

THE EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON THE
LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL TENDENCIES OF THE SECONDARY STUDENT
IN THE OPEN SPACE CONCEPT SCHOOL

by 4589

DOROTHY LUCILE MONTY

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Approved by:


Major Professor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The enrollment at Salina High School has long exceeded the maximum capacity for which the building was erected. The administration has for several years recognized the need for additional classroom space long before a new high school became a reality. Several years ago plans were made to construct a dressing room facility to complement the high school stadium. A logical solution to the urgent need for classroom space seemed to be the construction of the dressing room facility and fitting it as a temporary classroom complex.¹

Since the Salina school administrators and school board recognized the acute problem of needed facilities, they presented the problem to the citizens of Salina Unified District #305 who approved the additional secondary structure. Initial planning for the construction of a new secondary building took into consideration the need for an innovative building to house a progressive curriculum. In cooperation with school personnel, the architect designed a building that permitted change in teaching techniques during the life of the building.

The age of space is upon us and if secondary education doesn't take on "the new look," it may find itself preparing citizens for yesterday rather than today and the fast developments of the future.²

¹The Salina Public School Unified School District 305, "New High School Facility," Staff Bulletin, (November, 1968), p. 4.

²Paul E. Coble, "Looking Ahead in Secondary Education," Peabody Journal of Education, XLVI (September, 1968), p. 90.

Revolution has erupted in the nation's schools, but it is not the kind of revolution caused by student activists, dissident teachers, or desegregation orders. The revolution is in the ranks of school architects and is the result of studies, evaluations, and architects' ideas of the perfect educational environment.

Gone are the chairs set in neat rows in four-walled classrooms. Gone are the windows. And gone are the walls. Open space schools are the new look, and Salina will have its own example of the new trend in school buildings when Salina High School--South opens its doors in the fall.³

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. This project was initiated to study selected factors related to the control of the physical environment in the open space secondary school and to investigate by an opinionaire whether parents, teachers, and administrators felt that open space classrooms facilitated innovative teaching.

Limitations and delimitations. The survey was limited by the factors below:

1. Environmental factors included were:
 - a. temperature
 - b. lighting
 - c. color
 - d. sound
 - e. furniture and equipment

³Barbara Phillips, "Architects Join Classroom Revolt," Salina Journal, April 19, 1970, p. 36.

f. space

2. Application was limited to the three open space schools that were compared.

3. The role of teachers and counselors was limited to their effectiveness in such an environment.

4. An opinionaire on innovative teaching practices was limited to a random sample of twenty teachers-administrators now teaching in the Salina Senior High School and twenty parents of students now enrolled in the home economics program at Salina Senior High School. The students surveyed will be enrolled in Salina's open space high school in the fall, 1970.

5. Since the open space concept has been a fairly recent innovation, the review of literature had to be limited to recent magazine and newspaper articles, interviews, school brochures, reports, and profiles.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Open space concept school. This is a building structure where classrooms are constructed in various sizes. Most rooms are large enough to seat seventy-five students easily; however, space adapted to small groups and independent study can be obtained by the use of moveable wall dividers and study carrels. Large commons areas containing circular tables can be used for small groups, for testing or for instructing up to 150 students.

This type school is usually divided into two parts: one part contains rooms used for academic activities and administration, while the other part contains physical education, music, drama, home economics, and vocational shops.

Environmental factors. Factors which become involved with physical facilities of the open space building are those variables which contribute to opportunities for learning and behavior modification. These are:

- a. temperature
- b. lighting
- c. color
- d. sound
- e. furniture and equipment
- f. space

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Educators and architects have joined forces to provide the proper climate for optimum learning. Gone is the day when the self-contained classroom is the ultimate in education. Some of the nation's most gifted architects have devoted themselves to school architecture in these past ten years, looking at many aspects of school life, including the environment which encourages greater interaction between pupils and teachers. The literature reviewed included the environmental factors which the writer found to be the most important.

I. TEMPERATURE

If a room is either too hot or too cold for teacher and students, the discomfort may seriously block the educational process. The open space school has a central heating and cooling system that is simplified by fewer walls, thereby reducing the number of thermal zones and requiring fewer thermostats. Windows can be like magnifying glasses, taking the rays of the sun and increasing the magnitude of their effect in the classroom. Very few windows are used in the building, reducing the problems associated with solar heat gain. The modern thermostat control system permits a year-round controlled temperature of 68 to 75 degrees.⁴ This enables

⁴A Profile of a Significant School, Clarksville High School, Clarksville, Tenn., 1968.

students and teachers to work comfortably and avoid the fatigue caused by an uncontrolled thermal environment.⁵

Today, unit ventilators are finding an essential place in windowless schools, in circular schools, in cluster schools, in flexible schools--in just about every variation on the educational-building theme that has been tried. What makes this reassuring in a proverbially changing world is that unit ventilators have always provided a simple, economical means for the two-way temperature control so essential to schoolrooms. By this is meant simultaneous heating and cooling capacity to meet the needs of each separate educational space--where thermal requirements vary with occupancy (school children are little stoves!); with the use or non-use of high level lighting (as with audio-visual equipment); with sunshine or the lack of it (since mighty Old Sol manages to make his warmth felt through walls and roofs, even in windowless schools). This type ventilation prevents overheating without the stratification of drafts associated with window ventilation. Because of the proper ventilation in the clustered open-space classroom, many students no longer sleep through lectures because of poor ventilation.⁶

In terms of more learning for the students, better teaching by the staff and higher morale for all, it may be that the return is substantial. When air circulation is poor, air exchange inadequate, heat or cold in an

⁵A Profile of a Significant School, New Providence Junior High School, Clarksville, Tennessee.

⁶Herman Nelson, "Architects Are Ingenious People," A Report by American Air Filter Co., Inc., School Products Dept., p. 4.

extreme, mental and physical efficiencies are impaired. Where properly balanced thermal systems have been installed, there is increased efficiency and morale and better personal health.⁷

II. LIGHTING

Indirect lighting is recommended for use in all instructional spaces. Indirect lighting reduces glare and results in greater visual comfort. A serious lighting difficulty in older school buildings is caused by the competition of natural light with artificial light. This problem is eliminated by reducing the number of windows.⁸

In September 1961 the attention of school architects and school administrators throughout the United States was drawn to the problem of the windowless classrooms. The whole concept of fenestration had come into questioning as the result of advances in air conditioning and artificial illumination. Many air conditioning engineers and lighting specialists were contending that windows are not only an unnecessary building expense but an operational nuisance as well, particularly insofar as they produce problems of heat transmission and visual glare. In the windowless classroom there is no direct sunlight, no glare, no distraction, such as weather, or outside noises. There is more wall space for display purposes.⁹

⁷Frank Carioti, Design for ETV (prepared by Dave Chapman, Inc., Industrial Design for Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1960), revised 1968.

