AN INQUIRY INTO A PROACTIVE APPROACH

TO TEACHING AS AN ALTERNATIVE

TO THE REACTIVE TRADITIONAL

APPROACH

By

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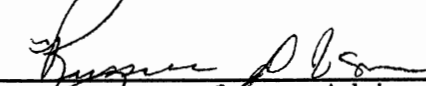
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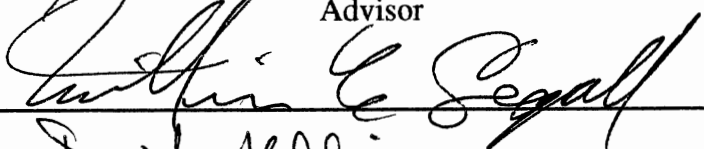the Degree of
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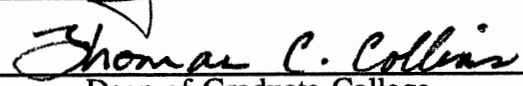
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ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

TRADITIONAL TEACHING TODAY

Introduction

One of the most frustrating things that can happen to a teacher is for him/her to be instructing students in his/her particular discipline only to see some of them staring out the window, doodling on their notebooks, sleeping, writing notes, and so on.

When this happens, and it does more often than teachers would like to admit, two questions generally come to the teacher's mind: Why can't these people see the value in what I am telling them? And what can I do to provide an atmosphere which will help my students become intrinsically interested in the material?

These questions are not easily answered. Surely, motivation, that sense of excitement which makes one act upon a given thought or idea, is a key factor. But, how can that sense of excitement be imparted to a group of students who would rather be anywhere, doing anything other than sitting in a classroom hearing a teacher talk about the merits of learning the causes of the Civil War or how important dead poets and their ideas are to today's young person?

One answer to these questions may be to look at the method used to instruct. Traditional teaching methodology has been the preferred style among educators since the turn of the century.

1

According to Mortimer Adler (1982), traditional teaching is telling the student about subject content through lectures and responses aided by textbooks and other materials. Motivation to perform is reinforced through the use of rewards, i.e. good grades and teacher approval; and punishments, i.e. bad grades, failure, and teacher disapproval.

According to Glasser (1986), teaching has traditionally stressed competition and individual learning. He suggests that about fifty percent of the nation's students respond to traditional methodology, but fifty percent do not.

Most educators are not satisfied with these figures. Dedicated teachers know that the central task of education is to produce learning people. Adler (1982) reminds us that basic schooling - amounting to about twelve years - is the preparatory stage where learning habits are developed. These habits are necessary for a life-long learning process.

However, educators must take into consideration the many environmental and social changes which have occurred in the last half of this century. These changes seem to have the greatest impact on children during adolescence.

According to Wlodkowski and Jaynes (1990), adolescence itself is a culture all its own. It has its own language, its own medium (MTV), its own dress code, its own geography (shopping malls, cars and so on), and its own financial support system (service jobs which enable the teenager to command billions of dollars in this society). Seen as powerful competitors with school, these distractions draw the child away from learning in an academic sense which is seen sometimes as incompatible with his/her immediate life-at-hand.

In addition, schools have become complex social institutions responsible for a great deal more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. They are also held accountable for pediatric education, drug and alcohol education, social and psychological evaluation, and a host of other duties once left to parents and churches.

The majority of educators in the United States are well aware of the challenges today's student offers and are not willing to distance themselves from these problems. They also know that teaching is not about standing still and playing it safe. Most of today's students also realize that they must look seriously at "the big picture" and their place in it.

Need for the Study

From its inception, the American ideal of educating has been under fire. According to education historian Lawrence A. Cremin (1990), some critics in the early 1800's thought that mass education was at best a foolish idea and at worst a subversive one. As the nation grew and mass immigration occurred, these thoughts became more and more magnified.

