

THE OPEN CLASSROOM

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Many people, if asked to describe the classrooms they attended as elementary school students, would more than likely have very similar responses. They would probably remember a square or rectangular room in which the desks were all arranged neatly in rows. At the front of the room was the teacher's desk, facing the students. From this vantage point, the teacher could not only direct classroom activities with a minimum of effort, she could also keep an eye out for potential disturbances. In most cases, the classroom was completely teacher-directed. Students seldom had any choice as to what they did in the classroom. Any child who questioned the authority or methods of the teacher was labeled as a "discipline problem."

The classrooms of today and of twenty years ago, except in rare instances, differ very little from the average classroom at the turn of the twentieth century:

. . . it is arranged to make things easy for the teacher who wishes quick and tangible results; that it disregards the full development of the pupils. It is arranged on the fatal plan of a hothouse, forcing to a sterile show, rather than fostering all-around growth. It does not foster an individuality capable of . . . creative activities. It disregards the present needs of the child, the fact that he is living a full life each year and hour, not waiting to live in some period defined by his elders, when school is a thing of the past. . . . Nature has not adapted the young animal to the narrow desk, the crowded curriculum, the silent absorption of complicated facts.¹

Within the past decade there has been a tremendous increase in the

criticism of the traditional method of educating our children. Educators and parents are now becoming much less satisfied with the products coming out of our public schools (although other members of the same two groups are usually responsible for the fact that change occurs so slowly in the field of education). Teachers, being the ones directly responsible for implementing what occurs in the classroom, receive the major share of the criticism for an unsatisfactory product.

Educators have been planting children in rows and telling them to grow in certain ways. This has produced on the one hand people dedicated to the status quo and on the other a lot of rebels.²

The image of the teacher has suffered as a result of this widely read and discussed criticism.

To read some of the more important and influential contemporary critics of education -- men like Edgar Friedenberg, Paul Goodman, John Holt, Jonathan Kozol -- one might think that the schools are staffed by sadists and clods who are drawn into teaching by the lure of upward mobility and the opportunity to take out their anger. . . on the students.³

The teacher is not always at fault, however. Many teachers who have tried new ideas and methods in their classrooms have abandoned these ideas and methods for a variety of reasons. Often they receive little or no cooperation from the principal or fellow teachers. Parents sometimes question the advisability of innovations. Students who have become accustomed to the traditional classroom occasionally have difficulty adjusting to a new situation. The teachers themselves frequently fear personal failure. Unsuspected school personnel may influence the day-to-day operation of the classroom:

The personnel who clean the school frequently find that it is easier to clean the school if the chairs and tables are left in rows at the end of the working day. Frequently they will attempt to put pressure on the teachers to leave the chairs and tables in orderly rows, rather than grouped for

various purposes. In many schools, the principal acquiesces and requires the teachers to leave the chairs in rows, resulting in extra work for the teacher who prefers another arrangement and favoring those teachers who prefer to seat their classes in rows to instruct them all at the same time.⁴

Teachers, more than anyone, should be aware that if our present system of public education is to survive another generation, changes in classroom instructional methods are necessary. Many changes have been and are still being proposed in our system of public education. In fact, there is an abundance of written material dealing with the alternatives possible for educating our children. As is the case with the majority of problems in any field, there is an extreme range of opinion as to the best methods for solving the problem or improving the situation. The alternatives proposed for improving the American educational system range from complete abandonment of the public school system to making few, if any, changes in classroom structure and activities.

Chapter 2

DEFINITIONS OF OPEN CLASSROOM

This report deals with one of the suggested alternatives for a more efficient system of education. This particular alternative is known as the "open classroom." The rationale for reporting on the open classroom as possibly the most effective alternative for improving the product coming out of our schools is that, if any of these changes are going to have a lasting effect, the place to begin is in the classroom at all levels. The American public is still too tradition-oriented to allow for the total destruction of our public schools. This is evident in the fact that the unification of school districts in Kansas and other states was met with such strong opposition.

The idea of the open classroom, however, allows for an almost unlimited amount of flexibility in the nature and degree of change desired in the classroom. This becomes apparent when searching for a definition of "open classroom." In the first place, the concept of the open classroom is known by several different names:

1. Open school
2. Open classroom
3. Free school
4. Informal education
5. Integrated day
6. Integrated curriculum
7. Free day
8. British Infant School
9. Leicestershire Plan.¹

Many educators use these terms interchangeably. All are based, however,

on assumptions about learning and knowledge that are necessary for understanding the process of education. These assumptions have been very aptly listed by Roland S. Barth. (See Appendix A.) Educators who agree with these assumptions should recognize that the teacher who operates a traditional classroom is not doing so in the best interest of most of his students.

The different terms used in this instance should not be used interchangeably. Although they adhere to the same basic philosophy, they represent different means of achieving that goal. The open classroom is just one of the means. But, as yet, no one has dared propose the definition or the model for the open classroom. Perhaps it would be beneficial to first define the concept of "open" as it relates to this report.

Open education is a way of thinking about children, about learning, and about knowledge. It is characterized by openness: classrooms are open; . . . space is fluid; . . . children move openly from place to place, from activity to activity. Time is open, to permit and release rather than to constrain or prescribe.

Perhaps most importantly, open education is characterized by an openness on the part of children and adults. Persons are openly sensitive to and supportive of other persons, not closed off by anxiety and threat.²

The open classroom means that the child, instead of the teacher, becomes the center of attraction. The classroom will be organized around the needs of the child rather than the wishes of the teacher. Teachers who seek self-security in being able to rigidly control thirty children will be slow to accept the open classroom.

Open education views the child. . . as a self-activated maker of meaning, an active agent in his own learning process. Learning is seen as the result of his own self-initiated interaction with the world. . . . Only after prolonged exploratory contact with an object or a concept does he begin explicit verbalization on process, relegating the immediate product of learning to a position of secondary importance. This view also implies a need for teachers to

revise traditional definitions of "idleness," "wasted time," and "play," for who can tell what conceptual formulations hide within what might otherwise be construed as aimless dabbling?

Open education sees teaching as a lateral interchange, a transmission not from superior to inferior, but rather between two persons of nearly equal status, one of whom happens to have a special need for something possessed by the other. It is the student who is most often the initiator, not the teacher, the student who makes demands on the teacher.³

Nancy Dill, in her article, "An Inquiry into Curriculum Theories and Open Classroom Practices," does offer a definition for an open classroom. Prior to listing her criteria for an open classroom she dwells briefly on the philosophy behind open education.

Open systems are dominated by what is called the principle of equifinality -- i.e., the use of different patterns or routes to produce the same final result.

Open classroom education grows out of the philosophy that for each child learning takes an uneven episodic path and that children can take responsibility for their own learning if allowed to do so.

An open classroom should meet the following criteria:

1. There is no "up front."
2. The teacher seldom talks to the class as a whole, although she talks with individual children often.
3. Each child works with a wide variety of materials and books.
4. Children are free to speak and move around as they wish.
5. An individual child can **decide** for himself what he wants to work on.
6. A child can work on a task as long as he wishes to do so.⁴

Other educators have presented lists of what they feel is essential for a successful open classroom. Sally Newman, in her article, "A Brief Overview of Open Classroom Education," presented a more extensive list of criteria which focus upon the child's needs and social and intellectual abilities.

1. A welcome environment.
2. An environment inviting exploration and investigation.
3. A wide variety of choices available.
4. Interrelatedness of disciplines is explored.
5. Accommodation of different learning styles.

6. Risk taking is encouraged as a natural part of the learner's growth.
7. Opportunity to demonstrate strengths and develop weaknesses into strengths.
8. Peer teaching and learner sharing are encouraged.
9. Nurtures cognitive, affective, and psychomotor growth.
10. Curiosity is encouraged.
11. Students and teachers are partners as they seek knowledge and understanding.
12. Nurtures self-esteem and self-awareness.
13. Cooperation used to develop sense of community.
14. Trust and mutual respect is basic among all members of the classroom.⁵

It has become clear, after extensive reading on the concept of the open classroom, that to have one set definition and/or one standard model would be defeating the purpose of the idea. If all open classrooms were patterned after a single, standard model, the result would, in most cases, be a glorified traditional classroom (which might still be an improvement). A standard model would mean that someone (undoubtedly not a student) would have to set various limits on what occurs in the classroom -- or have no limits at all. Experts on the open classroom unanimously agree that no two successful open classrooms can be exactly alike. Nor should the same open classroom remain the same from year to year, or even day to day. If the students are truly learning according to the concept of the open classroom, there will be plenty of activity to prevent the chance of it becoming a typical classroom.