⁸A Profile of a Significant School, New Providence Junior High, loc. cit.

⁹Architectural Research Laboratory, Dept. of Agriculture, U. of Mich., The Effect of Windowless Classrooms on Elementary School Children, Nov. 1965, p. 17.

Proper lighting must be tailored to the specific need in each space. Obviously it is important to have lighting of proper intensities for different tasks, or else the student will unconsciously divert a good deal of his energy to the task of seeing, with less left for the job of learning. Appropriate lighting should be planned for each area in which varying tasks may be pursued. Moveable fixtures and lamps as well as switching or dimmer installations can allow great functional variety. Chalkboards should ordinarily be lighted so students can see materials without glare or insufficient illumination.¹⁰

III. COLOR

Closely related to lighting is the factor of color. Colors ideally are selected on the basis of reflection of light and psychological effect. Care must be taken to insure that high contrast between walls, floors, furniture, and instructional materials does not occur.¹¹

Color becomes essential in the open schools to relieve the monotony of space. Soft yellow and other warm colors are used in academic areas to stimulate creativity. In areas where students are very active, such as, commons or study areas, soothing colors which are subtly relaxing are used. Yellows and reds are motivational colors, while blues and greens are more soothing. Ceilings usually are white for reflecting purposes. The white also makes the space seem larger.¹²

¹⁰Carioti, loc. cit.

¹¹A Profile of a Significant School, Clarksville High School, loc. cit.

¹²Phillips, loc. cit.

If room colors are depressingly drab, the atmosphere discourages enthusiasm. Color in the schools is not restricted to walls and woodwork that are given a flat coat of paint. There is color in the structural materials that are left exposed in school areas--brick, stone, natural wood, brushed metal frames. There is color in the cork of the tackboard, in the brightly colored sketches in the display areas, in the wall maps and the lighted aquarium. There is color in the chairs and desks and all of these should be considered along with the fact that the students themselves provide a constantly changing spectrum of color. In many ways the trend in color and design of interior spaces of the high school is to become more sophisticated --to reflect the amenities of the adult world. Responses of the student in his middle teens are more subtle--and in many ways more sensitive than those of his juniors. Using color in high school will demand more skill and imagination on the part of those who set the dyes.¹³ Carpet provides a tremendous choice of colors, textures, and designs, making rooms more serene and pleasant. Psychologically, carpeting lends a feeling of warmth to the interior.¹⁴

IV. SOUND

Uncontrolled sounds within a school may bring about distraction and irritation. Uncontrolled sound is kept to an absolute minimum via wall-to-wall carpeting, acoustical plaster, roof design, and other sound dampening equipment.¹⁵

¹³Carioti, loc. cit.

¹⁴American Carpet Institute, Inc., New York, N.Y., Sound Conditioning with Carpet.

¹⁵A Profile of a Significant School, Clarksville High School, loc. cit.

The open space concept theater, for example, may be chosen because it has no proscenium arch, an artificial barrier which separates the performers from their audience. This permits one sound chamber for the entire theater. Carpeting, if used in over 80% of the school, prevents sound production at its source, the floor. In addition, a pyramid-shaped roof covered with acoustical plaster will trap sound and prevent it from becoming uncontrollable. A major and chronic producer of noise in the conventional school is the metal locker. Located away from the normal traffic flow, the lockers should be of wood construction and open and close quietly.¹⁶

There is a trend in the recently constructed school buildings in the United States to design interior spaces which are more open. In the search for relationships in space and function between rooms, which arise from newer teaching methods, partitions are not as frequently employed as they used to be to isolate one space from another. One of the problems presented by this trend is the design and treatment of the acoustical environment.¹⁷

One of the criteria which has been generally accepted and used has been that an acoustical separation of forty decibels or sound levels between adjoining teaching spaces is desirable. The acceptance of this criterion makes it difficult to relate two adjoining teaching areas by opening them widely into each other, or by separating them with folding partitions. The trend of school building planning, therefore, is a search for spaces that will house a great variety of activities under conditions that make

¹⁶A Profile of a Significant School, New Providence Junior High, loc. cit.

¹⁷Daniel Fitzroy and John Lyon Reid, Acoustical Environment of School Buildings, Technical Report from Educational Facilities Laboratories.

all kinds of intercommunication as direct as possible; this leads to a growing openness of plan. It is understandable that the acoustical environment of the newer schools is a problem for the architect and for the acoustical engineer.¹⁸

It is necessary to determine the minimum acoustical separation that is necessary to allow a group or an individual to work effectively. In how noisy an environment can a teacher and a group of students work, communicate, and study without extraneous, unwanted sounds interfering? What kinds of sounds are objectionable, and what is the limit of tolerable sound levels? We recognize that special rooms for music, assembly, dining, and other activities require different criteria. We believe that the acoustics of the learning environment have, in the past, been given much less attention than they deserve.¹⁹

As more sound sources combine, as in open classrooms where speech sounds from many classrooms may be added together, the intruding speech sounds blend together into a somewhat bland hum without easily identifiable speech components. This seems to be the reason why open classrooms have been found to be acceptable in such high percentages. When the room is near speech optimum, both speech and listening are comfortable. Even audio-visual instruction can be made more acceptable by careful attention to the sound level.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 9.

²⁰Ibid., p. 19.

