual materials. Outside speakers presented information about specific careers and conducted group discussions.

Group Activities

Organized group activities were held on a regular basis for purposes of socialization, stimulating the growth of cooperative behavior, building a sense of responsibility and fostering a sense of belonging. Recreational activities were organized and made available to the students on a weekly basis.

Background

Adaptability and durability are characteristic traits of the American secondary school. Through the decades, new demands by society have brought about evolutionary changes in secondary education¹ and secondary schools in the 1980's were the result of gradual

¹The Task Force on Secondary Schools in a Changing Society, This We Believe (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1975), p. ix.

evolution which had occurred over a period of more than three centuries. A program of education uniquely serving the educational needs, expectations and demands of American society was developed from the moral values and beliefs of the American people and their concepts of the functions and purposes of schools and the place of education in national life.

Features of American Secondary Education

The American system of education is one of the most outstanding contributions by the American people to the social development of nations throughout the world. The American system of secondary schools has a number of unique characteristics when compared with educational systems of other nations. Some unique features of the American program of secondary education are:

1. Schooling is available to all children. Although fully equal educational opportunities for all is an ideal, an opportunity to participate in a program of twelve or thirteen years of formal schooling is regarded as a right and privilege of every child in America regardless of his place of residence, family status, race, religion or ability to fulfill satisfactorily requirements of an academic or intellectual nature.
2. The program is adapted to the varying needs and abilities of all youth. Formal programs of common school education at the secondary level are developed to serve the intellectual and developmental needs of a great variety of pupils, who may differ markedly in talents, abilities, potentialities, and educational needs.
3. A common school is open and available to all the youth of a neighborhood or attendance area of a school district who seek to attend.

4. The secondary school provides a comprehensive program of educational opportunities. A broad comprehensive program of education provides the opportunity for each pupil to develop his unique talents and potentialities and to enroll in programs designed to best serve his educational needs and expectations.²

Local communities have accepted responsibility for the American pattern of tax-supported education and, through local school boards, have shaped the character and development of schools. Over the years, the American high school has been the subject of critical discussion and constant scrutiny not only by professionals but also by parents and citizens.³

The American High School as a Social Institution

Historically, the availability of free, public education also has meant compulsory education for all American youth until age 18. The American public has maintained an unquestioning commitment to compulsory education in order to fulfill the goal of socializing youth into a democratic society.⁴ Implicit in a decision to maintain a strong commitment to compulsory education, society has assumed an obligation to provide adequately for the transition of all youth to

²William M. Alexander, J. Galen Saylor and Emmett L. Williams, The High School: Today and Tomorrow (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 42.

³James B. Conant, Education and Liberty: The Role of Schools in a Modern Democracy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. xi.

⁴Thomas C. Hunt, "The American High School in Crisis: A Historical Perspective," The Educational Forum, 39 (November, 1974), p. 57.

adulthood.⁵

American concepts of the value of education as a social process, combined with the influences of diverse local communities on schools, might have resulted in the development of highly individualized institutions, but a remarkable uniformity existed in public secondary schools during the 1970's. Although the development of the American high school was largely in response to social forces, reaction to social change often occurred at a slow pace.⁶

Prior to 1980, high schools were classified into four general types:

The comprehensive high school. A school that is open to all youth of a community or attendance area and offers a broad program of academic, practical, pre-vocational and vocational education. It endeavors to serve the principal objectives of general and specialized education at the secondary school level and to serve the significant and important educational needs of all its potential student body.

The general high school. A school that is open to all youth of a district or attendance area and offers a more limited, restrictive program than a comprehensive high school.

The specialized high school. A school that offers a program to a group of students, and it usually sets admission requirements that demonstrate traits and abilities needed for success in such special programs.

The vocational high school. A school that offers extensive programs of vocational training for designated

⁵The Task Force on Secondary Schools in a Changing Society, op. cit., p. 33.

⁶Alfred Lightfoot, Urban Education in Social Perspective (Chicago: Rand McNally Company, 1978), p. 15.

occupations. Course work in academic subjects, particularly English, Social Studies and Mathematics is included in the curriculum.⁷

The comprehensive high school encompasses American society's goal of equal educational opportunity for all youth through public supported education. Its mission was to teach children from all social classes, from all religious groups and from all national backgrounds the values of a free and open society.⁸

As the last quarter of the twentieth century began, the American comprehensive high school was viewed as an establishment striving to meet the complex demands of a society in the throes of social change when the school system had become too large to accommodate a mix of young people from inconsistent social backgrounds. Comprehensive high schools required added degrees of flexibility in order to respond to active forces of social changes.⁹ As efforts proceeded to make secondary schools more comprehensive,¹⁰ other sociological factors such as changes in family life styles and the positive effects

⁷Alexander, Saylor and Williams, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

⁸Roy G. Francis and David W. Noble, "Historical Perspectives on the Comprehensive High School," Perspectives on the Conant Report (Minneapolis, Minnesota: The University of Minnesota, 1960), p. 21.

⁹A. Harry Passow, Secondary Education Reform: Retrospect and Prospect (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1976), p. 4.

¹⁰Jerry C. McGee, "What About the Comprehensive High School," Educational Leadership, 29 (January, 1972), p. 364.

of small, personalized schools on the climate of communities came into focus.¹¹

Urbanization and the Comprehensive High School

During the twentieth century, the phenomenon of urbanization in America was a consequential force in determining the aggregate features and qualities of secondary schools. Urbanization meant interdependence of peoples and more reliance of everyone on the contribution of other segments of the population for an individually selected method of livelihood and an established standard of living.¹² Obviously, people who carry on, support, and advance a society which is highly interdependent need to be well-educated.

Demographic conditions in the country caused secondary schools to offer broad-based educational programs. Education was viewed by a cosmopolitan society as a vehicle for personal development, social mobility and economic advancement.

Urban school districts produced some specialized high schools because of population, but the comprehensive high school offered the board, less restrictive, educational program compatible to American cosmopolitanism. Economic and social privileges of the American dream were considered available through improved educational status and comprehensive high schools provided the necessary options: (1) a

¹¹James S. Coleman, "Changing the Environment for Youth," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (January, 1978), p. 319.

¹²Alexander, Saylor and Williams, op. cit., p. 39.