Chapter 3

EARLY WRITERS SUPPORTING THE "OPEN" PHILOSOPHY

Having experienced the traditional classroom described at the beginning of this report, and knowing that it has existed for many generations, one might expect that the idea of the open classroom is new to the field of education. This is far from correct.

Faith in the child's natural curiosity and growth represents a mode of educational thought that goes back at least to Rousseau and, in this century, has won advocates ranging from Dewey to A. S. Neill to John Holt. Also, proponents of the open classroom often cite the psychological and educational studies of Jean Piaget, which substantiate the idea that children learn through direct experience and in varying stages.¹

It is very interesting to read the educational theories of earlier writers who were considered radicals because they disagreed with the conventional methods of educating children. Even though the concept of open education is accepted by many educators today, some of the early writers would still be considered radicals.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

One of the earliest writers to oppose the harsh discipline and regimentation customary in the schools was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). He is probably most famous for his political ideas that helped inspire the leaders of the French Revolution. He believed that men are often evil because the political and social institutions in which they live are corrupt. The solution to this was to reform both politics and

education. Rousseau's concept of a desirable education was described in the novel Emile, written in 1762.

In this work education is conceived as a negative, protective process, warding off external evil, that the good native to the child may be free to unfold itself, in all its spontaneity.²

Three of Rousseau's educational demands are especially relevant to the demands for implementing change in the classroom:

1. The demand that children should, from the moment of their birth, be allowed complete freedom of movement;
2. that they should be educated through direct experience, and not through mere information derived from books;
3. that they should be taught to use their hands in the production of useful articles.³

These statements might, if it were not known otherwise, have been written within the past five years rather than during the eighteenth century.

FRIEDRICH FROEBEL

A nineteenth century educator whose philosophy corresponds to that being proposed today was the German, Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852). Froebel is known as the founder of the kindergarten system of educating very young children. His most influential work was The Education of Man, written in 1826. Froebel described his philosophy of education as follows:

Education. . . is the treatment of man as a creature who is developing an awareness and understanding of himself. It should stimulate him to this realisation and show him how to achieve it. Education becomes a science when the educator in and through himself realises and practices the science of life -- when he recognizes this eternal order of things and understands its coherence, when he knows life in its totality. Educational theory consists in the principles derived from such insight, which enable intelligent beings to become aware of their calling and achieve the purpose for which they are created. The art of education lies in the free application of this knowledge and insight to the development and training

of men, so that they are enabled to achieve their purpose as rational beings.⁴

Froebel also believed that children learn by doing things. The teacher should guide the child in his education, not direct or interfere. He also stressed that children should learn how to live and work with each other.

LEO TOLSTOY

Another nineteenth century writer concerned with education was Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). This Russian writer is most famous for his novels, particularly War and Peace. During the latter part of the nineteenth century Tolstoy operated a school for peasant children. Therefore, his educational ideas were based on classroom experience.

. . . Tolstoy envisions developing individuals in a changing society -- where education should enable the individual to live creatively within a given society or to change that society. . . . It is the children's interests which should form the starting point for instruction.⁵

These were dangerous statements from a man living in a country controlled by czars. These, and other philosophical statements, later brought trouble to Tolstoy from the government and from his family.

JOHN DEWEY

The most famous American educator is John Dewey (1859-1952). Discouraged with the type of education young children were receiving, Dewey set up his own school in the late nineteenth century. He also supported the progressive education movement which was characterized by the following themes:

1. Education to be effective, must be compatible with the natural growth of the child.

2. Free movement, physical activity, and the affective component were as much a part of education as cognitive and intellectual processes.
3. Wholeness was emphasized.
4. Learning by doing was a part of natural education and the primary method by which children learned; . . .
5. Within the school there must be concern for children making choices and evaluating consequences.⁶

Dewey expressed his educational philosophy in several books which he wrote, including The School and Society, Schools of To-Morrow, Democracy and Education, and Experience and Education. In Experience and Education Dewey recognizes the conflict between the progressives and traditionalists in education:

The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without; that it is based upon natural endowments and that education is a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure.⁷

Dewey's child-centered school created quite an uproar in the world of education. During the 1920's and 1930's many teachers attempted to implement Dewey's ideas in their classrooms. A totally new type of classroom was seen in many places.

According to Dewey's theory, the life of the school was to be active, not passive; the children were to work, not merely to listen. The curriculum was to be organized around four chief impulses: the social instinct of the children, the instinct of making -- the constructive impulse, the expressive instinct -- the art instinct, and the impulse toward inquiry or finding out things.⁸

Progressive education came to an end in the 1940's. Critics accused the system of being inefficient in teaching the fundamental skills. Many educators felt that progressive education allowed for too much permissiveness in the classroom. As a result, the pendulum swung back in favor of the traditional classroom until the middle 1960's.

Chapter 4

BRITISH SUCCESS WITH THE OPEN CLASSROOM

It is not surprising that a renewed demand was made in the mid-1960's to make some basic changes in our system of education. American society, as a whole, was experiencing a period of upheaval. The civil rights movement was at its peak at this time. The young people of our nation were forcing themselves to be heard concerning important national issues. They were becoming disenchanted with the lingering Vietnam Conflict. And they were demanding a greater voice in the control of higher education. The time was ripe to demand changes in any of our basic institutions.

With the increased criticism of education in the United States, educators turned to the British for a possible solution. Why?

In contrast to American inertia, over the past twenty years English primary schools have changed markedly, and the rate of change appears to be accelerating. While the American public expresses frustration, doubt, and confusion, the British are expressing increasing confidence in their state primary schools.¹

It is amazing to many that the typically class-conscious and traditional British have provided the typically progressive and forward-looking Americans with examples of how to more effectively educate children.

World War II is given much of the credit as being the turning point in British education. Of course, as a result of massive damage during the war, many new buildings had to be built. But many old school buildings remain. The change was much more than improved physical

facilities. The basic change was in the teachers.

The war was a disaster for education . . . , but it was not an unmitigated disaster. Evacuation and bombing broke up the schools but they forced all teachers into a new relationship with the children, jerked everybody out of their ruts and made all sorts of improvisations and makeshifts necessary. Teachers who had taught the same stuff in the same city classroom for fifteen years found themselves in the fens, or the hills, or the farmlands, the only link with the children's background, and they simply had to re-think what they were doing.²

It was apparently this re-thinking on the part of the teachers which led to changes in the British educational system. They began to see education in terms of the child rather than the teacher.

Probably one of the major reasons for the success of the new British Primary School is that British educators did not all immediately jump on the bandwagon in support of the open education concept. The change was gradual. In fact, it had begun to a limited extent prior to World War II. Because the change has been gradual, the British public has been more receptive to open education. In the United States, change often occurs so rapidly that many people are either unable or unwilling to adjust. Another reason for the success of the change to more openness in British education is the source of the change.

Factors that block educational change in the United States do not seem to be so powerful in England. Hierarchical traditions, so much stronger in England than in the United States, put the weight of authority behind proposed shifts in direction. When English educational leaders advocate changes, the rest of the profession slowly but steadily follows suit.³

The concept of the open classroom received a great deal of impetus and prestige in 1967 with the publication of the Plowden Report, officially entitled "The Report of the Central Advisory Council on Education in England, Children and Their Primary Schools." The Plowden Report was an

extensive survey of primary education in England. It was the first major reassessment of English primary education in over thirty years. Although not using the specific terms "open education" or "open classroom," the report generally endorses the concept.

" . . . throughout the primary school, children should have time to follow their own interests and hobbies, to read for pure pleasure and to record their personal findings and experiences in words, in pictures and in movement."

Nevertheless, good teaching (though of a newer sort) continues to be essential. "But from the start . . . there must be teaching as well as learning; children are not 'free' to develop interests or skills of which they have no knowledge. They must have guidance from their teachers."⁴

The endorsement of the concept of open education by the Plowden Committee helped that concept to achieve status and support in the United States. Since that time many American educators have visited a number of British primary schools and then returned home to report their impressions in numerous books, magazines, and professional journals.

Chapter 5

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE OPEN CLASSROOM

If open education is to be successful in the United States, it will be much easier to begin with children who have had little or no exposure to traditional classroom teaching methods; therefore, the focus in the practical aspects of this paper is on the elementary school teacher and his classroom. This is not to imply that the open classroom cannot be successful at the secondary level. However, due to the organization of most secondary schools, and due to the fact that many secondary students have been only in traditional classrooms, the open classroom at the secondary level presents problems that are not within the scope of this report.