Authorities on teaching have known for years that carpeting could contribute immeasurably to the environment of education. Every attempt should be made to eliminate disruptive noise at the source. Hard surfaces are not only sound reflective but are the origin of most disturbing sounds in a classroom. A soft floor covering will muffle or eliminate disruptive sounds of dropping pencils and books, clicking heels or footsteps, and scraping furniture. The psychological effects of carpeting in the classroom also go a long way toward establishing natural disciplinary controls over both the sound output of the student and his general behavior. Experience also indicated that carpeting is also economically feasible in school installations.²¹

It is believed that carpeting contributes significantly to the "deinstitutionalizing" of the school and school life. Students take greater pride in the school and are more relaxed in the activities they carry on there. And this pride extends to school properties, too. Such problems as defacing of desks, walls, and other surfaces are practically non-existent. The presence of carpet has been observed by the faculty as a major cause of positive habit development by students using these areas. Boys wearing hats as they enter the building immediately remove them upon feeling the carpet under foot. Loud talking and horseplay in the corridor has been seen to cease when the group reaches the carpeted area.²²

²¹American Carpet Institute, New York, N.Y., Excellence and Economy, p. 10.

²²Ibid., p. 13.

There is a unanimous feeling on the part of school staffs that they would prefer to teach in carpeted rooms. Because the atmosphere is informal, teachers find it easier to develop a closer relationship between student and teacher. When they speak of quiet, they are not speaking of the acoustic absorption quality of carpet. They are speaking of the complete elimination of obnoxious sounds in the carpet area. The level of the speaking voice in the carpeted areas is consistently lower than it is in the uncarpeted areas. Pencils and pens are noiseless when they are dropped to the floor. In fact, pencils are not dropped to the floor for this reason. Constant sounds, such as ventilator fans and other equipment that create constant noise levels which must be overcome by the teacher's voice, are reduced in the carpeted areas. Thus, the teacher can use a normal speaking voice and his normal voice level encourages normal responses from the students. Teachers and students are less fatigued after a day on carpeted floors.²³

Acoustical engineers have found that a classroom ceiling should not be a sound absorber; a hard, reflective ceiling is a valuable aid in transmitting a speaker's voice to the back of the room. The hard surface reflects the sound energy down to the seats in the back rows. An acoustically treated ceiling would absorb this energy. Carpeting absorbs much of the noise before it can become noise. Thus, with carpet, the room has an acoustical floor: moving chairs or shuffling feet are noiseless activities in a carpeted room. Carpet can reduce classroom noise by as much as 50%.²⁴

²³Ibid., p. 14.

²⁴Ibid., p. 21.

Schools with an open plan require a high degree of acoustical absorption which is furnished by the carpeting. However, the most important reason for the use of the carpeting is the dignified environment which results from such an installation. Behavior patterns were enormously improved in the kind of environment in which carpeting is an important part. When schools are built with few partitions, the acoustics emerge as an important aspect of secondary school design.²⁵

The school of today can benefit from the inherent quiet of a carpeted floor--a psychological aid to teaching and learning which simply cannot be achieved with any other material, regardless of its cost.²⁶

V. FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

Office and classroom equipment must be considered in initial planning. Furniture should be selected on the basis of flexibility, mobility, attractiveness, safety, durability, comfort, and ease of maintenance.²⁷

Flexibility and adaptability determine equipment selection unique to offices, classrooms, commons areas, and library and should be chosen with matching and contrasting colors receiving due attention.²⁸

Classrooms served by a corridor may be screened from the corridor by a partition of storage units which are open at the top and bottom; thus there are no sound intercepting elements between the classrooms and corridor.²⁹

²⁵Ibid., pp. 32-33.

²⁶Ibid., p. 34.

²⁷A Profile of a Significant School, Clarksville High School, loc. cit.

²⁸A Profile of a Significant School, New Providence Junior High School, loc. cit.

²⁹Fitzroy and Reid, op. cit., p. 99.

Facilities can make or break the effectiveness of both the teacher and the learning program. The teacher's center in the future school will be more than just a desk and chair. It will be a work center for the teacher, with reference material, files, and supplies close at hand. It will serve as a suitable area for counseling and possibly for small group activity which the teacher can lead. It will be a control center for electronic equipment in the learning area--lighting, partitioning devices, intercom, and public address system. It will be so designed as to be both efficient and attractive--a place where the teacher will want to work and the student will want to visit. The individual study unit may be trapezoid shaped, groupable in various combinations, drop leaf for larger work top, and may also be used as a divider. Storage spaces may have perforated board or corkboard for bulletin board, teaching surfaces, or storage. Chairs may have disappearing writing surfaces or rotating surfaces for convenience.³⁰

Food service could be provided from rolling hot carts or from service areas set off from one of the main rooms behind an acoustical partitioning wall to prevent intrusion of kitchen sounds in the adjoining study area.³¹

VI. SPACE

The building structure makes team teaching more effective. Classrooms are constructed in various sizes. Most rooms are large enough to easily seat seventy-five students to introduce units, to give tests, and to present films, lectures, and demonstrations. However, small groups for laboratory

³⁰Carioti, loc. cit.

³¹Ibid.

work, research, and discussion and independent study for individual research can be attained by using moveable wall dividers. Large common areas containing circular tables may be used for small groups or for the instruction of up to 150 students. This makes for effective team teaching and multiple grouping. In addition, an auditorium or "Little Theater" of approximately 350 seats should be available for special group arrangements. This area may also be used by teachers for in-service meetings and by community groups for discussion sessions. A compact building may contain as many square feet as a rectangular building but corridor space is drastically reduced, allowing for a more economical and efficient use of space. To provide the best environment for effective education, a central open concept library and approximately six instructional materials centers should be included.³²

The new school of today is designed for a highly flexible program which calls for considerable interdependence among the teachers. While the old school's size and design prohibited communications, the new school facilitates it. Gone are the cement walls, the chairs set in neat rows, the privacy of the classroom, and the autonomy of activity. To counteract some of these changes, it is necessary for the teachers to develop a cooperative, cohesive group which will enable them to work out foreseeable problems. The open planning and the highly flexible classroom make it virtually impossible for some of the teachers to transfer directly all of their experienced procedures to the setting of a new school. It is necessary to modify their style of

³²A Profile of a Significant School, New Providence Junior High School, loc. cit.

teaching or face the frustration of trying to teach in a way for which the building was not designed. Slowly they begin to experiment with less-structured total school program and find that the classes are productive and easy to manage. Students like the relaxed atmosphere and with these success experiences, teachers begin to feel more secure.³³

The open space building is not prisonlike. It doesn't subject students to the influence of any one person for too long. It gives them the protection and interaction of many adults. It exposes them to a variety of personalities and activities and experiences. It permits them to move and gives them places to go. The whole atmosphere is more relaxed.³⁴

All are well aware of the fact that a pleasant, comfortable environment generally promotes a higher level of learning. The way we live and learn is affected by the kind of school structure we have created. Our school buildings should be designed to provide an environment which enhances the learning process. School buildings, therefore, should be designed to fit the school district's specific educational program. Flexibility should be built into the design to permit modification of the structure as the curriculum and the population adjust to change. The educational specifications become a written translation of the curriculum into required spaces for learning, including the necessary physical facilities.

