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ABSTRACT

The discrepancies between the comprehensive design for Follow Through evaluation and the program management's needs of the seven models in Philadelphia are discussed. The national evaluation has focused on pupil performance and achievement data. The local evaluation, conducted since 1968, has focused on: (1) the assessment of the correspondence between the philosophy/strategies of the seven models and the representations that had been established in the participating schools; (2) codifying the instructional evaluation procedures in the classroom and the interpretation of mastery (criterion) scores for some of the model sponsors; and (3) the assessment and interpretation of an ever-increasing involvement of the community. Collectively, the foci of the local evaluations indicate that not until a program is fully implemented will there be requests for information describing outcomes in pupil achievement terms. (Author/KM)

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ABSTRACT

Relationship of the Follow Through Evaluation to Local Needs, discusses the discrepancies between the comprehensive design for Follow Through evaluation and the program management's needs of the seven Models in Philadelphia. The national evaluation has focused on pupil performance and achievement data. The local evaluation effort, conducted since 1968, has in contrast attempted to undergird the objectives of the national evaluation by satisfying the needs of model sponsors, local liaison personnel, principals, teachers, and the project administrator. The first local focus was the assessment of the correspondence between the philosophy/strategies of the seven models and the representations that had been established in the participating schools. For this reason, the monitoring activities and evaluation procedures emphasized concordance analysis techniques.

The second focus of the local evaluation developed in response to the needs of classroom teachers who needed immediate feedback, in order to determine whether the methods of the model were producing positive effects. Therefore, the analysis procedures consisted of codifying the instructional evaluation procedures in the classroom and the interpretation of mastery (criterion) scores for some of the model sponsors.

Concurrent with these concerns, a third focus evolved. The need to assess and interpret an ever increasing involvement of

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the community necessitated the development of survey and interview techniques. From this community contact, evaluation guidelines geared to these local needs and conditions were established. These interactions with community resource personnel precipitated desires for data which covered the full spectrum of the program.

Collectively, the foci of the local evaluations indicate that not until a program, even one which consists of many well-defined program subcomponents, is fully implemented will there be requests for information describing outcomes in pupil achievement terms.

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RELATIONSHIP OF THE FOLLOW THROUGH EVALUATION
TO LOCAL NEEDS

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Project Follow Through is a federally funded program designed to help the nation's "culturally disadvantaged" children. It is an outgrowth of the recognition for the need to continue the gains made by pre-school children in the Head Start Program. Twenty different educational approaches (models) have been implemented throughout the nation, seven of which are being tried in Philadelphia.

The program operates at three levels:

- i) federal,
- ii) sponsor (based at various educational institutions throughout the country and responsible for a particular model),
- iii) local.

National evaluation efforts were designed to determine how effective each of the models was, and to isolate those features which were the most successful. Since the inception of the program in 1968, the main focus of this evaluation has been the classical pre-post, experimental-control design and the collection of standardized

achievement data. As the program evolved, it became evident that there were discrepancies between this evaluation design, sponsor needs and local developments. Local evaluation efforts have, therefore, attempted to bridge the gap, and in particular satisfy local needs.

Patterns of or Evolution of Needs:

a) Year 1:

As is characteristic of large-scale programs of such a complex nature, the task of implementation met with confusion and floundering at all levels. In many cases, the philosophy and techniques appropriate to each model had to be learned on the job, since it was not known ahead of the school year which teachers were to participate in the program. Sponsor input was sporadic, no doubt due to the fact that they were busy building foundations too. The beginnings of the program found personnel resistant to change, hazy about what changes they were actually expected to bring about, and anxious about the outcomes.

The first local evaluation effort, therefore, attempted to assess how closely the implementation of the seven models corresponded with the overall philosophy and objectives of the program, as well as some of the individual model objectives. A monitoring instrument was developed, which focused on classroom activities, instructional style, pupil response and the use of materials and classroom aides.

b) Year 2:

The realization that the sponsors could not adequately meet the needs of the local sites because of geographic and staffing difficulties, resulted in the appointment of seven model liaisons. They became responsible for interpreting the model at the local level. Since the classroom component was well underway, energies could now be focused on implementing other components of the program, such as parental involvement and the utilization of community resources to provide health and social services.

At the federal level, evaluation activities continued to be the collection of pre-post achievement data, with the introduction of a new endeavor--home interviews. At the local level, there was still a need to assess how well the specific model strategies were being represented in the classroom. This time the model liaisons were consulted and seven separate monitoring forms were developed. The monitoring activities were planned so that immediate feedback could be given to the teachers. In addition, parental activities and the types of health services established were documented.¹

c) Years 3 and 4:

These years marked the continued refinement of all program components. The questions asked by program personnel were now related to:

¹Goodwin, J. Follow Through Report: A Historical Development. The School District of Philadelphia, 1972.

- i) the impact of the model strategies on pupil achievement and attitude.
- ii) which models were the most effective and why.
- iii) the effect of supplemental services on pupil achievement and attitude.
- iv) the effectiveness of the parental component in bringing about change.
- v) institutional change.

In short, years 3 and 4 called for data related to program effectiveness and impact as opposed to data related to program implementation in the early years.

At the national level, classroom observations supplemented parent interviewing and the collection of achievement data. At the local level, survey and interview techniques were developed to assess the impact of the program on all concerned. The total parent, teacher and aide population was surveyed and individual interviews were conducted with program directors, model liaisons and principals. The data supplied information on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each of the models and the obstacles yet to be overcome.

Concurrently, due to the lack of feedback from the national evaluation, standardized achievement data had to be collected and analyzed. Although certain trends became discernible, the data were by no means conclusive and this effort must be continued in years 5 and 6.

d) Year 5:

The fact that the national evaluation has, to date, been unable to fulfill either sponsor or local needs, has placed increasing responsibility on each sponsor to collect the necessary data. They, in turn, must rely heavily on the local sites for support in this effort. Thus, the relationship between local research units and sponsor personnel is strengthening in an attempt to answer the questions posed in years 3 and 4.

Conclusion:

During the initial years (1 and 2) of a program with many well defined components, the major focus will be on how well these components have been implemented. Classical pre- post designs do not appear appropriate, at this point in time, and only become relevant in later years (3 through 6) when the effectiveness and impact of the program need to be assessed.

Figure 1, indicates that the need for model specific data decreases over time, while the demand for qualitative and/or descriptive data reaches its peak between years 3 and 4. In contrast, the demand for quantitative data, in particular, standardized achievement data will increase in years 3 through 6.

Figure 1

