

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 062 697

EA 004 217

AUTHOR Prisca, Mary
TITLE Practical (but Creative) Administration in Small Schools.
PUB DATE Mar 72
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at National Association of Secondary School Principals Annual Convention (56th, Anaheim, California, March 17-22, 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Group Discussion; *Independent Study; *Large Group Instruction; Principals; Self Directed Groups; *Small Group Instruction; Speeches; Teachers; *Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

This speech discusses the concepts of the large group presentation, or the motivational experience; the small group discussion, or reaction discussions; and independent study, or continuous progress self directed learning. The discussion of these concepts is taken from the perspective of 'three years' participation by the author's school in a Model School Project. The school's experiences in implementing the three concepts is presented. (JF)

ED 062 631

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIG-
INATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPIN-
IONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY
REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDU-
CATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PRACTICAL (BUT CREATIVE) ADMINISTRATION IN SMALL SCHOOLS

by
Sister Mary Prisca, R.S.M., Principal
Mercy Academy
1176 East Broadway
Louisville, Kentucky 40204

National Association of Secondary School
Principals Convention
Anaheim, California
March 15 - 22, 1972

EA 004 217

PRACTICAL (BUT CREATIVE) ADMINISTRATION IN SMALL SCHOOLS

Today, I would like to talk with you about three special experiences that have been going on in one small high school for three years. The small high school has a student population of 400. The staff consists of Sisters and lay personnel. We have fifteen professional teachers - ten Sisters and five lay teachers. We have seven instructional assistants and four aides: two clerical and two general aids. The school staff numbers in all twenty-five people - a ratio of 16:1. In terms of professional teachers only the ratio is 26:1.

For the past three years we have been a member of the Model Schools Project sponsored by the NASSP. It is within this framework that I would like to talk about the concepts of large group presentation, usually termed the motivational experience, the small group discussion called reaction discussions and independent study, looked upon as continuous progress, self-directed learning. We are still learning how to implement these concepts more thoroughly, but I would like to share with you what we have

found most successful up to this time.

There is no doubt that the Motivational Experience offers an incentive dimension that greatly enhances the learning of the student. The key word of the concept is motivation. We have found that the most effective ways we could present our Large Group Instruction in all the nine areas of human knowledge was by:

1. Combining areas that easily fit together.
2. Creating a team from both these areas to be responsible on a planned basis for the motivational experience rather than just one teacher.
3. Having just one large group presentation daily.

To combine areas that easily fit together, we made these combinations:

Language Arts (English) - Social Studies

Math - Science

Foreign Culture - Fine Arts

Practical Arts - Health, Fitness, Recreation

Theology

Since everyone in school takes English and Social Studies that became the largest team with seven members. Math-Science, Foreign Culture-

Fine Arts, Practical Arts-Health, Fitness and Recreation, as well as Theology, all ended up with four member teams.

Combining the teachers into teams did three beneficial things:

1. Insured that there would be a Motivational Experience as scheduled.
2. Added greatly to the professionalism of the presentation since teachers were now performing in the presence of peers as well as students.
3. Drew on the imagination of the whole team to do what the presentation was designed to do -- motivate as well as inform. Teachers are anxious to help teachers since in a short week or so it would be their time.

In pooling ideas the teachers have made use of the following possibilities for presentations:

1. The professional teacher herself. This is a high risk device since students are apt to dismiss more quickly those whom they are accustomed to see. If the teacher chooses to give the presentation herself, she knows beforehand that it will require hours of careful preparation.

2. Depend on a movie or film strip, either with a recorded explanation or teacher explanation. We have found that students tend to become bored with this type of presentation more than any other. Perhaps this is due to the influence of TV.
3. Obtain an outside speaker. This also has a high risk element unless one knows the speaker and is absolutely sure how he will perform.
4. The last is the best from the student's point of view. This is when students perform for students. The difficulty here also, is that it must be well done. If one is not careful also, the preparation will consume hours of student time. Creative projects the students construct are very good for motivational experiences. Alert teachers will remember the good ones and have the students demonstrate. I may say in passing there is nothing a student likes better than a creative project.