The greatest expectations for the future generations of the community should be reflected in the educational planning of school buildings. The

³³Architectural Research Laboratory, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

³⁴Educational Facilities Laboratories, New York, N.Y., Profiles of Significant Schools--Schools without Walls, April 1968, p. 54.

planning should be based upon a sound working philosophy of education which is stated in the educational policy of the school district. Competent school officials should be capable of translating the philosophy, teaching methods, functions, and space requirements of the educational program into the educational specifications for the proposed project a new building and un-indoctrinated teachers are a bad combination.³⁵

VII. A COMPARISON OF THREE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Much has been said about building schools for the future. In one respect, this continuing dialogue is symptomatic of man's deep-seated wish to influence the minds of his descendants. In another, it is evidence of his growing conviction that coming generations must be uniquely equipped to cope with a technology we have only begun to understand. "Education," states the introduction to one set of educational specifications, "must prepare the minds of students for work that does not yet exist and whose nature cannot even be imagined."³⁶

Such is the eagerness of the planners to get on with the pressing work of education, and such is their apprehension that they will be too late in designing favorable environments to nurture it, that blueprints are often praised before their completion and buildings assessed even before desks have

³⁵Kansas State Department of Public Instruction, Topeka, Kansas, Suggestions for Developing Educational Specifications, 1963.

³⁶Educational Facilities Laboratories, Profiles of Significant Schools, Three Schools Revisited: Andrews, McPherson and Nova, December, 1967, p. 3.

been moved into their classrooms. Rarely are schools reported upon after they have been in operation for some time, and even more rarely are planners and administrators apprised of the effects of their advanced thinking.

Three secondary schools were selected upon which to base this study. All are considered extremely advanced educational plants, and all were reported upon generously before their doors were opened. They have been in operation about five years. Many of their innovational aspects have been proven effective. Some have not. These three schools--Nova High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; McPherson Senior High School in McPherson, Kansas, and Andrews Senior High School in Andrews, Texas--were built with a definite, and roughly similar, educational philosophy in mind. The concept of team teaching, combined with those of intensified individual instruction, increased use of audio-visual aids, decentralized resource facilities, and efficient environmental controls, has led architects in the direction of flexible, multi-purpose space. Library focal points, fully air-conditioned and carpeted buildings, greater use of acoustical materials, one-floor and loft plans, windowless areas, teachers' offices, and planning rooms further the innovational aspects. All three schools are inward-looking, focusing on libraries and resource centers. None is equipped with the traditional single-purpose type of auditorium capable of seating an entire student body at one time; cafeteria space is minimized or rendered multi-purpose in varying degrees; and zones of high noise-level activity are isolated from areas in which uninterrupted study is of primary importance.

In all three, economy of space, zoning of related activities, and ease of traffic flow have been basic requirements. As much as they are alike in

basic educational philosophy, the three schools vary widely in their approaches to it. Andrews is devoted to the amenities, as well as the necessities, of a good learning environment. With its central-domed concourse, its glassed-in library, and its fully carpeted floors, it is meant to relieve, as well as dignify, the serious work of education. It is, more than anything else, a kind of enclosed educational mall, hushed in tone, comfortable for its occupants, and glowing with a uniform interior light.

McPherson is the most readily expandable, but it seems the warmest, most intimate building, better adapted for materials resource centers than Andrews, not as decentralized as Nova, and certainly the most compact of the trio.

Nova is a blend of controlled learning environments and outdoor leisure areas. It is the only school of the three in which a full program of team-taught, non-graded class scheduling is supported by completely decentralized library facilities, and a sophisticated network of information retrieval and communications hardware. The schools are well suited to their environments.

With all of their innovations, however, Nova, McPherson, and Andrews have one essential factor in common with even the most conventional school house. Educationally, they are effective in direct proportion to the motivation of teachers and students.

School buildings perform their most dynamic functions as catalysts. Their individual conveniences, efficiencies, and assets as a learning environment are less significant than their roles as fulcrums of separation from the past, encouragers of the experimental spirit, instruments of propinquity for people and their tools.

In the end, a school building itself is merely a tool, a tool which can only be useful as its designers and users are skillful and highly motivated.

The effect of the carpet and air-conditioning at Andrews is difficult to measure, but apart from the fact that the teachers say they are less leg-weary at the end of the day, and parents claim that their children have had fewer allergic reactions to airborne dusts, library use-frequency has improved markedly over that noted in the old high school; there is no littering nor vandalism in the carpeted areas; student appearance has improved; and general behavior is more dignified and respectful.

Noise level is low at Andrews due to the carpeting and acoustical ceilings. The school's excellent acoustical properties, dignified efficiency, pleasant surroundings, and easily maintained aesthetic assets have been deemed as factors in reducing dropouts and truancy, inducing better behavior patterns, improving library use, virtually eliminating vandalism, minimizing fatigue and absenteeism, raising grades, and creating an over-all "environment of respect."

On the negative side, Andrews has not yet attempted closed-circuit television, although the school is easily adaptable for television circuitry. A decentralized library program has not been deemed practical because of the difficulty of keeping accurate book inventory records. The moveable classroom partitions have not been moved, and the little theater has not been available for large-group lectures or team teaching because of crowded conditions.

Aesthetically, Andrews seems to be quite successful in fostering a wholesome environment which encourages unity, pride, and a kind of open personality within the student body. Efforts are being made to develop innovations in the traditional high school program, such as "quest-centered" science programs, a senior seminar problems course in social studies,

experimental remedial English classes, and advanced composition courses in the language arts. Students in the elementary schools, where quest-centered programs are being followed, may find more opportunities to break with tradition at the high school level.

