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ABSTRACT

This publication describes a workable strategy for instructional program design used in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1972-73. The strategy is known as the "Advocate Team" approach. The advocate team is a small, carefully selected group of people who assume responsibility for developing and recommending a plan which is preferred over a number of seriously considered alternatives. In some applications of the techniques, more than one advocate team is assigned to solve the same planning problem. The teams used in Kansas City were expected to generate and assess seemingly viable program alternatives and to determine their comparative value when viewed in terms of available opportunities and recognized constraints. Further, advocate teams were expected to provide the strongest possible rationale for their final recommended courses of action and to deliver a usable product by an established deadline. (Author/DN)

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PLANNING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:
THE ADVOCATE APPROACH

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PLANNING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS: THE ADVOCATE APPROACH

If your school system anticipates instructional program review as a result of opening a new school, remodeling an old one, or as part of a regular program review, you may be searching for a workable strategy for instructional program design. This article describes a secondary school program design approach used in Kansas City, Kansas in 1972-73. Some aspects of the strategy may be applied in your community.

Background of the Planning Venture

In 1970 Kansas City voters approved a twenty-four and one-half million dollar capital improvement bond issue. In pre-election planning Kansas City Administrators identified, among other things, the need for two new secondary schools of twelve to fifteen hundred students. Administrators recognized that the magnitude of the anticipated planning would seriously overtax the district's available resources. Consequently, additional financial and staff resources were secured through the Kansas State Department of Education and the School of Education at the University of Kansas.

The decision was made to focus the efforts of the university support team on program development for the two new secondary schools. Kansas City Administrators and the director of the university support team jointly adopted a program planning strategy which stressed cooperative involvement of school district personnel.

The strategy used in Kansas City is known as the "Advocate Team" approach. It has been used in earlier planning ventures by the Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory at Austin, Texas, and by personnel in the

College of Education at Ohio State University.

What is an Advocate Team?

An Advocate Team is a small, carefully selected group of people who assume responsibility for developing and recommending a plan which is preferred over a number of seriously considered alternatives. In at least one earlier application of the technique more than one advocate team has been assigned to solving the same planning problem. This approach generates as many solutions to the planning problem as there are Advocate Teams. Where the multi-team, one problem approach is used, diversity in solutions to the problem results from the differences in orientation which are consciously built into the individual advocate teams through the selection of team members. Administrators then select the plan, or elements from each of the different plans to formulate the ultimate plan.

The advocate approach was applied differently in Kansas City. An advocate team was constituted to develop a program solution for each of the separate secondary program areas. The diversity of the multi-team, one problem approach was not lost, however. Guarantees that a variety of program ideas would be considered were built into the process in two ways.

First, participants were selected who were knowledgeable in their respective subject areas, but who were not unanimous, by definition, in espousing any uniformly identifiable brand of academic orthodoxy. Second, the members of the advocate teams were charged with the responsibility to be adversaries as well as advocates. Team members were encouraged to critique, challenge and test each program proposal considered. By assuming adversary roles to identify flawed proposals,

advocate teams were ultimately left with only those proposals which they considered to be sound and feasible. Additional checks on the value of program proposals were provided through periodic involvement of administrators and supervisors in adversarial roles, and by the ongoing involvement of members of the university support team as adversaries. These individuals would review and critique the planning progress of individual advocate teams and attempt to "shoot down" features of program plans which they found wanting.

In brief, the advocate teams used in Kansas City were expected to generate and assess apparently viable program alternatives and to determine their comparative value when viewed in terms of available opportunities and recognized constraints. Further, advocate teams were expected to provide the strongest possible rationale for their final, recommended courses of action, and finally, advocate teams were expected to deliver a useable product by an established deadline and, if necessary, to argue publicly in support of their program proposals.

The Essentials of Advocacy

Successful application of the advocate team approach to planning hinges on the following considerations.*

1. Primary objectives (expected product outcomes) must be clearly defined, stated, understood, and accepted by advocate team members.
2. Latitude of the advocate team to make decisions and recommendations must be clearly defined and communicated to advocate team members by those responsible for the planning process.
3. Advocate team(s) must define, or have access to intermediate procedural steps which ultimately define and relate to the final planning products.
4. Advocate team(s) must develop or have access to methods of evaluating and relating discrete inputs to the final planning products.

5. Where more than one advocate team is used to work on related parts of one planning project, methods must be provided to review, update and coordinate the work of the teams.
6. Advocacy depends not only on arguing for a selected course of action, but also on identifying and arguing against flawed courses of action (the adversary role).
7. One individual or group must assume responsibility for administering the total planning process.

In addition to the seven "guides to action" listed above, there are four "Enabling Assumptions" related to the advocate team process which should be thoroughly understood by anyone who plans to use the procedure. These assumptions are deceptively simple, but of paramount importance to anyone who expects to have a successful experience with the process.