In considering the practical aspects of the open classroom, the following questions will be the focus of attention:

1. How might an open classroom be organized?
2. What steps are necessary to change a classroom from traditional to open?
3. What are desirable teacher characteristics for an open classroom?
4. How do students react to the open classroom?
5. How are students evaluated in the open classroom?
6. What are the responsibilities of the school principal in helping to assure the success of the open classroom?
7. What are some of the problems inherent in the open classroom?

This chapter of the report will conclude with drawings to illustrate examples of open classrooms. It should be stressed, however, that these drawings are not meant to serve as models. They are included with the intent to intrigue and stimulate readers with the idea of the open classroom so they will design their own "ideal" open classroom.

ORGANIZATION

One of the most important criterion for success in the open classroom is the need for a definite and detailed plan of organization. Without organization, no classroom can succeed. But this is especially true of the open classroom. There is naturally going to be more physical activity in the open classroom. If children are not aware of the purpose of the movement and the need to respect others' rights when movement becomes necessary, chaos will result.

Visitors to open classrooms -- especially those accustomed to the traditional classroom -- are often amazed at the noise level and the amount of activity within the room. As a result, many conclude their visit with the impression that no learning is taking place. Even some teachers who are just beginning to experiment with the open classroom sometimes doubt that much learning occurs. Critics of the open classroom often label it as being too permissive. And, without proper organization excessive permissiveness probably will result.

Within the open classroom children will be working more on an individual or small group basis. Therefore, to insure that there is enough time to work with each child, the teacher must know what is happening at all times. Ways need to be devised so the teacher will not be devoting most of his time to administrative details -- taking roll, counting

money, passing out papers -- or to answering routine questions -- May I get a drink? Where are the scissors? Where is the paste?

A vital element in. . . time-saving. . . is delegation, an expedient sometimes overlooked by a busy teacher with nobody to whom she can delegate except the comparatively unorganized and unskilled occupants of her. . . classroom. . . . Even in his first term in school Jimmy is capable of getting his own scissors, provided that (a) he really wants to use them, (b) he knows where they are, and (c) he also knows that nobody else will get them for him if he does not do so.¹

One of the first things that should be done in organizing the physical aspect of the open classroom is to move the desks and chairs into some arrangement other than rows. If possible, it would be better to replace the desks with tables. It is also a good idea to do away with assigning specific places to sit. Allowing the children the freedom to choose where they wish to sit might even provide a learning experience.

Whereas all children must be provided with a seat, not all the seats need be identical. The variety would tend to lead to struggles among the children for one chair or another and the ensuing negotiations (or violence!) are important social experiences. (Freedom from conflict is neither a realistic nor a desirable goal; learning to resolve conflict is.)²

Since the teacher in the open classroom does not rely heavily on the textbook as the only source of material, having an abundance of all types of materials is necessary for effective classroom organization. Often the excuse of lack of money is used by teachers to explain why they depend solely on the textbook for instruction. Of course, money is helpful, but there are other methods of obtaining materials for the classroom. The real problem is in selecting which materials will be most beneficial to the students.

. . . through the selection of materials the teacher influences the direction of the child's exploration, and hence his learning. Five criteria which can guide the teacher's

selection and which may help in reaching an optimal match between child and teacher are:

1. Whenever possible, encourage and permit children to supply their own materials.
2. Whenever possible, encourage and permit children to explore the real world outside the classroom and school.
3. The best materials for children are common ones, which are inexpensive, familiar, and easily available.
4. Ambiguous, multiprogrammed materials which suggest to the child a wide number of possible paths of exploration are preferred.
5. Select materials which have a high likelihood of initiating, sustaining and extending exploration.³

In order to prevent the open classroom from becoming a "junkyard" it is recommended that the classroom be organized into learning or activity centers. It is in these centers that the materials will be available for use.

The separation of materials into centers has two purposes. First, in order to exist in a classroom, we must have some logical method for finding things and putting them away. Second, many times the very grouping of related materials acts as a turn-on agent and suggests to the child explorations in which he might become involved.⁴

The location and number of activity centers will depend on the size and the physical layout of the room. The types of activity centers can be determined by the teacher and/or the children. If the children have been involved in planning and organizing at least some activity centers, they will more than likely make greater use of them and be more concerned in maintaining their appearance. Listed below are suggestions for possible types of activity centers within a classroom:

1. Science
2. Painting
3. Social Studies
4. Housekeeping
5. Dress-up
6. Sewing
7. Math
8. Spatial Relations
9. Building
10. Sculpture

11. Language Arts and Skills
12. Reading
13. Creative Writing
14. Music and Dance⁵

Each individual teacher and the students in her class should determine what types of activity centers would be best to meet their needs and goals. Although it has been stated that activity centers would be more effective if planned and organized at least partially by students, a classroom with several activity centers planned and organized by the teacher would be an improvement over a classroom of desks and chairs arranged in rows.

The materials included in each activity center would depend upon the type of center, the usefulness as determined by teacher and students, and availability of the material. As an example, listed below are types of materials that might be included in a Spatial Relations Center:

1. Puzzles
2. Form boards using shapes that are familiar.
3. Form boards using shapes that are unfamiliar.
4. Large boxes with various sized doorways for children to enter to emphasize perception of one's body in different spatial situations.
5. Materials to encourage development of near-far concept.
6. Pitching games
7. Cardboard tunnels for crawling through.
8. Any construction which allows children to go up.
9. Dollhouse with furniture and dolls (can be made from cardboard boxes or wood).⁶

A child who enters a particular classroom for the first time at the beginning of school where the desks and chairs are arranged in rows probably will not display much of a reaction. The child who enters a classroom organized according to the concept of the open classroom might just discover that learning can be fun and that school is really not so bad.

There is a danger that accompanies changing from the traditional

to the open classroom in that many teachers see other teachers having success with the practice and believe that they can do likewise with little effort. They spend little or no time researching the background or philosophy of the theory. They fail to analyze the needs and characteristics of their students. They also fail to take a close look at themselves to determine if they will be happy and successful in the open classroom situation. Dismal failure and total chaos often result in these instances. But this does not necessarily have to be.

There is no doubt that a climate potentially hospitable to fresh alternatives to our floundering educational system exists in this country. It is even possible that, in this brief moment in time, open education may have the opportunity to prove itself. However, a crash program is dangerous. Implementing foreign ideas and practices is a precarious business. . . .?

TRANSITION FROM THE TRADITIONAL

Advocates of the open classroom concept stress the fact that more harm than good will be done if a sudden change is made from the traditional to the open classroom. The probability for success is much greater if the change is gradual and a step-by-step approach is used. The teacher should not worry about how quickly the change can take place. Rather, he should be concerned with how well the change occurs.

Joy Taylor, in her book Organizing the Open Classroom, devotes a complete chapter to changing from a traditional to open classroom. She recommends a five stage approach to making the transition. These stages are summarized below.

Stage I. By the end of this stage the children should be accustomed to (a) working in groups, and individually, in a constructive and sensible way; (b) organizing themselves, within reason, in collecting

their own materials, working with them, and putting them away when they have finished; (c) accepting the teacher's authority in an atmosphere of controlled freedom, and recognizing that some measure of self-discipline is necessary in the interests of others; and (d) acknowledging the principle of moving from one task to another without intermediate reference to the teacher.

Stage II. Integration begins on a very limited scale. The children have delegated to them three important areas of responsibility: (a) putting into practice the principle of completing one task and beginning another without referring to the teacher for direction at the point of change; (b) exercising a degree of choice and of organizing their time so that the tasks are accomplished within a given period; (c) arranging their program to take account of the need for the number engaged in certain activities to be limited.

Stage III. The teacher now takes reorganization a little further by extending the period of integration in length and by increasing the number of tasks to be accomplished. The teacher should also remain aware that some or all of the students will need a certain amount of direct teaching.

Stage IV. Teacher-direction in children's activities should be gradually withdrawn so that it is less evident to the children and their own independence of choice and action seems to be more complete.

Stage V. In this final stage of the transition, all that remains is for the child's program to be distributed over a longer period of time.⁸

In Taylor's transition from the traditional to open classroom no mention is made of a time schedule. It would be impossible to reach Stage III in six weeks, for instance. Some children in the class might

be ready for Stage III in four weeks. Other children may have difficulty ever completing Stage I. To force everyone in the classroom to maintain a definite schedule would be defeating the purpose of abandoning the traditional classroom.

