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ABSTRACT

The Workshop Center for Open Education was formed on the basis of the following factors: a) efforts to construct an alternative to traditional public schools in New York City had galvanized the interests of hundreds; b) teachers who had gotten underway through the Open Corridor program needed a place to continue their development; and c) those trying without advisory support to make first steps towards open education needed help and reinforcement. Supported by grants from U.S. Office of Education, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the workshop is a new resource for all participants in the school process--teachers, principals, supervisors, paraprofessionals, parents, and graduate/undergraduate students--in the New York City area. The center features workshop activities ranging from demonstrations to independent work on individual projects and from single or one-time use to continuous or extended use. The facilities include the following: workshops in exploration of materials for curriculum discussions dealing with problems in class and school reorganization; publications that analyze and disseminate information; a darkroom for photography work applicable to classroom uses; a library for browsing and reference; a kitchen for cooking projects; and space for meetings, film showings, and individual or small-group consultations with staff. (Author/JA)

APPLICATION FORM - 1974 DAA PROGRAM

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Please Type or Print:

Name of Program Submitted: The City College Workshop Center for Open Education

Institution (complete name): City College of New York

President: Robert Marshall

Campus Public Information Officer: Ed Levine

Faculty Member Responsible for Program: Lillian Weber

Title of the Faculty Member: Professor/Director of Workshop Center and Advisory Service

Signature: Ruth Adams, Chairperson

Title: chairman, department of elementary education Date: 11/23/73

Please describe in 150-200 words the program which you have entered in the 1974 AACTE Distinguished Achievement Awards. A sample is included below to give a general idea of the kinds of information we need. Your abstract will be the basis for reporting your entry in Excellence in Teacher Education. Please continue on back if extra space is needed.

SAMPLE: *Hypothetical Sample Description:* Recognizing the necessity for public school teachers to have a continuing education as well as realizing the need for continually updating the elementary science curriculum, the College of Saint Alphonsia Joseph, together with the school district of Stockton, New Hampshire, began in 1969 the Advance Learning for Science Teachers Program (ALSTP). The program, initially funded by a National Science Foundation grant, features a six-week summer institute during which members of the college staff instruct teachers throughout the school district. Also, 30 consultants from the college's science and education departments visit each of the elementary schools during the year. Featured in the six-week institute are effective ways to teach environmental studies, using the neighborhood as key resource. The program has had sufficient impact to project a similar one for secondary science teachers.

Recognizing 1) that efforts to construct an alternative to traditional public schools in New York City had galvanized the interests of hundreds; 2) that teachers who had gotten underway through the Open Corridor program needed a place to continue their development, and 3) that those trying without advisory support to make first steps towards open education needed help and reinforcement, the City College Workshop Center, supported by grants from OE, the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, features workshop activities ranging from demonstrations to independent work on individual projects, and from single or one-time use to continuous or extended use. The facilities include workshops in exploration of materials for curriculum; discussions dealing with problems in class and school reorganization; publications that disseminate information and analysis; a darkroom for photography work applicable to classroom uses; a library for browsing and reference; a kitchen for cooking projects; and space for meetings, film showings, and individual or small group consultations with staff.

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Program Summary

In contrast to traditional agencies of teacher education, which stress acquisition of degrees or credits, the Workshop Center is concerned with process and growth. Its main function is to create a setting and offer activities that will encourage interaction of the experienced, the committed, and the informed with those reaching out to cross what is essentially a new frontier in public education: this education is based on the understanding that each child learns through active and repeated encounters with firsthand, concrete experiences, through interaction with other people, and through reflecting on those experiences and interactions.

Workshop activities range from demonstrations to independent work on individual projects, and from single or one-time use to continuous or extended use. Some participants simply use the place for its materials, working on their own without a preconceived purpose; others need to consult with staff to gain confirmation of what they have done or suggestions for future work. Some may attend scheduled sessions in math, science, or language, so as to reorder their store of content or to explore new possibilities in these basic areas; others may join a study of questions relating to language development or a discussion of the issue of accountability in reading performance. Some discover in new companionship and shared experience the kind of support that relieves their anxiety about change, others find relaxation and renewal in participating in dance, photography, and conversation.