The industrialization of the States introduced such concepts as mass production and the assembly line. This, coupled with the "American Dream", called for life production skills as additions to the curriculum in the nation's schools along with the liberal arts education of old. The expanded curriculum with its inclusion of vo-tech skills offered choices in American schools unheard of in other nations at the secondary level.

The expanded curriculum offered tremendous opportunities for the varied

cultures represented in America's society at large. Carnegie units were introduced into the nation's high schools so that each student would be educated in required basic subjects such as math, English, social studies, science, and so on. In addition, high school students were offered numerous electives ranging from music and art to home economics and auto mechanics allowing them to choose their own programs of study. According to Cremin (1990), critics felt that this was not an attempt to educate in the spirit of democracy, but rather an attempt to water down the curriculum and prolong adolescence.

John Dewey (1897) was well aware of the conflict and confusion that characterized learning. He sought solutions not by advocating a retreat into traditionalism, but rather a radical reconstruction of liberal education that would unite both vocational and professional education. He saw this as a must because of the rapid development of the American economy, and the growing anxiety over America's place in the world in the early 1900's.

Although the curriculum was going through a radical change with the addition of life adjustment education, the method to impart it remained basically the same: didactic instruction through lectures and responses. Textbooks and other aids helped organize subject-matter, and practice was given in the form of supervised seat work and homework.

(Although the traditional teaching method worked well for students in the first half of the century, the rapid increase in technology after World War II demanded citizens who were more educated than ever.) Businesses began to require at least the completion of a secondary education, and the pressure to remain in school and

graduate began. However, the report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) signaled a major decline in American educational productivity. The report indicated that 13% of American teenagers holding high school diplomas were functionally illiterate. Colleges reported a 72% increase in remedial math course offerings between 1975 and 1980. John Goodlad (1984) in his eight year study of American schooling may have found one of the reasons why such alarming statistics were revealed. He noted the following:

> The data from our observations in more than 1,000 classrooms support the popular image of a teacher standing or sitting in front of a class imparting knowledge to a group of students. Explaining and lecturing constituted the most frequent teaching activities according to teachers, students, and our observations. And the frequency of these activities increased steadily from the primary to the senior high school years. Teachers also spent a substantial amount of time observing students at work or monitoring their seatwork, especially at the junior high school level. (p. 105)

The traditional teaching method may not be capable of handling the extended curriculum by itself in today's learning environment. Distractions, mentioned earlier in this paper, along with peer pressure, the streets and immediate access to the world via television may signal that a change is needed in teaching methodology.

Statement of the Problem

Research concerning teaching methodology calls for an attempt to examine the effectiveness of the traditional method of teaching now in force in the majority of classrooms across the United States. This study is an effort to inquire into student views concerning traditional teaching methodology and cooperative learning, a teaching strategy involving student participation in small group learning activities. According to Goodlad (1984), student passivity in school could be a contributing

factor in what some critics believe is an inferior educational system in American schools.

Definition of Terms

By <u>traditional teaching</u> the researcher is referring to the methodology currently in use in the majority of American classrooms. The teacher lectures while students listen and take notes. Follow-up question and answer discussions take place at times, usually involving the teacher and a few students. Assignments are given via exercises from textbooks or workbooks. Seat work is monitored, and objective tests are given periodically. Students are given grades, usually A,B,C,D, or F, depending on their test and homework performance. Students are usually seated in rows, rules of conduct are outlined, and students work individually, often in competition, with other members of the class.

By <u>cooperative learning</u> the researcher is referring to the teaching strategy which allows students to work together in small groups. Students utilize strengths to help the group reach stated goals. The teacher becomes a coach rather than a manager as he/she observes the students helping one another. The primary purpose of cooperative learning is to allow each student the opportunity to develop and enhance his/her academic freedom.

According to Dr. Stephen Covey (1990) <u>proactive</u> means that human beings are responsible for their lives. Their behavior is a function of their own decisions, not the conditions with which they are faced.