In a continuous progress individualized instruction atmosphere, where there is no longer one teacher dominating a class of thirty-five students, the motivational experience becomes a powerful tool for learning. The interest rate to attend a large group instruction becomes high among the student body for two reasons:

1. They have not been talked at all that day before this time and
2. They never know what type of LGI has been planned for them.

As I have mentioned, in our school we have only one Motivational Experience a day. I believe there is a paper here that shows the combination of the LGI's and how they occur on a weekly basis. For instance, Monday at 8:30 everything in school stops and all students attend an LGI according to the following schedule:

Math-Science	Juniors and Seniors
Language Arts-Social Studies	Sophomores
Theology	Freshmen

Likewise, on Tuesday there will be three LGI's but they will occur at 9:30. Wednesday there will be three at 10:30; Thursday at 1:00 and Friday at 2:00 p.m. As you can imagine the worst possible times are Monday morning at 8:30 and Friday afternoon at 2 p.m. We tell our teachers, however, that these times do occur within the school day and we utilize them as best we can - just as we did under the traditional regime but perhaps with a greater challenge.

A part of the Trump Program is small group discussion -- these are usually known as Reaction Discussions. We have come to recognize and appreciate these as a great learning device. We have found, however, that the best time to have the Reaction Groups in order to reinforce the Motivational Experience is to have them immediately after the LGI. The LGI usually lasts between 25 and 35 minutes. After this the students are divided into small groups of fifteen or less. We find this to be a much better way than postponing the Reaction Discussion until later on in the day or perhaps even the next day as we did at first. We have used all sorts of devices for the small groups:

1. Combining juniors and seniors together, for instances.
2. Preparing deliberate lists in which one has carefully chosen a good leader and recorder.
3. Letting the students chose leader and recorder.
4. Allowing them to group themselves with their friends.
5. Paying attention to a mixed distribution of intelligence.

In all group discussions following LGI's we require a sociogram. This is the specific work of the recorder. Spontaneous discussions that occur as

the result of groups working together on packet material during independent study time do not require any formalization.

Sometimes the presenter of the LGI will prepare a list of discussion questions. Sometimes she will indicate broad topics to be discussed. Sometimes she will suggest the group talk, but warn them to stay on or near the topic. In some of the areas there are not enough staff personnel to sit in on a group for the complete time. Most teachers move around until the groups are fairly well under way and then the remaining time with one group, one time, another, the next.

Reaction discussions are a powerful way to reinforce information, better communication and motivate. Sometimes they are complete failures. It is then that the presenter begins to examine his conscience on the content and construction of his LGI.

Another way to determine the success of the endeavor is to have the students at the end of the small group to write a one-sentence critique on either the small group or the LGI. This also serves as an attendance check in case one is needed. Students are quite caustic in their comments

and do not hesitate to use the word "boring" when the IGI has been boring to them.

Finally, I would like to say a word about self-directed, continuous progress learning more widely known as independent study. We do this in our school by preparing learning packets for the student. Our teachers literally spend hours on learning packets, but universally they like to make their own. They are very particular about packet content. Each packet in English-Social Studies, for instance, and in Theology requires a creative project at the end. I may say in passing that, by far, the students' greatest interest is in their own creative projects. These projects are to be directly related to the behavioral objectives which introduced the packet. Good creative projects are put "on ice" to be used later for large group motivational presentations.

Each packet has constructed with it, its own particular evaluation and is weighted according to points. For example, we are moving towards three segments in math as a basic minimal essential for one unit of credit.