Most of all, the workshop experience gives the teacher a chance to rediscover her own way of learning, and encourages her to be reflective about it. Reflecting on her own learning process helps the teacher trust the learning process in a child. Similarly, in pursuing the details of her own work at the Center, the teacher once more grasps the significance of the detail that goes into a child's work. By being given the opportunity and time to pursue the details of a piece of learning,

those who participate in workshops illuminate the depths of their own capacity; the parallels with children in the classroom are clear. Further, the response to her work at the Workshop Center--on the part of staff and fellow participants, especially when the teacher's own interest might be flagging--also provides an experience the teacher can draw on for possible analogies to the teacher/child relationship and to relationships that children have with each other in the classroom. In particular, the staff's serious interest in the work that teachers do in the workshops clarifies the meaning of standards, distinguishing standards from standardization. Teachers begin to understand standards as neither absolute nor arbitrary, but having to do with individual capacity.

Finally, many workshop sessions serve the very practical and important purpose of filling in gaps in teachers' knowledge by assisting them to construct for themselves richer pools of curricular resources.

Workshop Center for Open Education

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The Workshop Center for Open Education is a new resource for all participants in the school process -- teachers, principals, supervisors, paraprofessionals, parents, and graduate/undergraduate students -- in the New York City area. Established in 1972 under the sponsorship of the Board of Education and City College, it is a free facility, funded under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Its director is Lillian Weber, professor of elementary education at City College and director of the City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors.

Objective

The Center's aim is to support the professional growth of school people who are making changes in the learning environments for children. These changes are based on a view that children learn through active and repeated encounters with firsthand, concrete experiences, through interactions with other people, and through reflecting on these experiences and interactions. The Center assumes that in order to make the changes that will support children's growth, the teachers themselves need to have learning experiences that will provide them with analogies to the child's experience. The Center offers services that are essential to the understanding of the rationale of open education; the relationship between language and experience, with an emphasis on bilingualism in the classroom and on integrating language development with math, science, music and movement, and art; the institutional conditions that

facilitate change in the schools; the problems and solutions in classroom organization, planning, recording, and testing, based on observing children's uses and responses to materials, environment, and relationships; the nature of curriculum, and how-to demonstrations on photography, crafts, cooking, music, and movement for classroom adaptation.

Program Development

The outgrowth of two programs -- the Open Corridor and the City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors, the Workshop Center was five years in the making. The first Open Corridor was created in 1967 by Professor Weber to explore the possibilities within our massive urban schools for reorganization that would better learning. Five classrooms of different primary grade levels and all ability levels were grouped around a corridor that could serve as a common space for the teachers and children. In this corridor, materials and experiences could be shared, activities that were hard to manage in the classroom could be readily accommodated. The corridor would identify the new community, within which each classroom in turn could function as a subcommunity, in this way eliminating the isolation of teacher from teacher, class from class, and children from one another. It could deemphasize the sharp separation of grade and ability levels. Teachers in the Open Corridor would begin to organize their rooms so that a child could work independently or in small groups; they could be guided to provide the materials that would not only reinforce skills but also arouse a child's interest,

stimulate his thinking, and generate problem-solving.

The Open Corridor became widely known as an example of change within the old traditional structures. Gradually, over a period of five years, the original project spread to 13 schools, 90 teachers, and approximately 3,000 children -- all on a basis of voluntarism on the part of parents, teachers, and administrators.

As the Open Corridor project expanded, so did the need for Advisors, to support teachers who were working to open their classrooms. In 1970, with the help of Ford Foundation funds, the City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors was organized to train Advisors who would serve as guides, mentors, counselors, and aides to Open Corridor teachers in their attempts to change. A year later, the City College School of Education, closely connected with the Open Corridor from its early sponsorship, initiated a Master's program, "The Child and the Individualized Curriculum," to support the further development of teachers who had reorganized their classrooms.

By the spring of 1972, there was little doubt that these new efforts to construct an alternative to traditional public schools in New York City were galvanizing the interest of hundreds of teachers, principals, and parents. The teachers who had gotten underway with the help of the Advisors needed a place to continue their development. In addition, there was now a growing number who were trying without advisory support to make first steps towards open education and who needed help and reinforcement, as would parents, cooperating supervisors, paraprofessionals, and

and custodians. Open education demands of its practitioners not only a profound rethinking of the craft of teaching and the nature of children's learning but also the kind of active retraining that is provided far more effectively in the workshop format. Concern about these special requirements for work in open education culminated in the creation of the Workshop Center in the fall of 1972.