The term <u>reactive</u> is used in this paper to mean a passive response given by

human beings when they depend on others to give them information or reasons for controlling how they think and how they react to given information.

By connections the researcher is referring to the way in which school knowledge is constantly filtered through cultural experiences that students bring with them to the classroom. According to McLauren (1989), students cannot learn usefully unless teachers develop an understanding of various ways student perceptions and identities are connected with information given in classroom subject.

Limitations of the Study

The following were the limitations for the study:

1. The student opinion survey used as one instrument in this paper was administered to tenth and eleventh grade high school students only; consequently not all grade levels K - 12 were polled.

2. The students ranked low, medium, and high performers based on standardized test scores and performance in one English class.

3. The students who participated in the opinion poll were members of a rural school district.

4. The opinion survey used by the researcher was adapted from a poll concerning student reactions to school in general. The researcher modified the poll to include questions earmarked toward traditional teaching methodology and cooperative learning.

5. The student interview used as the other instrument in this paper was limited to five students chosen by the two teachers whose students were involved in the

student survey. Each of these students had experience in classrooms, where both cooperative learning and traditional methods were used.

6. The five students were chosen based on standardized test scores and performance in one English class. The intent was to represent varied student performance along with background data which may affect or aid classroom performance; consequently, no random selection was used.

Research Questions in the Study

Conceptually, the research questions posed in this study are:

1. Do students see the traditional teaching method as ineffective in today's school environment?

2. Is cooperative learning preferred over the traditional teaching method?

3. Could cooperative learning be perceived as a method which would allow students an opportunity to deal with distractors which may affect their academic life?

Summary

The findings in this study should yield important information on student's opinion regarding the two teaching methods discussed. Also, it should provide critical findings which call attention to the environment in which today's adolescent finds himself/herself.

The researcher believes that adolescence today is a culture all its own, and consideration of this should be given when choosing a teaching method. It is also believed that teachers need to listen to what students have to say about the method used to teach them.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Derived from the democratic ideal of educating the masses, traditional methodology became the model used for imparting the curricula of the twentieth century. This popular teaching style has the teacher as the active participant in the classroom while the student is the passive recipient. The teacher chooses the material and the method of instruction. The subject matter is content-centered and highly structured with pre-determined learner outcomes.

According to Kliebard (1975), education through well meaning leaders and trend setters, developed into a science based on stimulus/response theory (Thorndike, 1910) and scientific management (Taylor, 1911). Languaging based in the social sciences, i.e. positive and negative reinforcement, frequency, intensity and so on gave curriculists a foundation upon which a science of education could be built. Science was identified (and still is) with progress. According to Eisner (1983), science provided a credible base to explain to the public that its money was being well spent.

Effective teaching today seems to be determined by how high students score on standardized tests, especially in math and science, and how well a teacher is able to keep his/her students engaged in productive tasks. Hunter (1984) contends that the teacher alone is accountable for student performance.

Further changes in educational languaging added management terms to

9

traditional methodology, i.e. time on tasks, skills, projects, performance, input/output, and so on. Kemp (1977) states that managerial aspects are now expected by administrators when teachers are observed and/or evaluated. According to Hunter (1984), it is expected that goals are defined, objectives are written, work is detailed, grouping is done with an emphasis on homogeneous clustering, and that the teacher transmits facts, lectures, uses recitation, and carefully programmed instruction in his/her classroom. Kounin's (1977) research states that discipline problems are also expected to be kept at a minimum through recognizing problems before they arise.

Overview of Research Literature on Traditional Methodology

It is necessary for all people - teachers, parents, and students - to realize that a democratic society must provide an equal education to all its citizens. According to Adler (1982), this is not achieved by providing equal time - same number of years in school - but by providing equal quality education, with no exceptions, to everyone. This seems overwhelming when at the turn of the century only ten percent of those eligible for high school attended. Adler's research contended that today one hundred percent enter, but not all finish secondary schooling.