1. Expected outcomes (products) of the work of planning groups are capable of definition.
2. Planning tasks are amenable to decomposition and restructuring in parallel and/or sequential steps, as in PERTing.
3. Given some knowledge of the expected outcomes of a planning process and access to a variety of resources essential to accomplish the task, most groups are capable of developing a useable product.
4. Outcomes of group planning are subject to periodic review and modification at both the development and use stages.

These four assumptions serve a dual purpose. First, they make explicit a set of conditions which are essential to the use of advocate teams. Second, in a more subtle, but equally important way these assumptions serve to screen out administrators who may have reservations about using the advocate team process. How do they accomplish this? By forcing the administrator to say--"I know what the planning task is and have it defined. I know how to organize the over-all job in order to get it done. I can say with complete candor and sincerity that I

have faith in the people who will do the job, and will give them enough freedom to do it. And finally, since checks and balances are built in, I can and will encourage the planning groups to be as creative as they know how to be."

If you have a hard time getting through this recital, you may be the kind of administrator who is accustomed to doing all the important jobs by yourself. If you are that kind of administrator, and if you want to keep it that way, you should stop reading here. If, on the other hand, you believe in and support participative decision-making, or if you think you'd like to try it, read on.

Organizing the Planning Process

The Kansas City Superintendent and members of his administrative staff were committed to cooperative, professionally rigorous program planning from the beginning of the project. That support, and the periodic critical appraisal which the superintendent and his staff provided were essential parts of the advocate team process. The sincerity of commitment which the Kansas City Administrators have maintained throughout the project has contributed greatly to maintaining the feeling on the parts of advocate team members that their work is important, that they have the freedom to make planning decisions, and that their program recommendations will be tested in operation.

In two initial meetings between members of the university team and key administrators two major objectives were identified.

1. The primary product outcome of the planning venture would be a detailed description of instructional programs for the two new schools.
2. Planning activities would emphasize the development of leadership skills in staff members who would constitute the nuclei of the staffs for the two new schools.

Once these primary objectives had been determined district administrators proceeded during September, 1972 with the selection of forty-five teachers and administrators who would become members of advocate teams and a "Leadership Development Cadre." The advocate teams were to do the actual planning of programs for the new schools. The Leadership Development Cadre membership would supply a discussion leader and recorder for each of the advocate teams. Additionally, the Leadership Development Cadre would serve as the group which would coordinate and critique the efforts of advocate teams as they worked to accomplish the two primary planning objectives.

During the same period of time that district administrators were selecting advocate team (AT) and Leadership Development Cadre (LDC) members, the university support team concentrated on the development of an explicit definition of planning procedures and expected planning outcomes. They also planned content and scheduled activities for the period of time from October to May.

Course titles and descriptions would be needed by mid-January so that schedules for the new schools could be developed in time to begin the 1973-74 school year. Consequently, initial planning activities were scheduled in ten, once-a-week meetings from October through December. These ten program planning sessions were organized around the following topics,

1. The planning process
2. Developing a community profile
3. Educational needs of the client population
4. Designing instructional objectives

5. Behavioral management and micro-teaching
6. Design of learning experiences
7. Alternatives in program scheduling
8. Evaluation of learning outcomes
9. Assessment of planning progress made to date
10. Completion of program and course identification

These ten work sessions were organized in four-hour blocks, as follows.

Time	Task Group Structure	Activity
6:00-7:00 P.M.	LDC - Leadership Development Cadre (15 Members).	Critique and modify planned activities for the evening session. Preview activities for following week and suggest changes. Review progress to date.
7:00-8:00 P.M.	LDC and AT's (Advocate Teams), Meet as combined group (45 Members).	Observe and hear a presentation of a topic related to program planning. Ask questions and receive answers.
8:00-10:00 P.M.	AT's meet as individual teams (3 to 8 Members). Usually organized by discipline areas, sometimes across disciplines.	Complete specific tasks related to the evening's content presentation and work on a segment of the planning task related to the completion of the over-all goal. Provide process feedback and information to be used in evaluation.

The six o'clock session provided the opportunity for the university support team director to work with the Leadership Development Cadre in

the development of leadership skills which would be used in the eight o'clock session as those people worked as discussion leaders and recorders with their individual advocate teams. The presenters of the topics during the seven o'clock time-slot were drawn from the professional staff of the school system, the student population of existing schools which would send students to the new schools, and university personnel qualified by knowledge and experience to discuss the various topics.

The one-hour, formal presentations were designed to provide advocate team members with information essential to program planning. "--What is planning? What is the population to be served and what is it like? What new instructional technology is available and what should we consider for use?" Advocate team members had the opportunity to react to the content and value of the presentations. The content and order of the presentations were revised when evaluative feedback from advocate team members indicated needs for revision.

The eight o'clock to ten o'clock sessions constituted the heart of the planning process. During this period advocate teams modified and adopted the content of the evening's presentation to the component of the program with which they were working. This was the time during which advocate team members did the arguing and testing which were internal to the teams' planning work. External criticism and testing of proposals were forthcoming from members of the university team on a regular basis, and from counselors, curriculum supervisors and administrators on an occasional basis.