The Workshop Experience

In contrast to traditional agencies of teacher education, which stress acquisition of degrees and credits within a fixed time, the Center offers teachers a place to keep their development continuous, a place which they can use in the amounts each determines and as each feels that he or she needs it. Thus the Center is concerned with process and growth. Its main function is to create a setting and offer activities that will encourage interaction of the experienced, the committed, and the informed with those reaching out to cross what is essentially a new frontier in public education. The Center provides teachers with opportunities for autonomously reinforcing the continuity of their professional development and also services for beginners.

Workshop activities at the Center range from demonstrations to independent work on individual projects, and from a single or one-time use to continuous or extended use. Some participants simply use the place and materials, working on their own without a preconceived purpose; others need to consult with staff to gain confirmation of what they have done or suggestions for future work. Some may attend scheduled sessions in math, science, or language, so as to reorder their store of content or to

explore new possibilities in these basic areas; others may join a study of questions relating to language development or a discussion of the issue of accountability in reading performance. Some discover in new companionship and shared experience the kind of support that relieves their anxiety about change; others find relaxation and renewal in participating in dance, photography, and conversation.

Most of all, the workshop experience gives the teacher a chance to rediscover her own way of learning, and encourages her to be reflective about it. Reflecting on her own learning process helps the teacher trust the learning process in a child. Similarly, in pursuing the details of her own work at the Center, the teacher once more grasps the significance of the detail that goes into the child's effort. By being given the opportunity and time to pursue details of a piece of learning, those who participate in workshops illuminate the depths of their own capacity. The parallels with children in the classroom are clear.

The response to her work at the Center -- on the part of staff and of fellow participants, especially when the teacher's own interest might be flagging -- also provides an experience the teacher can draw on for possible analogies to the teacher-child relationships that children have with each other in the classroom. In particular, the staff's interest in the work that teachers do in workshops, clarifies the meaning of standards, distinguishing standards from standardization. In other words, teachers begin to understand standards as neither absolute nor arbitrary; but having to do with individual capacity.

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in gaps in teachers' knowledge, assisting them to construct for themselves rich pools of curricular resources.

Wherever possible, staff and consultants adjust work and conference time to individual needs of participants at any and all steps of the spectrum of change. The active and supportive involvement of staff with participants' activities and work is a key aspect of the Center.

Evaluation

Evaluation has been and continues to be formative rather than summative in nature, conducted in-house and exterior to the Center, for the purpose of affecting implementation of its goals. In line with the latter, there is a continuing focus on studying the influence of workshop/ advisory consultation experience on the direction and nature of change within a selected subsample of teachers.

Staff and Budget

The Center's staff numbers 16, including clerical and dissemination support and four part-time consultants drawn from the City College faculty. Budget for its second year of operations included \$205,412 of Title III monies, \$80,000 from the Chancellor's Fund, and supplementary funding from City College, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Ford Foundation.

A Case in Point

Esther Rosenfeld is in her 30s, married, mother of three children who attend public schools, lives a few blocks from the school in which she works on the upper West Side of Manhattan. In 1957, she took her B.A. from Hunter College, where she majored in English and minored in elementary education, and in the same year began teaching. She taught fulltime until 1960, when she took maternity leave; she subbed from 1962 to 1967; in 1967 she returned to fulltime teaching and was assigned a third grade class in P.S. 75, the school with which she is still associated. During the next two years, she began, along with a lot of other teachers in New York City, to feel the outer resonances of change and efforts at change, particularly in England, that was just then being reported on in journals, popular magazines, the field's special literature. In that climate for change, the school district of which P.S. 75 is a part had instituted a district-wide program that was aimed at achieving more balanced classes, racially and in terms of school performance. As a parent representative on the program's (it was called the Balanced Class) districtwide committee, and as a teacher in the program, Mrs. Rosenfeld tried to "bring herself closer" to the children with whom she worked, acting on and reacting to their ideas, making provision beyond the materials prescribed in the curriculum.