It may be seen that the American education system has kept only part of its responsibility in providing equality. According to Adler (1982), equal quantity of education is offered to all, but not quality of education. Tracking students in different directions is not equal quality. Adler reported the following research findings of the Paideia Group in The Paideia Proposal:

> The ordinary classroom with students sitting in rows and the teacher standing in front of them dominating it, and the ordinary class period running fifty minutes, properly serve the purpose of didactic instruction, but nothing else. (p. 53)

Goodlad (1984) reports that sameness is the name of the game in most American classrooms:

> Writers and speakers reinforce our own memories of classrooms like these with references to cells, each with thirty or so students, desks or tables in rows, a teacher at the front, and pupils looking toward the teacher. (p. 93)

Goodlad (1984) notes that it was a sign of exuberance and joy when actual hands on activities would occasionally be presented. Some individuals may have difficulty understanding what is being presented in the classroom in relation to what they know outside the classroom when little or no tactile-kinesthetic experience is offered.

Constance Kamii (1982), and ardent follower of the imminent French psychologist, Jean Piaget, states that children naturally construct knowledge by putting things into relationships. This knowledge is not compartmentalized into subjects. Yet, classrooms are often conducted as if none of this were true.

According to Glasser (1986), the nation's schools are filled with young people who are dependent on the teacher for information and on themselves for handing back that information on a test.

Some researchers believe that it is simply easier on teachers, administrators and teacher training programs to remain with traditional teaching methodology. One such researcher is John Goodlad (1984):

> "On the whole, teachers at all levels apparently [do] not know how to vary their instructional procedures, [do] not want to, or [have] some kind of difficulty doing so." (p. 106)

In fairness, it should be remembered that so much of schooling involves large groups of students, and control is of major concern. "...restrictions to movement

abound in most schools. Leaving [one's] desk without permission is taboo in most classrooms." (Wlodkowski and Jaynes, 1990)

In addition, teachers hold back from giving their students much space for fear of losing control and of students taking over. This can be seen as a frightening prospect for them.

According to Goodlad (1984), teachers also carry society's expectation of classroom behavior with them. That expectation is to be in charge.

Crain (1980, 1985) states that most educators also agree that education is largely a socialization process and the child, if properly schooled [controlled] will learn what he or she needs in order to become effective law-abiding and economically sound members of society. Mortimer Adler (1982) states that the objective of basic schooling [is] an adequate preparation for discharging the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. (p. 18)   According to Selakovich (1984), schools must deal with a diverse group who are not socialized to these skills, and the schools fail to socialize because the students they get are not homogeneous enough.

Research Literature Specific To Proactive Learning

Michael Apple (1974, 1990) says that, "schools seem to contribute to inequality in that they are tacitly organized to differentially distribute specific kinds of knowledge...Just as there is a social distribution of cultural capital in society, so to is there a social distribution of knowledge within classrooms. For example, different kinds of kids get different kinds of knowledge."

Most citizens in a democratic society will agree that all children have the right

to an equal education which leads eventually to equally trained adults. However, when questioned further, these same citizens will readily agree that is simply not the way it is. Children entering kindergarten and first grade, despite the inequalities of home and environmental nurturing prior to public school exposure, are treated as equally as they ever will be again in the educational process. That is, until they are divided into "red birds" and "blue birds" or more realistically, sheep and goats. The "sheep" skilled in following or reacting will receive a different kind of instruction and subject matter - hidden sometimes; mostly not. The "goats", who do not follow well at all, will be "tracked" in different directions; vo-tech training, survival skills subjects, alternative school, GED, or eventual drop-out status.