Another danger in the transition to the open classroom is that of progressing too far without complete understanding and readiness on the part of the students. Students who suddenly gain freedom may overreact and bring about a classroom environment worse than what they were accustomed to.

Teachers changing to the open classroom should be careful not to allow it to change from teacher-controlled to student-controlled. Most students have had little or no experience with classroom freedom. If the teacher does not set down rules, the students often feel the need to impose their own, which usually are much stricter than those the teacher would have expected them to follow.⁹

If a teacher discovers that he has overestimated the ability of his students or himself to change to the open classroom at a certain rate or to a certain stage, he should immediately evaluate the situation. If the transition is being made too rapidly, the process should be slowed to a rate at which the students will progress comfortably. If the class has advanced to a stage beyond the level of its ability, the teacher must be willing to be satisfied with the present stage or even to backtrack to a stage the students have shown themselves capable of handling.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

The purpose of the open classroom is to provide a learning environment which is child-centered rather than teacher-centered. However, the open classroom has no chance of success unless the teacher implementing it displays certain characteristics, is aware of and agrees with the

philosophy underlying open education, and is willing to accept the responsibilities and duties which accompany the operation of the open classroom.

Most teachers of today were taught in traditional classrooms by traditional teachers. Most teachers of today teach in traditional classrooms. What distinguishes the teacher willing to try the open classroom from the one who is satisfied with the status quo? What type of teacher, then, will experience success in the open classroom?

The open classroom teacher must realize the necessity for at least some change in our educational system. A teacher who is satisfied with the present system will fail to see the need for disrupting the traditional classroom. Anyone who gets an uncomfortable feeling when the classroom is not perfectly quiet would last a very short time in the open classroom.

If you are a person who is basically in touch with your feelings, who enjoys life and is easy-going in most situations, then you can probably move easily into the open classroom. If you are a controlled person who tends to suppress feelings, you may have some initial difficulty in the open classroom situation.¹⁰

The teacher who decides to implement the open classroom will have to relinquish his position of being the center of attraction in the classroom. The students will assume this role. The teacher will no longer be expected to continually present information which the students will absorb into their brains. The teacher will be present in the classroom for other purposes:

1. A cooperative facilitator.
2. A sympathetic supporter.
3. A knowledgeable resource person.
4. A knowledgeable diagnostician.
5. An available and knowledgeable aid in the child's pursuit of knowledge.¹¹

The open classroom teacher needs to know more about how children

learn and how to diagnose learning difficulties than how to diagram sentences or to be able to list the major exports of Peru. The teacher must also not be afraid to show emotion in the classroom. Students are much more relaxed in an atmosphere where they do not have to constantly guess the moods of the teacher. Teachers are human beings and should be expected to be honest with the students by displaying their emotions when occasions arise.

It is essential for the teacher in the open classroom to know when it is best to intervene and help the child in his learning program. This intervention may be in the form of providing suggestions or ideas to stimulate the student. It may be that the teacher may have to take an even more active role in the child's educational process.

Open educators believe there are times when it is appropriate and essential for the teacher to be directive, times when he might even be a transmitter of knowledge:

1. When children are unlikely to discover for themselves skills and information needed to pursue activities important to them.
2. When it is likely that a child's exploration will result in significant danger to himself or others or to the equipment he is using.¹²

Many teachers apparently see the open classroom as a way to reduce their work load because they do not have to worry about lesson preparation and the students are left mostly to themselves to learn as best they can. In reality, the open classroom is much more work for the teacher. Instead of preparing a lesson aimed at the whole group, the teacher is responsible for keeping track of the activities of each individual student. And these students will not all be working on page 50 of the same textbook at the same time. The teacher must become actively involved in the activities of all the students in the classroom. One of the highest compliments that can be paid an open classroom teacher is for him not to be located

immediately at the front of the room when a visitor enters. More than likely he will be found eagerly engaged in some type of activity with one student or a small group of students.

STUDENT REACTION

As opposed to the traditional classroom, the open classroom is child-centered. Many educators and laymen see this as one of the best ways to educate children. But adults are not the objects of the experiments with open classrooms. They are not the ones who are expected to perform, no matter what method of teaching is presently in favor of the "experts." If open education is to be considered successful, students should be able to see an improvement over the traditional classroom. How do students react to this new type of education?

It takes some students relatively little time to see the differences between the open and traditional classroom. One teacher noted the following changes in some of his students after just three months in their first open classroom:

. . . I have observed a change in attitude toward learning. Learning, which children once expressed and interpreted as dull, meaningless, impractical, and useless, began to take on purpose. It became real, lifelike, exciting, and rewarding. Children became so involved with learning and school that it was almost impossible for parents to keep them home when they were ill. I marveled at the children's ability to learn to make decisions, to accept consequences, to set goals, to make plans, to activate plans, and to evaluate their own learning.¹³

The students referred to in the above paragraph ranged in ages from nine to twelve (grades four through seven). Normally by this age students have already become bored with learning, often resulting in "discipline" problems for the traditional teacher. These students were fortunate

enough to be exposed to the learning opportunities available in the open classroom. Sooner or later, however, they will have to return to the traditional classroom setting -- most likely in junior high school.

This brings rise to one of the most important questions concerning the open classroom and open education. How will students who have attended an open elementary school react to the transition to junior high school? The chances are very slim of attending a junior high school operated on the open concept. Individual teachers may attempt to have an open classroom, but the students might now have up to seven or eight teachers a day.

The response of the students may initially seem somewhat surprising.

It appears that the open elementary school may assist the transition to junior high school more than the traditional elementary school because of similarities in structure which foster more appropriate preferences and expectations in students.¹⁴

Students from open elementary schools are more accustomed to the diversity of activities common at the junior high level. They are also better able to deal with the greater amount of student freedom allowed in the junior high school. Certain teachers may be as strict or stricter than were the elementary teachers, but at the junior high school the students are not with the same teacher all day long.

Of course, there are some students who are unable to function well in the open classroom. They may have become so dependent on the dominant role of the teacher in the traditional classroom that they are unable to accept the responsibilities necessitated by the open classroom. They may have learning disabilities which prevent them from functioning well without a great amount of teacher direction. Or, lack of acceptance

of the open classroom environment may not necessarily stem from school-related problems.

. . . students will be more likely to prefer open school organization when they are accustomed at home to more flexible rules governing their behavior and a more influential role in the decision making process.¹⁵

The student who lives in a home where the adult dominates and is the authority figure will expect the same climate in the classroom. He may be lost when he is placed in a situation where he is respected by an adult.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

One of the critical aspects of open education is the evaluation of students. For many years students have been evaluated in comparison to other students in the class. Superior and/or favorite students received A's and B's. Slow students and students who were not "performing up to their abilities" received D's and F's. The mediocre student received C's. For a long time it was the practice to retain for another year in the same grade those students who received F's. It was believed that the same teacher and material would be more effective the second time around. Although still done occasionally, this practice is not so widespread today. Students may still fail a subject or grade, but they are usually passed on to the next level for the "benefit of the student" or for the benefit of the teacher who does not want to risk having to put up with that student for another year.

Student evaluation in the open classroom is in no way compatible with our present grading system. Students in the traditional system begin each grading period with a handicap. Their past grades are a matter

of record and they are expected to work only at that level, whether it be high or low -- and they usually live up to those expectations. This is not the philosophy of the open classroom. "In an open classroom a pupil functions according to his sense of himself rather than what he is expected to be."¹⁶ The teacher must forget the idea that all children must perform against all other students and against certain standards.

Student evaluation in the open classroom should be a continuous process -- one reason why the operation of an open classroom means more work for the teacher. This is best done by day-to-day observation and keeping notes of progress made or of problems that have developed. What can the teacher look for?