She was just then beginning to hear favorable reports about the work of Lillian Weber in a neighboring school--work directed at opening up classrooms to informal structure. She read the series of articles on English infant schools that J. Featherstone had written for the New Republic. In some of the ways described by the articles and suggested by Mrs. Weber's work, and in the spirit of the program of which she was a part, Mrs. Rosenfeld tried to "open" her classroom, but on her own she had little confidence that she could control her class in that setting for long.

In 1969, Mrs. Rosenfeld became a teacher of second grade, and Lillian Weber began to consult at P.S. 75, organizing an Open Corridor program there. Although he was not a part of the program, Mrs. Rosenfeld sought and received advice from the

informal advisory that Mrs. Weber's consultancy provided. (For Mrs. Rosenfeld, it was the only source of such advise, save for the suggestion, made by a supervisor after a classroom observation, that her goals "were too high for the kind of children she had in her class.") She started to visit other schools where classes were being reorganized along informal lines; she began to learn about reorganization.

In 1970, when the Open Corridor at P.S. 75 expanded upwards into the second grade, Mrs. Rosenfeld joined the program. On the practical level, joining brought her class loads of materials, such as ESS devices, geo-boards, people pieces, pattern blocks, which she could never get before. In terms of her own professional development, it brought her back to school as a student: a course called "Strategies of classroom organization," that Lillian Weber gave at City College. (She took the course as a non-matriculant. It wasn't until later that the college instituted a master's program in open education and that she enrolled in it.) The course exposed her to ideas and books, she feels now, that she should have been given as an undergraduate. These included the Nuffield Math series, Piaget, Susan and Nathan Issacs, Millie Aimy on language development, a whole series of how-to books on science and language. It came to her with a start, she says, that in the process of qualifying to be a public school teacher the courses she took in the psychology of young children were nothing less than banal, with an insufficient focus on development in children. Observing children became a major interest, investing Mrs. Rosenfeld's teaching with new creative energy.

In 1971, Mrs. Rosenfeld taking a second course at City College, "The recording of children's behavior," continued to broaden her reading, her observations, and the applications from these to her teaching. Whenever demands on her time permitted, she attended workshops set up periodically at her school and in and around the city. But while she had traveled far from her starting point as a teacher, a lot of the ideas to which she had been exposed still didn't inform her practice; in other words,

she still hadn't touched the depths of her own capacities, and she began to learn about this in very direct and concrete ways in the following school year, the year the Workshop Center began operations.

Being part of the Open Corridor program, Mrs. Rosenfeld had anticipated the coming of the Center as a support for her deeper development and became an early user. At first she came in with no plan in mind. To her, first and foremost, she recalls, the Center was an oasis in the midst of a large impersonal university. She could walk into the Center at different times of the day until late evening, be greeted on a first-name basis which was important to her, and do her thing. In the process, invariably, she would pick up on a leading question posed by one of the displays in math or science or language and begin to explore the ways she might use certain materials in her own classroom. Interested in working with colored solutions, she attended the workshop on the subject when it was given. Similarly, because she was about to get rabbits for her classroom, and needed cages, she attended a workshop and not only learned to make her own, but took great delight in doing it and went to great lengths to show her accomplishment to everyone at the Center that evening. Until that point she had never made anything quite like it.

While all this was going on, Mrs. Rosenfeld was having a difficult time in her classroom. She had seven children who presented problems difficult for her to meet; they had formed a unit with which she couldn't deal in an open framework. She found herself increasingly unable to cope with the situation and by January the whole class was beginning to reflect her anxiety. The experience was becoming somewhat traumatic; she even gave some

thought to quitting, getting out of teaching. Instead, she came round to the Center and talked with one of the staff, Martha Norris, who had been an Advisor in her school and with whom she felt close, about a new strategy for the classroom's organization. With Miss Norris' help she saw how she really hadn't planned her time well. Children simply came into the class, gathered for a class meeting, and floated from activity to activity. Together, Mrs. Rosenfeld and Miss Norris planned a more secure organization of time, for children and teacher alike. They set up blocks of time: first, quiet working time that gave children a chance to settle down. The class meeting would be moved back to just before recess. Recess, which before was treated with arbitrary importance, would become a fixed point, an activity to do rain or shine. Then center time would follow, when children involved themselves in projects, followed by clean-up time and lunch. The afternoon would contain quiet working time and center time. The quiet time would give Mrs. Rosenfeld a chance to organize herself and give her a chance to talk with children who needed that first direction. By moving back the class meeting to later in the morning, it would catch children at a more reflective moment, less apt to want to talk with a friend and be distracted. There were other suggestions. Mrs. Rosenfeld had been coming to all of them on her own. But she felt it vital to have the chance to talk it over with someone else. The consultation put the problems in perspective, and in doing so it helped her avoid expedient decisions and actions loaded by emotion.