Glasser (1986) contends that traditional teaching could be seen as a reactive method to which approximately fifty percent of the nation's students respond. Paulo Freire (1970) likens the present educational system to a bank where education becomes an "act of depositing...students are the depositories and the teachers the depositors. Students patiently receive, memorize and repeat...therefore the scope of action [reaction] allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits". (p. 58)

The researcher believes that the key word "reactive" when speaking of traditional teaching must be replaced with the word "proactive" before an attempt is made to present a different approach to teaching. This calls for a paradigm shift. Furthermore, educators must broaden the way they "see" their classrooms and their students..." Covey (1989, 1990) states that proactivity means that as "human beings, [students] are responsible for [their] own lives. [Their] behavior is a function of

[their] own decisions, not the conditions [in which they find themselves]...Highly

proactive people recognize responsibility and their behavior as a product of the

student's own conscious choice...rather than a [reactive] product of conditions based on

feelings." (p. 71)

Cognate Areas Relevant To Proactive/Cooperative Teams

There are suggestions from many researchers for changing the current situation

in force in classrooms today. One such researcher, Elliot Eisner (1983), asks teachers

to look at teaching as an art and a craft. According to Eisner, a teacher must know

his/her "craft" expertly and use it skillfully while at the same time, daring to invent

new methods of using that craft (art). In his article, "The Art and Craft of Teaching",

Eisner stresses "that craftpersons and artists tend to care a great deal about what they

do."

Teachers skilled in their craft as professionals must learn to adopt an attitude

when seeing themselves and care as much for the aesthetic experience in teaching as

they do about the intellectual stimulation wrought by traditional methods. Eisner asks

that educators regard teaching as an art and craft because humans do not respond

merely to stimuli. They construct situations and make sense of them. The importance

of education, he contends, is after all what students take with them from the classroom

based on what they brought with them in the first place through previous experiences,

their own capabilities, their friends, and their relationship with the teacher.

McLauren (1989) also states that educators must realize that school knowledge

is continually filtered through the life experiences that students bring with them to the

classroom. When this concept is ignored, then the dimensions of student experiences upon which they learn, speak, and imagine are lost and the importance of student connections to classroom and life is also lost. "Students can not learn usefully unless teachers develop an understanding of the various ways in which student's perceptions and identities are constructed."

According to Wlodkowski and Jaynes (1990), students of any age level favor learning situations that allow them to participate actively rather than just to listen or to read. The key word again is "actively" or better yet, "proactively". One way communication - teacher speaks; students listen - allows little overt interaction between teacher and student, and without interaction how can there be growth?

Cooperative learning groups may be one way to attain not only the overt interaction between teacher and student but also between student and student. In cooperative learning, children put their heads together to produce a team effort resulting in proactive positive interdependence which may lead to people who are self-reliant and capable through working together. (See Appendix C p. 65)

According to Covey (1989, 1990), proactive independent people realize that intellectual interdependence leads to the best thinking of other people to join with one's own.

Adler (1982) suggests that teachers consider how athletic coaches are able to teach those skills needed in an athletic contest by moving from athlete to athlete and small group to small group, "standing or sitting beside the learner" and seeing the results - students who know their subject matter and their importance to the team. Adler further states that every coach knows that when this "coaching technique is not

adequately undertaken, little can be expected in the development of basic skills" (p. 27), and the team fails.

The importance of cooperative learning has a great deal of research and support to back up the claim that it is the fairest way to educate.

Johnson and Johnson's (1974, 1978, 1983, 1987) study showed that students in cooperative learning groups "achieve at a higher level, use higher level reasoning strategies, are intrinsically motivated, have higher self-esteem, and are more skilled interpersonally" (1987).

William Glasser (1986) says that children have four needs in life - love, power, freedom and fun, and that it is upon these psychological needs that cooperative grouping is based. Glasser contends that if a child does not feel that she/he belongs, she/he will not pay any attention to academics; if she/he feels that she/he has no power in deciding what his or her academic achievement goals will be, she/he will pay little attention to academics; if a student feels she/he has no freedom regarding what to do or what to say, she/he will not give academics a chance; and if a student feels there is no fun in the classroom, she/he will not bother with subject matter.