The implicit assumption has been made throughout this article that a designated individual or group must be responsible for directing and

coordinating the over-all planning effort. In the Kansas City case, this function was delegated to the university-based project director.

One of the essential functions of the director consisted of preparing task process sheets for the use of advocate teams during each working session. These sheets served two essential functions. First, they were constructed in ways which required advocate team members to relate the evening's presentation topic to secondary school program development in several different ways. Second, advocate teams were required, by questions and directions contained in the task process sheet, to create a written product during each planning session. Each of the individual task sheets used during the ten planning sessions related content of formal presentations and products of advocate team activities to the ultimate product goal--the development of written school programs.

The ten, weekly work sessions formed the first of three phases which constituted the total planning project. The organization of the complete process took the following form.

Phase	Time	Task (Process)
I	October to December (Full complement of Advocate Teams--45 people--15 member Leadership Development Cadre)	Ten weekly seminar/work sessions, four hours each. (Critique planning activities and suggest leadership roles; examine instructional alternatives; prepare behavioral course descriptions; provide process feedback.)
II-a	January to April (Full complement of Advocate Teams--45 people)	Four weekend workshops, 6-8 hours each. (Develop course-unit outlines, instructional packages, "Mini-course" content.)

II-b	January to April (Leadership Development Cadre--15 members)	Fourteen, 3 hour weekly sessions. (Prepare and structure Phase III activities and examine and practice various leadership exercises.)
III	May (Total staffs of two new schools)	One day workshop, 8 hours. (Communicate instructional program to total staffs of new schools; assign teachers who did not participate in planning new programs to "buddies" who did participate in planning.)

Phase one was explained in an earlier part of the article. Phase two was divided into two parts. II-a was undertaken after course titles, course objectives, prerequisites and time structures had been developed. Phase II-a was devoted to "fleshing out" the course structures which were developed in Phase I. In Phase II-b, members of the Leadership Development Cadre defined activities for Phase III, critiqued activities being conducted concurrently in Phase II-a, and established guidelines which structured the work of advocate team members in Phase II-a. The complement of activities undertaken by Leadership Development Cadre members in II-b assumed this form.

1. Planning the allocation of resources and structural organization of the workshop anticipated in Phase III.
2. Hearing and discussing activity reports from newly-appointed building principals.
3. Studying and considering special program structures and interfaces. (Special education, driver education, and independent study, for example.)
4. Considering principles and concepts of leadership.

As the planning activities in Phase II-a and b were occurring, the school district administrative staff identified and selected staff members for the new schools. Many of these newly-appointed staff members accepted an invitation to participate in on-going Phase II planning

activities. Given the gradual addition of new staff, during the planning process it became apparent that the amount of knowledge about the new high school programs would vary from staff member to staff member. The probability that different staff members would know more or less about program depending on when they became a part of the planning process provided a strong argument which supported the inclusion of Phase III. The third and final phase of the planning process was designed to give all staff who would serve in the new buildings a consolidated, common, current perspective of all parts of the new educational programs, and of the intended relationships of those parts as conceived and designed by the program planners. In a very real sense, Phase III constituted the Planning Turnkey--the point at which the intents of planners were communicated and turned over to the people who were to make it work.

In Conclusion

At the time this article was prepared Phase II of the project was three-fourths complete. The product outcomes postulated at the beginning of the project have been achieved on schedule, and the performance of the planning groups to date encourages us to believe that the total project will be successfully completed--on time. Those who have examined the variety of nine-week, eighteen-week and thirty-six-week program offerings for the new schools have made modest statements that the recommended offerings are "exciting," structurally "different," and "potentially interesting to students."

Those of us who have observed and participated in the project from the beginning agree that the planners have developed viable educational programs for new schools. Moreover, we have been favorably impressed with the "product orientation" of the work teams, their increasing

commitment to the planning effort, and the visible increase in enthusiasm for the task.

We submit that the structuring and scheduling of expected outcomes, coupled with organized advocate teams, contributed to the high level of productivity. The explicit definition of the expected products of the entire effort, including completion deadlines, not only aided the program planning done by the university support group, but also acted as a motivating and stabilizing influence on the activities of the advocate groups.

Some of the major lessons learned from the experience are these.

1. Programs for new schools can be different.
2. Given time and resources, teachers can develop programs which, at least by title, are relevant.
3. Given minimally adequate resources, teachers can become creative program planners.
4. In the face of severe time constraints, teacher advocate teams not only accomplish tremendous amounts of work in relatively short periods of time, but also develop enthusiasm for and commitment to program in the process.

Someone will surely suggest that there's nothing particularly new or different about all of this. That may be true. But--given Kansas City's needs for new programs and leadership development, they implemented a program which went a long way toward the satisfactory fulfillment of those needs. In the process they realized bonuses in the form of increased professional commitment to program and the discovery of a useful future source of program planning manpower. It's working in Kansas City. It may work for you.