Your primary source of information will be your observations of the child in action with materials, with others and with you. Another source will be any work the child does within the context of lessons or individual activities. In both situations, you will be evaluating students on many levels. You will not be looking for right-wrong answers to questions about predetermined content. . . . You will be looking for a wide range of abilities and knowledge.¹⁷

For most teachers this type of student evaluation is new and will entail knowing clearly how students learn and being willing to evaluate them on this basis no matter how difficult it is for the teacher. There are specific steps that can be taken in observing how children learn:

Move about during the free time period after students feel comfortable about choosing their activities. Watch everything you can and try to detail for yourself the type of learning which is going on. Try for awhile to suspend your judgment about how worthwhile such learning may be; simply notice it. See how students can work out problems between themselves in dealing with materials. Notice how a child uses bits and pieces of information he has gathered in the past to approach problems in the present, or to act in a situation. Watch what happens when students have time to think within the classroom. Essentially, for a while at least, you must forget about teaching as you know it and begin watching learning in progress. When you become skilled at observing spontaneous learning, then you will be ready to begin shaping and influencing it.¹⁸

This procedure is much more complex and time-consuming than adding up test scores at the end of a grading period to determine a letter grade. It is also much more accurate in portraying how the student is performing in accordance with his own abilities, rather than how he compares with someone else or with the norms on a standardized test.

Student evaluation should also be a joint process between teacher and student. This is not only fair to the student, it can relieve the teacher of some record-keeping chores.

Evaluation needs to be a cooperative process in the "student-centered classroom." It need not be based on some decision at the end of an activity, but rather it can be a continuous process.

As an example:

Each student could have a folder in which he places a statement of his goals, a copy of his plan, and some record (diary) of his progress. The teacher, in the same folder, can write comments about the goals, plans, and progresses while in consultation with the student. This folder could then be sent home to the parent as a documentation of the student's activity. If a letter grade is necessary, it could be a result of an agreement between the teacher and the student.¹⁹

An example of a student's Goal-Setting Form and Diary of Progress can be found in Appendix B. There is no reason why students cannot keep records of their own progress. This would relieve the teacher for more individual work with students.

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

If the open classroom is to have any chance for success, other people must be involved in the process of change and in the operation of the classroom besides the teacher and the students. The most important of these is the school principal.

The principal's position of responsibility and leadership within the school is the critical and pivotal point of influence over teacher's teaching and children's

learning. The "facilitative" principal gives teachers opportunities to make choices and to confer with others, in the belief that the teacher who consciously and deliberately decides what to do in his classroom, in light of many alternatives, will be more likely to evolve a successful, consistent philosophy and style than will the teacher who has little choice. A facilitative principal can be an advisor, as well as supervisor; a colleague, as well as subordinate; a supporter, as well as adversary; a provider, as well as requirer. The facilitative principal can expect antagonisms from teachers, many of whom want to be told what to do, even though they complain about such directives. The facilitative principal can help each teacher critically examine, develop, and refine his philosophy of education by providing instructional alternatives and the opportunity to select from among them.²⁰

The principal sets the tone for the types of activities that occur in his school. If he is tradition-oriented, teachers probably will have little incentive to try anything new in the classroom. A principal who believes in the open classroom concept, however, can completely change the learning atmosphere in his school.

The principal who seeks innovation and change in his school can also create a situation resulting in chaos. Many things must be considered and many questions answered prior to requesting teachers to develop open classrooms:

1. Has a well-stated set of objectives for the intended classrooms been developed?
2. Do these give me a clear picture of the kind of classroom that will exist if the effort is successful?
3. Am I in agreement that this is a highly desirable setting for children to learn in?
4. Do I have two or more teachers with a high degree of interest in this kind of classroom?
5. Have I thoroughly discussed the objectives with the teachers?
6. Do these teachers and I have a similar vision of what success would look like?
7. Do I have full confidence in the judgment and skill of these particular teachers?
8. Can this effort be initiated without additional expenses or without unusual privileges. . . for the teachers?

9. Do these teachers have a constructive relationship with most other faculty members?
10. Is this kind of classroom likely to meet with positive parental reaction?
11. Can I effectively communicate the nature of the intended classrooms to other teachers, administrators, and community?
12. Are there any policy, physical, or curricular restrictions in the school which will seriously handicap the development of these classrooms?
13. Am I prepared to spend some time in these classrooms -- be involved in their development in a personal way?²¹

Not only does the open classroom mean more work for the teacher, it also means considerable additional work for the principal. Each of the above questions is important enough to merit further discussion.

For anything to be successful the objectives must be stated clearly so that there is no misunderstanding about what is being undertaken. The principal should be responsible for seeing that the objectives for the open classroom are drawn up and available for review. This does not mean that the principal formulates a set of objectives and gives them to the teachers as a guide for operating an open classroom. As much as possible, the teachers should develop their own objectives. After all, they will be directly responsible for the success or failure of the classroom. The principal should make himself available as a resource person. It will also be necessary for him to review the objectives to determine whether there are objectives which cannot possibly be met due to peculiar circumstances at that particular school.

As mentioned above, the objectives should be stated very explicitly so that there can be no question as to what is being attempted, the methods used, and how evaluation occurs to determine the success or failure of the project. After a reasonable length of time, the principal, being familiar with the objectives, should be able to walk into the classroom and decide

whether or not the objectives are generally being met.

The open classroom will have very little chance for success in a school where the principal disagrees with the basic philosophy. He is liable to view such a teacher as one who cannot control the students. At this point in time, the principal still controls the learning atmosphere of the school to a great extent. The principal who wishes to have his teachers experiment with the open classroom will do himself a favor by thoroughly studying the philosophy, background, and practical aspects of the concept. There should be no doubt in his mind as to the worthiness of the open learning environment.

Often a principal will attend a convention, or read a magazine article, and hear or read about an idea which he thinks would be great for his school. He then draws up plans, presents them to the teachers, and expects successful reports within a short period of time. The result, in most cases, is failure. Teachers usually resent ideas forced upon them from the top. They will work more diligently on ideas presented and planned by themselves or by their colleagues.

If a principal wishes to push the idea of the open classroom in his school, he should first attempt to locate teachers who are interested. If there are teachers who are uncertain about their feelings concerning the open classroom it might be helpful to administer an attitude inventory constructed by Roland Barth and based on his assumptions about learning and knowledge (see Appendix A). According to Barth, most educators who "strongly agree" with these assumptions would probably be successful in the open classroom.²²

With a nucleus of teachers who support the idea of the open classroom, and with a principal who has confidence in these teachers, the like-

likelihood of a successful transition from the traditional to the open classroom is excellent. When other teachers on the staff notice the effectiveness of the teachers working with the open classroom, they may decide to join the bandwagon. Here, the principal must guard against teachers who wish to operate an open classroom without a thorough understanding of all that it entails. Some of these teachers may be much more effective in a traditional classroom. The principal must assure them that their traditional classroom is an educational alternative and that their future security does not rest on their willingness to adopt the open classroom.

Another key to the success of the open classroom is the ability of the principal and teachers to convince others, especially parents, of its value. The principal should know his community well enough to know whether or not they will accept innovative ideas pertaining to the education of their children. In some areas, parents strongly believe in the traditional methods of education and will react strongly against any changes. In other areas, parents will demand that the school try any and all new ideas in education, whether or not they have any proven educational value.

Even if the principal suspects parental opposition to the adoption of the open classroom on a limited basis, he should not be afraid to propose the experiment. With a well-planned and well-executed public relations program he may be able to convince many of the parents of the value of the open classroom. If parents are able to understand the concept of the open classroom and feel that teachers and administrators respect their opinions they will be more apt to support the school's attempt to improve the education of their children.

Personal involvement in the open classroom by the principal will

have a positive effect on the teachers. At the outset, especially, there will be many problems to solve and many discouraging moments. The principal who is actively participating will not only supply added support to his faculty, he will have first-hand knowledge of what is taking place. And by helping out in the classroom the principal will be showing his teachers that he really believes in the open classroom concept.

PROBLEMS

The open classroom concept is not accepted by everyone, of course. Opposition ranges from those people who are willing to give it a chance to fail in someone else's classroom, to those who refuse to accept the basic philosophy and will never permit it to happen in their classroom or allow their child to have so much freedom.

There are many valid criticisms of the open classroom. Critics believe that subject matter will not be covered as thoroughly as in the traditional classroom. If standardized tests are used to measure what the child has learned, the critics are probably correct. It is very convenient, in the traditional classroom, to teach only that material which is stressed on the standardized test.

Classroom discipline is another concern of the critics. They believe that children are not able to handle effectively the amount of freedom required in the open classroom. Some children will not be able to cope successfully with the sudden freedom to move about in the classroom. On the other hand, there are also children who cannot successfully cope with the rigidity of the traditional classroom.

Critics are concerned about grading children in the open classroom. Some opponents argue that it will make selection of students by

colleges and selection of employees by business and industry much more difficult if the use of letter grades is discontinued. Parents will also find it more difficult to compare the grades of their child with those of the children of their friends and neighbors.