James S. Cangelosi (1984, 1986) points out the necessity of changing from traditionalist teaching methods to cooperative learning groups because the very nature of the modern world insists upon it. His book, Cooperation in the Classroom; Teachers and Students Together, is designed for teachers and offers suggestions from his own classroom experiences as well as nineteen years of research.

W. Crawford Lindsey (1988) says that under the current traditional teaching style learning is "forced, passive, no fun and required" and is more concerned with

behavior modification then with subject matter. He agrees that a new emphasis on teaching is needed...one that will "get all the brain skills" working in a social interactive setting. Cooperative learning, according to Lindsey, fills the needed prescription for what ails the American classroom. The method redistributes the teacher's roles and duties among the students who are divided heterogeneously into "mini classes". "Students do all the researching, organizing, testing, grading, writing, and reading...performing all the steps involved in the thinking and communicating process". (p. 15) The end result, according to Lindsey, are students who are self-actualized, caring, creating, imaginative, motivated, curious, communicative, and socially responsible human beings.

Eliot Wigginton, a twenty year veteran teacher best known for The Foxfire Experience, gives the following comments about cooperative learning in his award winning book Sometimes A Shining Moment:

> To make our education effective, we must start with the real-world reality of our students' lives...accept that, and build on that, and broaden that. (p. 122) When students can't make connections and internalize connections between information or make use of it, they will discard it as soon as the tests are over. (p. 197)...Small group work enables the subject matter being covered in the class to be utilized through the use of resources - human and physical - from the real world on a broad enough basis allowing participation by all students in the class...where cooperation and consensus is emphasized (p. 406).

To further substantiate Wigginton's point as well as those of other researchers mentioned who are relevant to proactive cooperative team methodology, the researcher must emphasize that how a student feels about what goes on in the classroom in terms of what she/he hears and reads is far more important than just gaining information. The student's emotions - how he/she reacts to facts and ideas - are extremely important for real learning to take place.

Often a student's feelings will determine whether or not he/she will learn. Because cooperative learning depends on mutual efforts by each group member to attain stated goals, these "feelings" become apparent within the group. The students know who is involved and who is not and will often, through guidance and interaction, solve problems on their own without teacher intervention. These experiences can become "an avenue for opening new areas of understanding" (Leypoldt, 1967, 1982).

<div align="center">Critical Assessment of Reviewed Literature</div>

This researcher is aware of the necessity to practice objectivity from the beginning of any professional study. The need to approach a research topic as "scientific curiosity" rather than a "strong personal belief" calls for a literature review relevant to the topic which is both objective and explicit in its over-all approach. Therefore, the literature used for review was carefully selected with this aim in mind. Researchers, accomplished in their field whether that field is educational philosophy (Adler, 1982; Dewey (1916); educational theory (Goodlad, 1982); (Eisner, 1983, 1991); (Cremin, 1990); (McLauren 1989); structural model design (Hunter 1984); (Kemp, 1970); (Tyler, 1949); (Taylor, 1911); (Johnson and Johnson, 1987) or reconceptionalist idealogy (Apple, 1979, 1980); (Friere, 1970); (Selakovich, 1987), were used for their seminal work in epistemology. This combination of research from wide and diverse areas of study provides a depth to the research topic as well as an increased awareness on the part of this researcher of what has proven effective methodology in the past and what may be a call for a change in teaching methods now.

What Is Known And Unknown About The Thesis Topic

There is without a doubt a number of concerns with which the researcher must deal when suggesting a change from a teaching method which has been in force and has been seen as successful by teachers, administrators, and the public alike for many years.

Consideration must be given to teachers and administrators fears concerning relinquishment of adult power, a pretty frightening concept in itself because it involves not only the requirement of changing a teaching method but also a whole new way of perceiving themselves. There is also very little incentive, especially on the part of administrators who have neared or completed the last step of the career ladder to want to change to a new way of educating.

Change creates anxiety after all, and the status quo, seems safer and preferable to the unknowns in a different procedure. Media pressure to answer public demands for increased quality in education has created enormous competition between schools and educators within these schools.