The outstanding feature of McPherson High School is the encouragement of experimentation, the envelopment of both students and teachers in an environment of freedom and change, the generation of ideas. By its very design--the size and shape of its classrooms, the inclusion of teachers' offices, the centralization of its library and the decentralization of resources, the clustering of its instructional spaces around special centers, and the architects' deliberate attempt to set aside the right angle and take fullest advantage of the geometry of space--the structure almost forces its occupants to strike out along new paths of learning. The structure nourishes a lively program of team teaching. Conventional classroom seating was discouraged by supplying each room with a sufficient number of chairs, but varying kinds of work surfaces, i.e., a round table that could be split into two semi-circular tables, several trapezoidal desks that could be combined for group seating, and a limited number of ordinary desk-chairs.

Within a short time, the physical environment markedly affected its occupants. Teachers exchanged ideas as they had never done before. They began to coordinate curricula and grading techniques, and many adopted new teaching aids after observing their use by more adventurous instructors. The concept of flexibility extends to even the most basic equipment, such as moveable chalk boards and cork-lined room dividers. The library is the school's intellectual nerve center and library use has increased tremendously

in the new building. The most striking achievement is the growth of McPherson's team teaching program. There is better grading and course continuity, more experimentation, and increased interdisciplinary movement. On the negative side, team teaching still encounters some resistance, mainly from older teachers who are accustomed to operating by themselves, and from those whose personalities conflict; the little theater is not adequate for large groups or a variety of dramatic productions. Some of the older teachers miss the contact that windows provide with the outside world. The building is still a little ahead of the teachers, but hopefully that will be remedied in the future.

Nova is, in effect, a workshop of academic experimentation and a non-graded program of instruction. Ideas are tried with relative freedom and no student is accepted without his wholehearted endorsement of the school's principles. The Nova student is not only surrounded by an efficient and pleasant learning environment, but is bombarded with all possible opportunities for education, including those that could be presented by a wide spectrum of advanced technological aids. The fat of the usual high school curriculum was cut away, and only the basic bones of intellectual discipline and inquiry left as an intangible structure, around which a highly functional building complex would arise, giving form to a philosophy predicated on the future.

At Nova, there was a maximum of useful, flexible, and varied instructional space. Lounges, kitchens and cafeterias, large gymnasiums, large swimming pools, spacious auditoriums, band and choral rooms--all were eliminated in favor of teachers' offices, planning rooms, clerical space,

air-conditioning, good lighting, and the most impressive battery of modern audio-visual teaching aids in any school in the country. The closed-circuit system, study carrels, retrieval of audio-material, films, and so forth, are available to all rooms. Nova also maintains a full-time staff, including an artist and technicians, to produce its own visual aids. This profusion of audio-visual apparatus not only offers the convenience and efficiency of the most modern teaching and information retrieval methods, and eliminates the need for an auditorium, but it accustoms the student to the use of both traditional and automated resource centers, skills that he will find useful throughout his life. Simultaneously, it enables the instructor to utilize a wide variety of advanced technological aids in his efforts to reach the student. In most cases, the learning process has been deepened and accelerated, and student absorption has so improved, that the instructors find themselves hard pressed to keep up with the increased demand for new knowledge.

In any course, the teacher is likely to give a lecture once a week to a group of 150-200, meet once a week with a middle group (50-60 students under two teachers), and direct two small groups of 15 or under. Middle groups may devote time to independent study or supplementary information. Small groups have seminars or discussion activities related to the lectures. Conferences are usually held with the teacher once every two weeks.

There has been much apprehension that teaching aids would replace teachers and deprive students of individuality. At Nova advanced teaching aids are employed in hundreds of learning situations, but the staff has been able to achieve an intensification of individuality, simply by shifting the instructional responsibility from teacher to student, and by bending all

energy toward the task of encouraging the student to learn at his own best pace. The result has been greater freedom and a gratifying increase in motivation.

The price of such achievements is time so Nova has lengthened its academic year to eleven months, the weekly session to 7-1/3 hours and the daily schedule divided into twenty-two flexible 20-minute modules, with no less than two mods per class period and no more than three. Open mods are usually spent in one of the school's resource centers, but can be spent in conference with an instructor or a counselor in a quest center.

When a student enters Nova, he is scheduled into a curriculum designed to satisfy his interests as well as the school's academic requirements. Each of his teachers or teaching team equips him with a "learning activity package," a detailed "self-study sequence" that amounts to a basic text and leaves instructors free to lecture, prepare materials, or offer personal assistance.

Such a system, combined with non-graded program of instruction, gives teachers the opportunity to concentrate on enriching their courses, coordinating their efforts and utilizing the most effective methods for communicating information. Simultaneously, it removes the pressures of regimentation from the student, permits him to fulfill the conditions for graduation without the imposition of an "average speed" and frees him to range as widely or as deeply as his interests or abilities allow. The school's emphasis on the individual and its efforts to make him responsible, self-reliant, and highly motivated have resulted in direct contact between the educated and education.³⁷

³⁷Ibid., pp. 4-36.

VIII. EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS

In such schools as the above, counselors should help students increase self-confidence so that they may take greater responsibility for their own learning and growth in self-understanding. The school staff should accept individual differences and encourage unique talents and strengths, thus helping students operate competently in group as well as individual learning situations. Lines of communication should be kept open between teachers and students. Individual or group counseling sessions should be established as the need arises.³⁸

Technology has changed the frame of reference of all segments of society. Via satellite communication, we know, almost instantly, events going on all over the world. How relevant are these facts to education? What do they mean in terms of school? How ready are the schools to help students not only to live in today's "instant world" but also to contribute to the adult world of tomorrow? The hardest gap to bridge is not the generation gap, but the gap between what is and what could be in the schools. All must join forces to bring today's world of technology into the schools. The educator must readjust his approach to teaching and to learning. He must incorporate new strategies of teaching and learning into the curriculum, into the school environment, and into his instruction. If men are not to be controlled by machines but will use them to advance their purposes and goals, they must also give more attention to the humanistic use of media and to the worthiness of content.

³⁸Louise McClanathan, "Student Guidance in the Classroom," Science Research Assn., Inc., Chicago, 1968, pp. 2, 30.

Teachers must use the new media, but they must use them wisely. They must be at the center of the decision-making process on what will be used and how it will be used, for they bear the ultimate responsibility for making technology work in education for the benefit of mankind.³⁹

The role of counselors also is different in the innovative school. No longer do they sit in their offices, repetitiously planning programs and helping to select colleges. Now they are in the mainstream of instruction, helping professional teachers to grow as teacher-counselors and performing as teachers, participating in presentations to large groups, planning independent study materials (in counseling areas), helping pupils with special problems, and doing other things that professional counselors should do.