Student evaluation is a major problem of the open classroom. This is partially due to the fact that most teachers are inexperienced at observing children in action and knowing what to look for to determine if the child is progressing with his learning activity. Evaluating children in this way will also require much more time of the teacher for observation and for conferences with the children to discuss their progress or lack of it. Hopefully, student evaluation will be one of the strong points of the open classroom when teachers become more familiar with a new type of evaluation.

The transition from the traditional to the open classroom is frequently a cause for failure. Many times the failure is a result of attempting to make the change too rapidly. Everyone concerned needs to know the purposes for the change, how it will take effect, individual roles, and where to turn in the event that problems arise. Educators with good intentions may inadvertently doom the open classroom to failure because they did not take sufficient time to plan and execute properly.

There seem to be three basic responses to the abrupt change in structure:

1. Relief and immediate adjustment by students who probably had healthy personalities, and who were inhibited by the traditional classroom.
2. Disorientation and confusion for students who had previously made successful adjustments to the school situation where they were required to sacrifice their own needs and interests for those of the teacher and the school.

3. Fear and absorption with preexisting personality problems by students who were not strong enough to function without any external controls.²³

Not only will the open classroom usually fail when insufficient time is spent on planning and performing the transition, but many students will also suffer as a consequence.

Chapter 6

DIAGRAMS OF THE OPEN CLASSROOM

To illustrate how the open classroom differs in physical appearance from the traditional classroom sample diagrams are included in this section of the report. The arrangements portrayed would not be on a permanent basis. For full effectiveness an open classroom would change its appearance whenever student activities so dictated. Each diagram will be described individually.

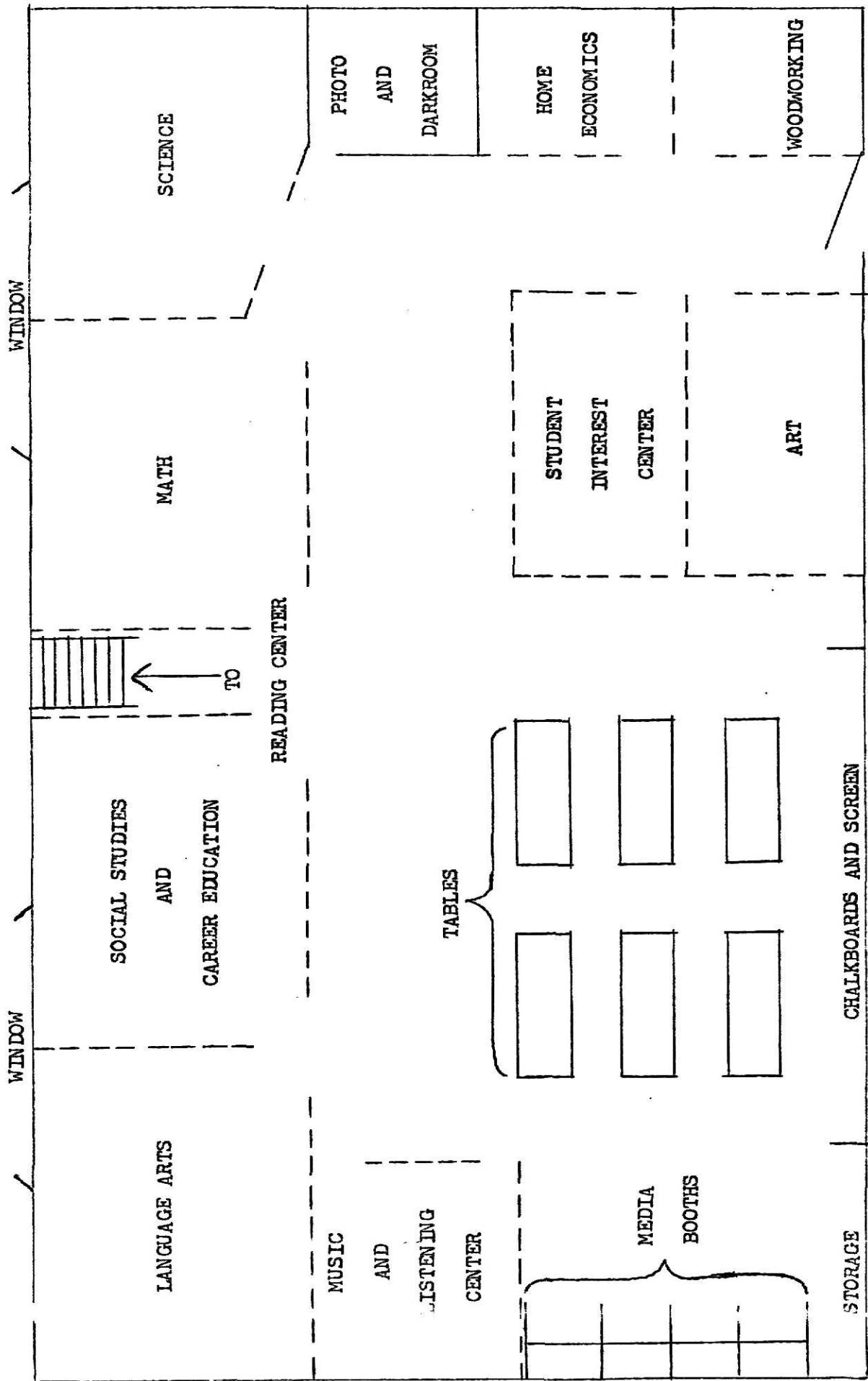
CLASSROOM #1

This classroom represents the ideal classroom of the author of this report. Physically, the classroom would have four walls, which may be portable to give the classroom more flexibility. The classroom would be divided into several interest centers. The reading center and class library would be a balcony extending over one side of the room. At the end of the reading center there would be located a center for games not concerned with any particular subject.

The main part of the room would be divided into other types of centers, including science, math, social studies, language arts, art, music, and a listening center. Each would be stocked with materials which hopefully would be effective in helping children to learn on their own. Included would be books, magazines, games, toys, and audio-visual materials.

There would also be specialized interest centers for career education, photography, woodworking, and home economics. One center would be left vacant for a student or group of students to plan and construct interest centers of their choosing on a monthly basis.

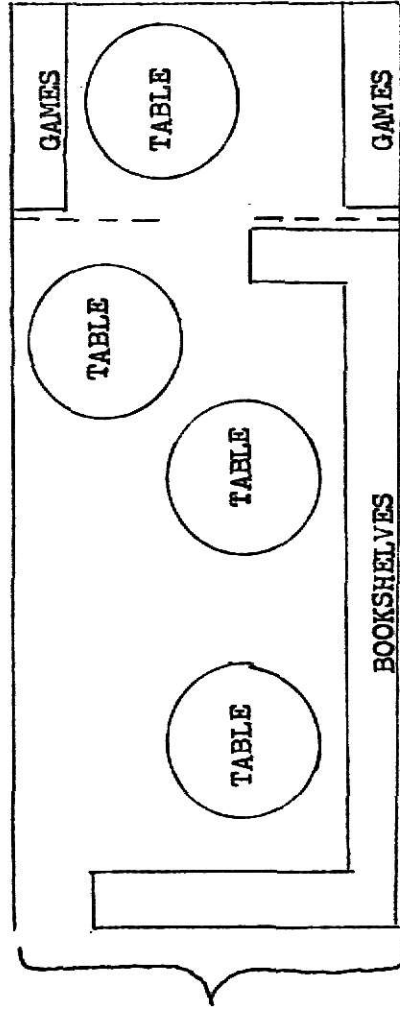
At one end of the room would be a media center where all audio-visual equipment would be located. Space would be provided in this area for group presentations by students or by the teacher. There would be individual booths for those who desired to use the equipment and materials on an individual basis.



Each interest center has its own storage area.

Room dividers are portable bulletin boards, pegboard, or chalkboard.