Cooperative learning gives students a head start in dealing with a society based on positive interdependence. It leads to autonomy and intrinsic motivation as well as individual responsibility (Johnson and Johnson, 1988). But, what is unknown is its effectiveness when students must work independently on standardized tests or during fifty minute class periods interrupting group work just when it gets started. Nor is it known if school life is made more proactive for all students involved, for example, those who will achieve regardless of the method used: reactive, proactive, or whatever. And with the growing problems of this century requiring generations to become expert

problem-solvers, is cooperative learning able to offer the kind of atmosphere conducive to empowering students with the kinds of skills needed which will lead to autonomy?

This study should contribute to other research findings which stress a need to change from a reactive, passive learning method to one which results in proactive, autonomous learning.

That is what this researcher hopes the contribution to this paradigm-shift in methodology will make clear - the need to practice what our democratic creed preaches: a free and equal quality education for all.

Summary

This chapter should help the reader understand the need for a change from teacher dominated classrooms in order for a democratic society to provide an equal quality education for all its citizens. Several researchers are cited who comment about the traditional teacher-stimulus approach now in place since the beginning of the century. Many of these researchers realize the need to recognize the experiences children bring with them to the classroom.

Suggestions are made that students and teachers alike make important contributions to learning when allowed to do so - students through constructivism and teachers who perceive their profession as both an art and a craft. It is also suggested that teachers remove themselves from managerial roles into a coaching role thus allowing themselves an accessibility to several small groups instead of one large one. Further suggestions are made in this chapter concerning the need for a proactive learning approach. The resources and commitment needed to achieve this are explored through cooperative team methodology by citing several researchers who support this rationale.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Introduction

According to Professor Stephen Covey of Marriott College (1989), people

respond autobiographically to information given to them. They evaluate (agree or

disagree); probe (question from a personal frame of reference); interpret (try to figure

out others motives and behaviors based on their own motives and behaviors); and

advise (counsel based on their own experience). This very natural state of receiving

information, however, can be genuinely limiting if not recognized because it is often

guided by sentiment and emotion. Individuals tend to see the world not as it really is

but as they, as individuals, are. With this in mind the following research methods

were chosen.

Research Design - General Methods

Two general research methods were used. First, opinion polling was used with

three specific groups of students. Their beliefs and behaviors regarding traditional

teaching and cooperative learning teams were determined through the use of a survey.

These three groups were identified in more detail in succeeding portions of this

chapter. Secondly, interviews were conducted with five students who are classified as

gifted, above averaged intelligence, average intelligence, and below average intelligence or learning disabled. The students were classified according to results on standardized tests or other testing methods through the school system. This researcher did <u>not</u> classify these students. The information and records, with student permission, was assessed by the guidance counselor and the two teachers whose students participated in the survey.

Specific Procedures and Instrumentation

One survey was used in the student opinion poll. It was adapted from a survey in <u>A Guide to Positive Discipline</u> (p. 59-62, 1990). Its intent was to learn what students think about school in general. Some of the questions were modified by the researcher for 10th and 11th grade English students who had experienced at least one year of cooperative learning group methodology and one or more years of traditional teaching methodology. Each question was carefully considered with a two-fold purpose in mind: (1) to determine how these students felt about school in general, especially their attitudes toward traditional learning and cooperative group learning, and (2) to determine if the research questions in Chapter I of this paper could be answered effectively.

There were seventy-seven high school students involved with the questionnaire, and their honesty in answering the survey was stressed. They were encouraged to read each statement carefully and circle the appropriate response both through written directions on the survey itself and through verbal directions given by the survey administrator. (See Appendix B p. 59)

The second type of instrumentation which was used in this investigation was the interview. Five students were chosen for this procedure using the same criteria as that which was used for the survey. The students were selected by the guidance counselor and the two English teachers as before, based on classroom performance and test results. They were chosen according to school academic performance as stated above.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

The student opinion survey was chosen, first of all, for its ability to reach more students in a shorter period of time, and for its ability to be confidential and anonymous enabling the students to be more open and frank with their answers. Secondly, it is the opinion of the researcher that another method of data collection was needed in addition to the results of the survey for added credibility since the survey focused on student reaction to school climate as well as the two teaching methodologies in question. The reader may see bias here since the survey was specifically designed for general information. Therefore, a second method of data collection, the student interview, was used.