The following material concerning the role of the counselor in the open-type building was taken from a letter written to me by Henry McCaslin, assistant principal and former counselor of New Providence Junior High School, Clarksville, Tennessee:

The open concept of our school does have some advantages for the counselor. Our building has three large open common areas with tables and chairs, and most of our classrooms will seat the equivalent of three classes of students. This is advantageous since we have plenty of space for large group testing or guidance. There is a disadvantage to this if you have student traffic moving through these areas constantly.

The open concept and teaching method of our school allows students to work and study in small groups throughout the building, and we think the student generally has more freedom of movement. I have found that this allowed me the opportunity to move among the groups to stop and talk about various subjects. This permitted the establishment of excellent rapport, and I could reach students who otherwise would never enter my office for guidance.

I have found that guidance in large groups is sometimes efficient and useful. I have presented programs to as many as four hundred at one time, but I have found that groups above

³⁹Elizabeth Koontz, "The Profession and the Media," Today's Education, February, 1969, p. 17.

one hundred are increasingly less effective. You may conduct orientations, explanations of course offerings and film-oriented programs to extra-large groups with good results.

A most distinct advantage of the building is that we can be in contact with more students at a time and probably more often. The only problem that I see is the need to guard against poor quality guidance as a result of large groups.

Our guidance director says that there may be some disadvantage when testing because in order to test four hundred students, you have to use large groups for a longer period of time for tests. She feels smaller groups (30) would be better for testing results.

Since we have no study halls for all students, we have some difficulty getting to students for group guidance. We have to take the students from academic classes. Fortunately we have excellent working relationship with the faculty, and we have no trouble in getting their cooperation. Establishing this rapport will be one of your first tasks if it does not exist already. You will also want to develop an attitude whereby students may go freely to the guidance office with no interference or "red tape" from the faculty.

We do have a great deal of team teaching, independent work, and work on the student's own level and speed. When a student comes to the office for guidance, he does not usually miss something important that cannot be made up. This gives the student the feeling of freedom to use the guidance facilities without fear of loss in his academic work.⁴⁰

The curriculum needs to be organized on a continuous progress basis so that pupils do not waste time waiting for other pupils to catch up or by being frustrated by work which is too difficult for them. This will intensify pupil motivation, as will the fact that each pupil has time to devote to studies that are particularly interesting to him or helping him toward his future goals. Evaluation will be based on individual pupil progress rather than on a comparison of the pupil with the group he happens to be in.

⁴⁰Henry McCaslin, Jr., Assistant Principal and Former Counselor of New Providence Junior High School, Clarksville, Tennessee. A personal letter written in reply to questions concerning the role of the counselor in open schools.

Innovative schools need new criteria to replace the usual criteria now being enforced by accrediting associations. The extent to which learning is individualized for pupils, that curriculum is refined, and that facilities are better utilized should determine the worth of the program. Students who develop more responsibility for their own learning go beyond minimums to greater depths and creative approaches. They develop better skills in oral communications. They relate better to others and they apply what they learn to new situations.⁴¹

Teachers are the key to success in an open setup. An open room should have only teachers who want to be there, who welcome new experience, are not afraid to make mistakes, have a capacity for excitement, are somewhat nonconformist--and are student-centered. You cannot have people whose security rests on four walls; they must have security inside themselves.⁴²

In an up-to-date school system, parents can expect the high school to have an alert, innovative guidance department, sensitive to ongoing social, cultural, and technological changes. The school will contribute to each student's self-understanding and self-acceptance, help each one to make informed educational and vocational choices, and provide group-learning experiences focused on questions and problems of general concern to youth. Throughout the school it will not only foster acceptance of human diversity but encourage students to develop the diverse talents and abilities needed in our world.⁴³

⁴¹J. Loyd Trump, Focus on Change--Guide to Better Schools (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1961), p. 15.

⁴²Profiles of Significant Schools--Schools without Walls, op. cit., p. 55.

⁴³Carol and Harry W. Smallenburg, "When Students Seek Counseling," The PTA Magazine, February, 1968, p. 29.

CHAPTER III

THE OPINIONAIRE

The open concept school is conducive to the attitude of flexibility and innovation. The review of literature showed that open space schools seem to lend themselves to team teaching and individual instruction; therefore, this chapter will deal with a survey of such innovative practices.

Opinions concerning proposed innovations in the open space school were solicited from a random sample of twenty teachers and administrators who are presently teaching in the Salina Senior High School, and twenty parents of students in the writer's home economics classes. These students will be juniors or seniors in the new open space facility, South High School, which Salina will open in Fall, 1970. A copy of the opinionnaire may be found in Appendix A, page 41.

Since the sample was small, there was 100% return of the opinionnaires. Table I, page 31, shows the results of the parents' opinionnaire ranked by percentages in order of approval. The results of this opinionnaire showed that innovative changes are favored by the majority of parents. They revealed a capacity to accept new educational ideas, even though their views might be considered naive in some instances.

The proposal, Table I, which won the highest approval (90%) among parents, was providing classes to teach students how to think, to organize their work, how to concentrate, and how to analyze problems.

Table 1
The Percentage of the Opinions of Parents
Favoring or Disfavoring Ten Proposals
on Teaching Innovations

Teaching Innovations	Like	Dislike	No Opinion
Classes to teach students how to think	90%	10%	0
Individualized instruction	85%	10%	5%
More independent study time	80%	10%	10%
Placement based upon achievement	80%	0%	20%
Air-conditioned schools	80%	10%	10%
More visual aids (closed-circuit TV, etc.)	80%	10%	10%
Moveable partitions for classrooms	55%	25%	20%
Carpeting	50%	25%	25%
Team teaching	50%	20%	30%
Indirect lighting (no windows)	45%	45%	10%

The proposals, Table 1, which were equally divided as to likes and to dislikes or no opinion were carpeting, which many people consider a luxury, and team teaching, which is an innovation and which may not be fully understood by the parents. Moveable partitions for classrooms and indirect lighting were proposals also approved by only approximately one-half the parents.