The two advisors working in her school were pulled into the discussion of her plans for change. Seeing the close, respecting relationship

Between Miss Norris and the school-based Advisors, Mrs. Rosenfeld now felt more able to talk with them. The Advisors, in turn, not only agreed with what she wanted to do, but even accompanied her to the meeting with the principal when she went to request a transfer to a bilingual class -- one of Miss Norris' suggestions -- for one of Mrs. Rosenfeld's difficult children.

(It is important to point out here that the school-based advisors and Center staff joined each other at special weekly seminars at the Center, where work in the schools was reviewed. Additionally, at different times, Advisors served as workshop leaders. Finally, the principal of P.S. 75 also attended workshops that were especially organized for principals and supervisory personnel.

While all of this went on, Mrs. Rosenfeld continued to draw on the Center for ideas and experience. Terrariums. Two that she had started had failed. She saw one of the Center's staff working on one, talked about it, found out what she'd been doing wrong, tried again, and succeeded. Overhead projectors. A display of how one teacher had used them with transparencies and color solutions led her to try her own. The pond table. She had set one up in her classroom the year before and taken it to the limit of what she thought its potential to be. The one she saw set up at the Center made her reevaluate what she had done and do it all over again. She was exposed to the possibilities for children's learning in the seasonal environment: in autumn leaves. She learned about leaf printing. That experience developed into learning about all kinds of printing. She learned how to make dyes.

The learning was reciprocal. Work produced in her classroom -- such as books and maps: of the city's playgrounds, of the city itself -- was sent to the Center, to be shared with other teachers, and put on display. Seeing the work displayed on a wall at the Center not only deepened her sense of professionalism, it made her reevaluate what she was doing. How can I do it better, she began to ask herself. How can it be done differently?

In addition, there was a lot learned from talking with other teachers, even though they were asking her advice. Talking with her professional peers at the Center forced her, she says, to clarify and redefine what she was doing. In the process, she deepened her own understanding.

Similarly, just following the economy with which the Center staff organized and displayed materials provided insights into her practice, Mrs. Rosenfeld says, which she then incorporated into her own thinking. She learned the ways in which she wasted words in setting up her classroom displays. She was exposed to materials she had either not known about, or thought about as useful to her: dried peas, straws, straight pins.

This school year, Mrs. Rosenfeld has taken leave from her teaching position to work fulltime on her master's degree course. Impelled by what she has learned, she has embarked on independent research into parental attitudes towards the Open Corridor. But she still finds the Center indispensable, she says. She participates in regularly scheduled talks with teachers about open education. She uses reference books at the Center. She has found herself helping a teacher, who is just messing

around, to work through a problem that she herself had once tackled. Most important to her, she says, has been to see the growth in the way the Center staff store and organize materials, and how they have developed the woodworking and cooking facilities, the photography, the animals, the erosion table, how they've expanded the library, color-coding material.

It is important, she says, for teachers involved in the classroom to see a model, one that supports change without imposing it, drawing a teacher out to the edges of what she or he is capable of doing; in other words, putting her in touch with her ways of learning so that not only is she more effective as a person but more supportive as a teacher.

"When I built the rabbit cage," Mrs. Rosenfeld recalled, "I had never built anything before. I was seven years old again. It was a very concrete experience. I had to keep asking myself questions: How big did it have to be? How strong did I have to make it? At one point I got angry with the workshop leader. I needed his attention; I wasn't getting any supervision. His directions were short. I was frustrated and terribly anxious. But my desire to do it was paramount. And then I finished it, and I showed it to everyone. I experienced great pride. I learned from all of it. Most of all, I learned when, and why, not to intervene in a child's learning. Now I want to deepen those insights."