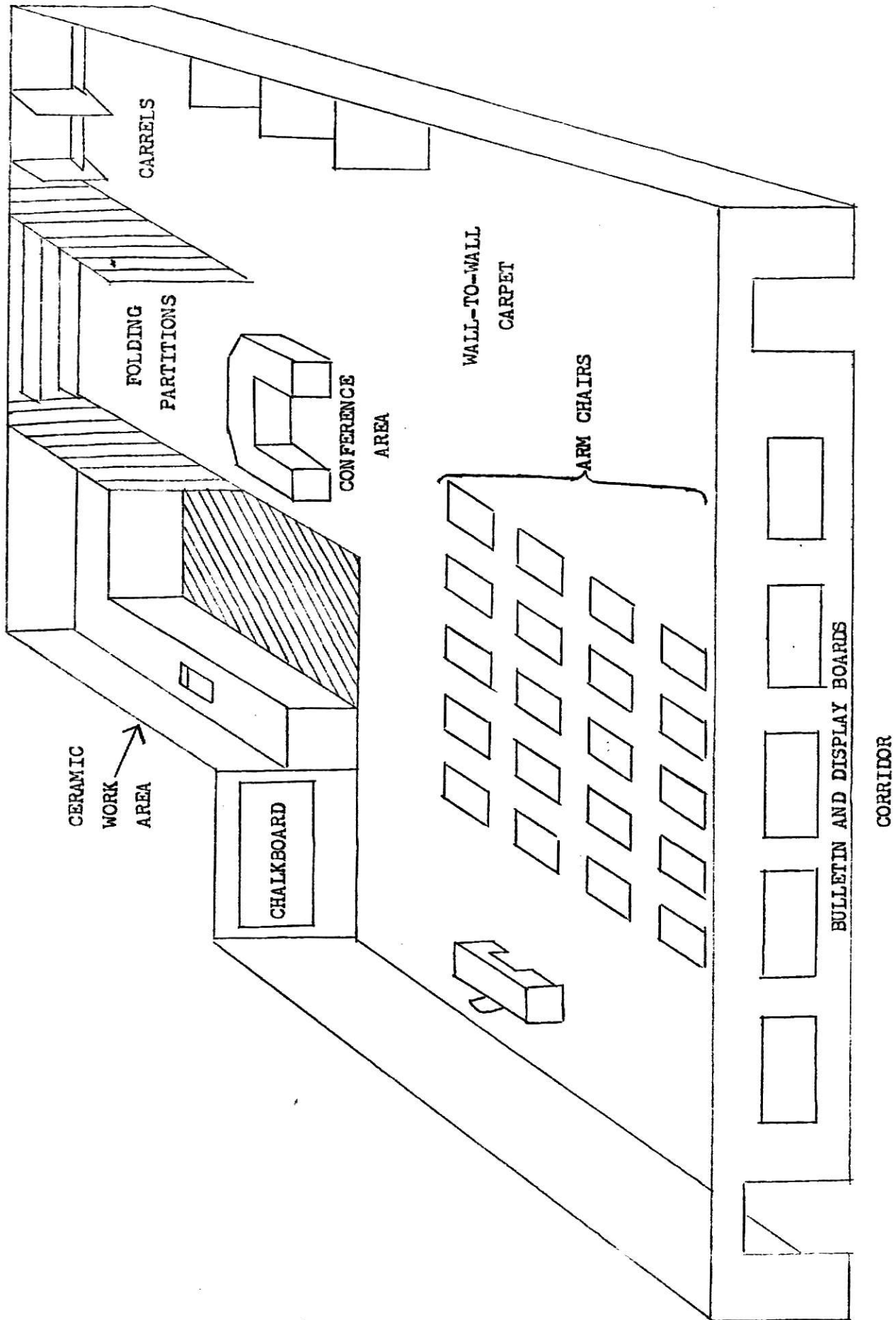
READING
AND
GAME
CENTER*



* Located directly above social studies and language arts areas.

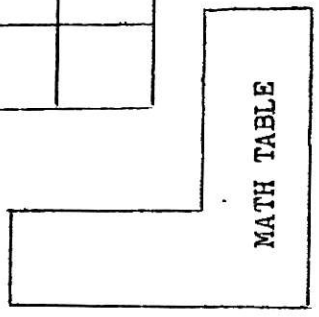
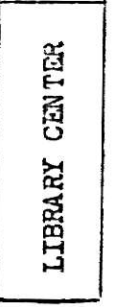
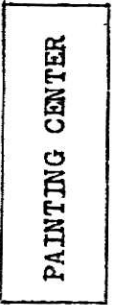
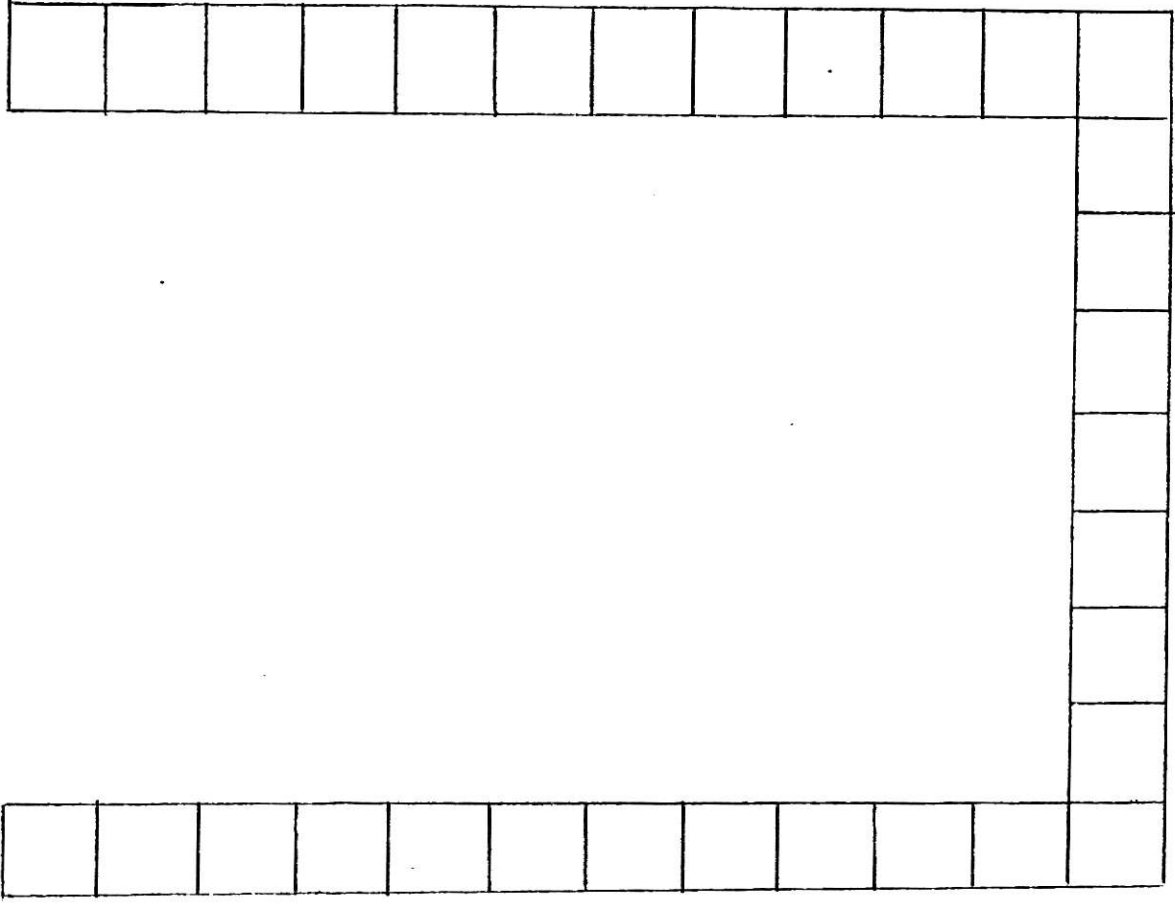
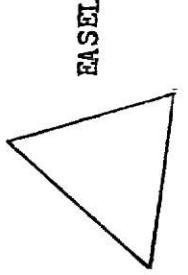
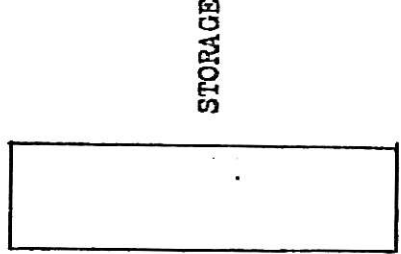
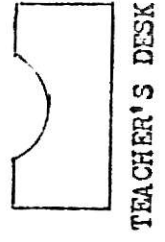
CLASSROOM #2

This classroom makes use of partitions to create more flexible spaces. The spaces could be used by individuals or by small groups. Outside walls are used for displays of various types. The inside walls are constructed so that most of the wall space can be practically used. Individual study carrels line a portion of two walls. The student desks are portable so they may be easily moved to provide more room for other activities. One corner of the room is set aside as a work area. Wall-to-wall carpeting would help reduce the noise level to allow for different types of activities to take place at the same time.¹