Table 2, page 33, shows that 90% of the teachers-administrators approved individualized instruction, air-conditioning, and carpeting. Only a small group (25%) of teachers-administrators favored indirect lighting. Sixty percent disliked the idea.

The results of the opinionaire, Table 3, page 34, show the comparisons between percentages of parent opinions and those of teachers-administrators. For a more visual representation of this table, please turn to the graph (figure 1) in the appendix. In many instances parents seem more ready to accept change than the educators.

The same number of parents (80%) and educators (80%) were in agreement that students should be assigned to classes on the basis of achievement rather than age. The success of the non-graded elementary schools has no doubt had a favorable influence on both teachers and parents. While parents (90%) approved providing classes to teach students how to think, only 75% of the educators were in agreement that more should be done to teach students how to arrive at independent conclusions.

Parents (80%) and educators (60%) differed somewhat on more independent study time. Parents seemed slightly more in favor of such time than educators. The independent study program for the superior student has proven quite successful for the past several years. Educators may be in doubt as to the suitability of such a program for students of lesser ability.

Table 2

The Percentage of the Opinions of Teachers-Administrators
Favoring or Disfavoring Ten Proposals
on Teaching Innovations

Teaching Innovations	Like	Dislike	No Opinion
Air-conditioned schools	90%	10%	0
Carpeting	90%	5%	5%
Individualized instruction	90%	0	10%
Placement based upon achievement	80%	10%	10%
Team teaching	75%	15%	10%
Classes to teach students how to think	75%	5%	20%
More visual aids (closed-circuit TV, etc.)	70%	15%	15%
More independent study time	60%	20%	20%
Moveable partitions for classrooms	40%	35%	25%
Indirect lighting (no windows)	25%	60%	15%

Table 3

The Percentage of the Opinions of Parents and
Teachers-Administrators Favoring Ten Proposals
on Teaching Innovations

Teaching Innovations	Parents	Teachers- Administrators
Classes to teach students how to think	90%	75%
Individualized instruction	85%	90%
More independent study time	80%	60%
Placement based upon achievement	80%	80%
Air-conditioned schools	80%	90%
More visual aids (closed-circuit TV, etc.)	80%	70%
Moveable partitions for classrooms	55%	40%
Carpeting	50%	90%
Team teaching	50%	75%
Indirect lighting (no windows)	45%	25%

Only one-half the parents favored team teaching, while three-fourths of the educators seemed to feel that this method of teaching might give them the opportunity to individualize instruction when several teachers were collaborating on instructional material. Both the parents (85%) and educators (90%) were in favor of the individualized instruction.

More visual aids seemed acceptable to both parents (80%) and teachers (70%). The idea of educational television and other filmed media seemed to strike a note of introducing into the curriculum events which could best be given by professionals.

A method of avoiding extremes in weather was favored by educators (90%) and parents (80%). The thought of trying to teach students who were uncomfortably hot or cold put the educators more in favor by a small margin.

Teachers (90%) seemed to favor carpeting more than parents (50%). Educators were no doubt impressed with the fact that carpeting cuts down noise and would make it easier to hear and be heard. Parents may think of carpeting as a luxury and hard to keep, instead of economical as it has been proven.

Moveable partitions for classrooms was accepted by a slight majority (55%) of the parents, but only by 40% of the educators. The wait-and-see attitude might be applicable here, since many cannot visualize separate classes operating without walls or doors between them.

Neither parents (45%) nor educators (25%) seemed to be too impressed with indirect lighting and no windows. Both seemed to take the attitude that windows added to the comfort of the individual. Not much thought seemed to be given to better light control, better temperature control, and better room arrangement without windows.

The findings of this survey seemed to bring out the fact that parents and educators are in favor of innovations if they will result in change beneficial to the younger generation. All groups seemed to want educational innovations which will lead to increased responsibility for the student and ultimately to educational improvement.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose for this study was to determine the effects of the environment on the learning and behavioral tendencies of the secondary student in the open space concept school.

Literature was reviewed on the environmental factors which made such an environment conducive to innovative teaching. An area school, McPherson High School, and two other open space schools were compared as to the environmental effects on the learning and behavior of high school pupils.. The effectiveness of teachers and counselors in such an environment was described.

An opinionaire on ten innovations concerning the environment and teaching methods was conducted with a sample of twenty secondary teachers-administrators and twenty parents of students who will be enrolled in the new open space school this fall, 1970. Percentage tables and a graph were made of the results showing comparisons between the opinions of the two groups.

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

1. There is a positive relationship in the comparison of the parents and educators on innovations in education. Because the percentage tables and graph were only opinions, the survey could not be considered conclusive.
2. Literature reviewed was no doubt biased because it was limited, generally of necessity, to profiles, brochures, and newspaper articles.

Many of these were published by architectural firms, school districts displaying a new school, educational facilities stressing educational TV, and firms interested in electronic equipment, carpeting, and so forth. The literature, for the most part, therefore, was very favorable toward the use of innovations.

3. While much research is now being undertaken with the new model school program under the direction of Trump, associate secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, it is too early to find much written by educators who are presently in the program.

4. Changes will not in themselves result in better learning. The ultimate goal of our change should be better learning for the pupils.

5. The greatest value of experimentation is the enhancement of the experimental attitude itself.

The following recommendations are submitted for use in further study:

1. Run the survey again after Salina's open space school has been in session one school year to see whether opinions are the same.

2. Use random samples or stratification in choosing the subjects, and include a larger number in the sample.

3. Compare standardized test results, especially in achievement, in areas where team teaching, modular scheduling, individualized instruction, and independent study have been most used.

4. Survey the teachers and students as to attitudes and results of the innovations.

5. Survey the counselors concerning their role in the program.

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APPENDIX A

OPINIONAIRE

As a parent, teacher, or administrator concerned with changes in the education of children, would you please check your opinion of the following proposals:

	Like	Dislike	No Opinion
1. Air-conditioned schools	_____	_____	_____
2. Indirect lighting (no windows)	_____	_____	_____
3. Carpeting	_____	_____	_____
4. Moveable partitions for class-rooms	_____	_____	_____
5. More visual aids (closed-circuit TV, etc.)	_____	_____	_____
6. Individualized instruction	_____	_____	_____
7. More independent study time	_____	_____	_____
8. Placement based upon achievement	_____	_____	_____
9. Team teaching	_____	_____	_____
10. Classes to teach students how to think	_____	_____	_____

Your opinion is solicited for a paper on the open space school which I am writing for a master's report. Your name will not be used so it is not necessary for you to sign this opinionaire.