A student proceeding at her own rate may perhaps finish only two segments in a year's time. She receives one point for each segment. Taking up the next year, she finishes the third segment and receives the unit of credit. The same idea is used in English-Social Studies with a different point emphasis. A student receives two points for every one of twelve required packets for a unit of credit. She could, however, go as high as twenty-six or twenty-eight points in a year's time.

Finally, we have experimented with students pursuing their own interests and writing their own packets at the last quarter of the school year. This has many beneficial overtones:

1. Students learn how difficult it is to write a packet.
2. He must construct good behavioral objectives.
3. He must research his topic in-depth for bibliography and suggested activities.
4. The accomplishment of his packet on his own initiative has sustained his interest and has given a feeling of pride.

On the whole I am convinced that our students use their independent time well. This is because each student is given a definite idea of what is expected in terms of basic minimal essentials for her. She is also given a definite time in which a teacher could normally expect the work to be finished in terms of the individual's ability. At times it becomes necessary or beneficial for a student to spend more time in a particular resource center than her schedule calls for. A permanent change (two days or more) requires consultation of teacher adviser with the subject teacher plus a notification to the office. A schedule change on a day basis is done through the office. A student applies for a schedule change slip in the office before school. It is signed by one of the administrative officials. The student next takes it to the resource area which she wishes to omit for the day. It is signed by an official there. This is to guarantee that the student is completing the basic minimal essentials and can spare the time. Next it is taken to the resource area where the student wishes to go say at 10:30. The official there signs it, provided she knows that the resource area will not be overcrowded and that there will be sufficient materials to work with. Finally, the pass is brought back to the office where it

stays on file.

We have noticed that students in a resource center tend to group themselves with their intellectual peers. Although in our school we have a silent independent study room those who go in there most often are the Phase four and five students. The slower students most often seek the security of the group.

Finally, If I may say a word about principals themselves. Constantly every day we deal with people, program and structure. By far the most difficult in my opinion are the faculty people. One has to forget his own feelings and be a good listener. Forget his own ideas and be a staunch encourager. Be alert and ahead of anything that a faculty member may propose -- even perhaps having proposed it a good year ahead of time before it takes root. One must be on top of new movements -- even try implementing them oneself before expecting a faculty member to be successful. In my case it would be to give an LCI occasionally to learn how difficult it is. To move about as consultant in a small group

to learn how to speak and how to keep silent. To write a subject packet with plenty of interesting activities. To move about in a resource area to recognize the daily challenge of a resource person.

In short, according to Dr. Trump's idea there can be no ivory tower. Three-fourths of the time used in actual school activity is not too much if you, the principal, are going to run a good school and keep out in front.

Perhaps I haven't given you any new ideas. I realize that many of these concepts are "old hat" now, at least in theory. I have not talked about school facilities although we are fortunate enough to have those we need to carry out our program.

In the last analysis, I believe that the role of the principal is one of leader, but that the mark of leadership is the ability to accept all those, one has been given to lead.

We have been asked many times by our visitors if we like the Model Schools Program. They ask if we ever think of going back. The answer to that is an emphatic "no" even though this type of school is much harder on the staff. But the gains outweigh the disadvantages. The evident ones in

my school are:

1. A much more alert and professional staff.
2. A happy and contented student body. Ease of tension because of new type of evaluations has been especially beneficial.
3. Better learning situations and in the long run more learning.
4. Parental pleasure.

For the first time in their lives school for many students has become a happy experience. Now it is also an interesting and mind-stretching place.

Mr. John M. Jenkins, principal of Wilde Lake High School, Columbia, Maryland and a member of the MSP, in the February, 1972 NASSP Bulletin says:

"There is probably no more challenging position in America today than the secondary school principalship. Either we stand the heat or get out of the kitchen. Far too long we have reacted to change when it happened rather than exercise our leadership to bring the change to fruition. The school can make a difference in the lives of its students, but only when the principal realizes that he is indeed the principal teacher. His actions speak more loudly than 100 lines of copy. The tone of the school is his creation!"