CLASSROOM #3

In this classroom the desks are pushed together, giving greater intimacy to adjoining neighbors and suggesting casual conversation between them. The single desk lineup still isolates students from the bulk of their fellows. . . . However, this arrangement puts all students in visual contact with one another, and encourages greater group feeling. There is easy access to desks, which encourages frequent movement around the room. The large area in the middle of the desks might serve no purpose other than to separate students and could result in a lot of wasted space. Or it might be utilized advantageously for activity centers or small group projects. With this arrangement the teacher's desk can be placed anywhere in the room. A center, symmetrical placement inside the U-shape would suggest an intimate contact with children, but would make the desk somewhat inaccessible for students and for the teacher. A placement outside the U-shape gives a more distant or casual quality to the relationship between teacher and students. A centered placement outside the students' desks probably would give a feeling of formality to this room. Depending upon the shape of the room, the walls or the center area can be used to set up activity centers. If you anticipate many students using the activity centers at the same time, the space around them could be increased by using only one end of the room and pushing the U-shaped arrangement to the other end of the room as shown in this diagram.²



Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The time has come for changes in our public educational system. American society is changing abruptly. Public schools cannot afford to lag behind. Educators are now much more knowledgeable about the ways in which children learn. Children do not learn best by the methods forced upon them in the past. Each child learns best in his own way and at his own speed. Therefore, it is necessary that alternative forms of education are provided so that each child has the opportunity to learn in the way that most nearly suits him.

One of the most promising alternative forms of education being experimented with is the open classroom concept. Although regarded by many as being new, the philosophy of the open classroom originated with the educational writings of such early writers as Rousseau, Froebel, Tolstoy, and Dewey. Successful operation of the open classrooms by the British has brought the concept to the United States.

There are many factors influencing the success of the open classroom. Everyone involved must have a thorough knowledge and understanding of what is trying to be accomplished, and this takes time. The transition from the traditional to the open classroom must be a gradual process. Any attempt to hurry the process will normally result only in frustration and failure. The teacher in the open classroom must not expect it to ease the job of teaching. More work for the teacher will

result if the open classroom is operated properly. Active involvement by the principal is a necessity for success because he still generally determines the type of learning that occurs in his school. The principal is also instrumental in acquiring parental and community support.

It should be emphasized that the open classroom is just one possible alternative to our present system of education. It will benefit many students, possible hinder others. Some students may learn better in situations that are more teacher-controlled.

The open classroom is not synonymous with the term "permissiveness," as some critics claim. It can result in permissiveness if not handled properly. The degree of freedom in the classroom depends upon the personalities of the teacher and the students. Therefore, no open classroom will create the same learning atmosphere and environment. No open classroom can serve as a model for any other.

It will be a rare teacher and group of children, indeed, who can effectively operate an open classroom to its fullest extent. In fact, until more teachers and students have had experience with the open classroom, it will best operate on a limited scale -- perhaps one or two hours a day at the outset. Teacher-directed activities will not be abandoned. They might even improve as a result of the need for more materials for the open classroom.

The acceptance of the open classroom will be too slow for some, too fast for others. It may prove to be just another educational fad. Hopefully, those who support any part of the concept will put that part to use in the classroom. No matter to what degree it is used, it will give children a break from sitting in the same desk and listening to the teacher day after day.

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7. Roland S. Barth, "So You Want to Change to an Open Classroom," Phi Delta Kappan, LIII (October, 1971), 97.
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APPENDIX A

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE*

Instructions: Circle the response which best represents your own feelings about each statement. The responses are abbreviated as follows:

Strongly agree	(SA)
Agree	(A)
No strong feeling	(NSF)
Disagree	(D)
Strongly disagree	(SD)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Children are innately curious and will explore their environment without adult intervention. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 2. Exploratory behavior is self-perpetuating. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 3. The child will display natural exploratory behavior if he is not threatened. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 4. Confidence in self is highly related to capacity for learning and for making important choices affecting one's learning. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 5. Active exploration in a rich environment, offering a wide array of manipulative materials, will facilitate children's learning. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 6. Play is not distinguished from work as the predominant mode of learning in early childhood. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 7. Children have both the competence and the right to make significant decisions concerning their own learning. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 8. Children will be likely to learn if they are given considerable choice in the selection of the materials they wish to work with and in the choice of questions they wish to pursue with respect to those materials. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 9. Given the opportunity, children will choose to engage in activities which will be of high interest to them. | SA A NSF D SD |

*From: Roland S. Barth, "So You Want to Change to an Open Classroom," Phi Delta Kappan, LIII (October, 1971), 98-99.

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|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|-----|---|----|
| 10. | If a child is fully involved and is having fun with an activity, learning is taking place. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 11. | When two or more children are interested in exploring the same problem or the same materials, they will often choose to collaborate in some way. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 12. | When a child learns something which is important to him, he will wish to share it with others. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 13. | Concept formation proceeds very slowly. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 14. | Children learn and develop intellectually not only at their own rate but in their own style. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 15. | Children pass through similar stages of intellectual development, each in his own way and at his own rate and in his own time. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 16. | Intellectual growth and development take place through a sequence of concrete experiences followed by abstractions. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 17. | Verbal abstractions should follow direct experience with objects and ideas, not precede them or substitute for them. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 18. | The preferred source of verification for a child's solution to a problem comes through the materials he is working with. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 19. | Errors are necessarily a part of the learning process; they are to be expected and even desired, for they contain information essential to further learning. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 20. | Those qualities of a person's learning which can be carefully measured are not necessarily the most important. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 21. | Objective measures of performance may have a negative effect upon learning. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 22. | Learning is best assessed intuitively, by direct observation. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |
| 23. | The best way of evaluating the effect of the school experience on the child is to observe him over a long period of time. | SA | A | NSF | D | SD |

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 24. The best measure of a child's work is his work. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 25. The quality of being is more important than the quality of knowing; knowledge is a means of education, not its end. The final test of an education is what a man <u>is</u> , not what he <u>knows</u> . | SA A NSF D SD |
| 26. Knowledge is a function of one's personal integration of experience and therefore does not fall into neatly separate categories or "disciplines." | SA A NSF D SD |
| 27. The structure of knowledge is personal and idiosyncratic; it is a function of the synthesis of each individual's experience with the world. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 28. Little or no knowledge exists which it is essential for everyone to acquire. | SA A NSF D SD |
| 29. It is possible, even likely, that an individual may learn and possess knowledge of a phenomenon and yet be unable to display it publicly. Knowledge resides with the knower, not in its public expression. | SA A NSF D SD |

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE STUDENT GOAL-SETTING FORM*

Name _____

Social Studies

Work Book

Date Completed: _____

Project #: _____

Date Started: _____

Estimated
Completion: _____

Title of Project: _____

Description of Project:

Goals: What am I Going to Do?

Description of Exhibit:

List of Ways I Intend to Achieve My Goals:

List of Materials I Will Need:

How I Intend to Obtain My Materials:

How Much Time I Will Need to Complete the Project:

How I Intend to Use the Time:

*From: Gerald F. Johnson and William C. Page, "Helping Traditional Teachers to Plan and Implement Student Centered Classrooms; Selected Classroom Project. Final Report," ERIC, ED 055 962 (June, 1971), pp. 144-146.

THE OPEN CLASSROOM

by

JAMES CHARLES BOGART

B. A., Washburn University, 1967

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

1973

In recent years there has been an increasing amount of criticism of public education in America. Educators and laymen alike are demanding alternatives to the traditional methods of educating our children. The alternatives range from complete abandonment of the public school system to minor changes in classroom activities. This report is concerned with one of those alternatives, the open classroom. A review of literature reveals that there is no agreed upon definition of the "open classroom." The philosophy behind the open classroom is not new, however. Early writers such as Rousseau, Tolstoy, Froebel, and Dewey agreed in principle with the open classroom concept. Increasing use of the idea of the open classroom concept in America began as a result of successful reports of the operation of the British Primary School. The report deals in some length with the practical aspects of the open classroom: How might an open classroom be implemented into a traditional classroom? What are desirable teacher characteristics for a successful open classroom? How do students react to the open classroom? And, what are the responsibilities of the school principal in helping to assure the success of the open classroom? The report concludes by presenting examples of possible designs for an open classroom.