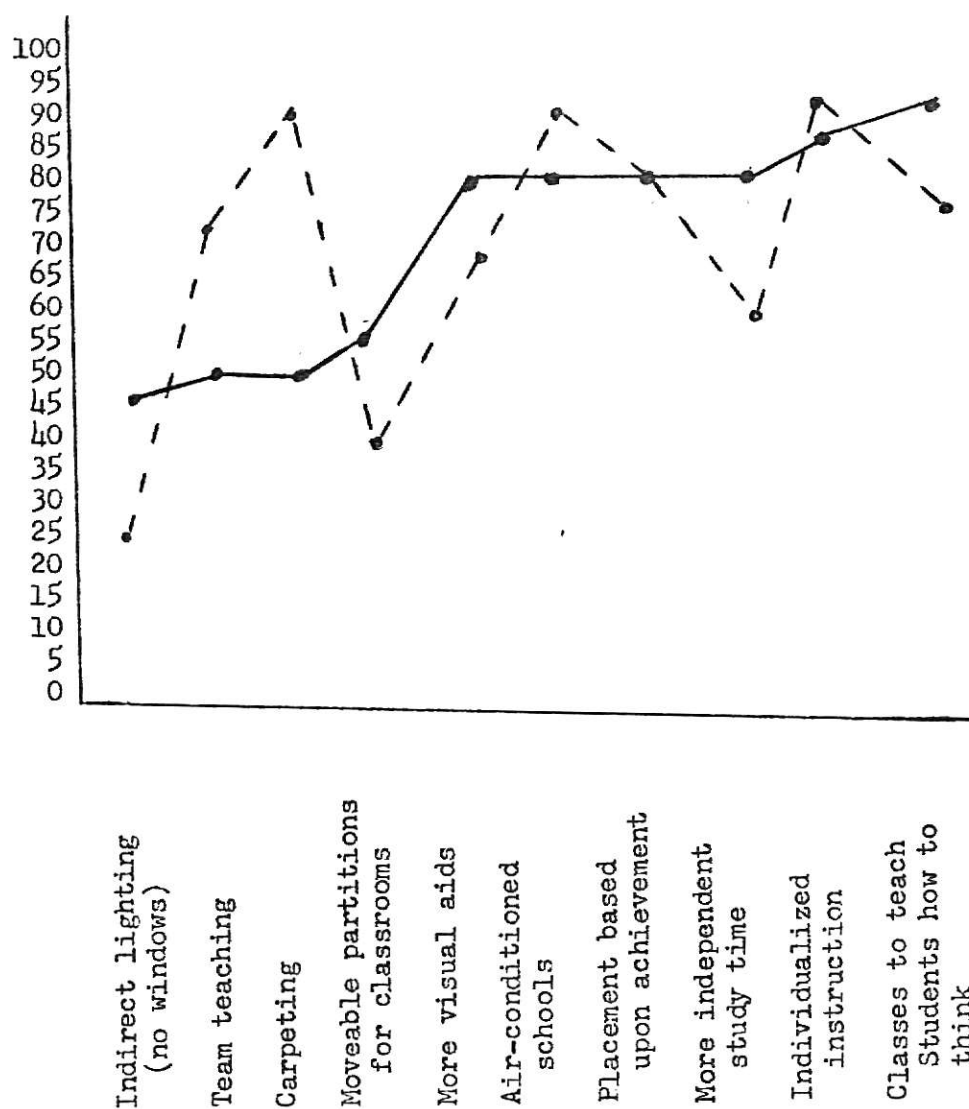
I am most grateful for your cooperation.

Mrs. Dorothy Monty

APPENDIX A

Figure 1

Graph Showing Comparison of
Opinions of Parents and Teachers-Administrators
Toward Ten Proposals on Innovation



*Solid line=Opinions of parents

**Dotted line=Opinions of teachers-administrators

THE EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON THE
LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL TENDENCIES OF THE SECONDARY STUDENT
IN THE OPEN SPACE CONCEPT SCHOOL

by

DOROTHY LUCILE MONTY

B. S., Marymount College, 1938

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

Many present-day schools are lavishing unlimited time and energy preparing students for a world that no longer exists. Many classrooms--in physical layout, method, and content of instruction--still resemble the classroom of thirty or more years ago. Citizens of the future will need diversity and originality. Tomorrow's educator must create a new type of learning environment.

This study was undertaken because of the writer's interest in the open space secondary school which is currently being built in Salina, Kansas, and which will be ready for occupancy in the fall of 1970. The writer's objective was to learn more about the effects of the open space type of environment on the learning and behavioral tendencies of the secondary student.

Since the open space concept in buildings has been a fairly recent innovation, the literature reviewed had, of necessity, to be limited to school brochures, reports, profiles, interviews, and recent newspaper and magazine articles. Only one recent book was found worthy to be included.

The environmental factors used included a review of: temperature and the positive effects of year-round air-conditioning; of indirect lighting and windowless classrooms with appropriate lighting planned for each area in which varying tasks could be pursued; of color selection based on the reflection of light and psychological effect; of sound and its control by carpeting, acoustical plaster, and roof design; of

furniture and equipment which of necessity must be flexible, mobile, attractive, durable, comfortable, and easy to maintain; and of space with classrooms of various sizes, many with moveable partitions creating an atmosphere of openness and lending itself to new methods of instruction.

Three secondary open space schools were compared. All have been in operation five or more years. These included: McPherson Senior High School in McPherson, Kansas, Nova High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Andrews Senior High School in Andrews, Texas. These schools are alike in basic educational philosophy, but differ somewhat in their approaches to it.

The discussion of the role of teachers and counselors in open space schools had to be limited, because little has been written by staff members in such schools.

An opinionaire on ten innovations concerning environmental factors and teaching methods was given to twenty administrators and teachers presently on the staff of the Salina Senior High School, and twenty parents of students who will be attending the new open space school this fall, 1970. The results were tabulated in percentages, and three tables and a graph were made showing the results and comparisons of the two groups.

Although the sample was small and the survey was only an opinion, since no one involved has actually worked in such a situation, the writer was satisfied that both parents and educators were generally in favor of a change in both educational factors and the environment influencing them.