Eliot Eisner, (1991) in his book The Enlightened Eye, states the following:

> Second in importance to direct observation is the use of the interview...It is surprising how much people are willing to talk to those whom they believe are really willing to listen (p. 183).

The interviews allowed an intimate glimpse of these two methodologies through the eyes of the individual students themselves. The researcher, with the permission of the students, used a tape recorder. There was no formal questionnaire-oriented format.

It was the intent to keep the tone of each interview conversational, and concrete examples were the focus of the researcher.

The students were chosen by the teachers and guidance counselor as before: classroom performance records and standardized test results. Three questions were used by the researcher to place the student at ease, but most comments and questions used came randomly during the interviews themselves.

Treatment Of The Data

A step by step description regarding how conclusions were drawn through the use of the opinion poll are provided in Chapter IV. Graphs are also included in Chapter IV.

Numbers were assigned to each response on the survey, i.e. 100 = strongly agree, 75 = agree, 50 = disagree, 25 = strongly disagree. The researcher assessed each question using a rank score by assigning a numerical value to the survey questions, especially those questions which lean toward traditional methodology or cooperative learning as the student's preference. A copy of the survey is included in the appendices as well as copies of letters sent to the high school principal, guidance counselor, and teachers involved.

The interviews were conducted in private. Names were changed to insure anonymity. While conducting the interviews, the researcher was aware that rapport should be established between the student interviewee and the interviewer. However, ethics was of utmost consideration. With this in mind, each student interviewed was informed concerning the purpose of the interview; why he or she had been chosen; and

he or she was given the chance to "opt out" if it was desired. The aim of this study, after all, was to gain further understanding of student's views concerning teaching methodology, and to determine if cooperative learning does help the fifty percent who Glasser (1986) says are not being reached. Candid remarks by students were expected. The researcher was well aware of the responsibility when reporting results pertaining to this research method. If certain information obtained in student interviews was withheld, the researcher does not mean to be misleading. Rather, the intent was a judgment call if the researcher felt that to include the comment(s) might violate some ethical issue.

Summary

This chapter should help the reader understand the process procedure and the instrumentation used for data collection. Its intent is to explain the choice of investigation types used by the researcher. The survey and interviews should answer the research questions raised in Chapter I.

CHAPTER IV

PLAN OF STUDY

The Student Opinion Poll

According to Keating, Pickering, Slack and White (1990), surveys are useful tools which help to identify specific areas to be evaluated. Their greatest advantage is their ability to reach more people in a shorter period of time, and present their results simply and succinctly. They can be confidential and anonymous allowing the respondents to be more open and frank with their answers and comments.

The opinion survey used in this research was adapted from a student opinion poll regarding general information concerning particular school climate (see Appendix B p. 59). Additional data concerning traditional teaching and cooperative learning groups was added by the researcher.

The information collected in the opinion poll was expected to yield useful information with which to answer the research questions posed in Chapter I of this paper:

1. Do students see the traditional teaching method as effective in today's school environment?

2. Is cooperative learning preferred over the traditional teaching method?

3. Could cooperative learning be perceived as a method which would allow

students an opportunity to deal with distractors which may affect their academic life?

Specific groups were used in the survey:

1. Tenth and eleventh grade students who participated in at least 1 year of cooperative learning.

2. With the help of two teachers and the guidance counselor, the students were placed in one of three groups: low performers, average performers, and high performers. The poll produced beliefs about school in general in addition to the student's opinions regarding traditional teaching and cooperative learning methodology.

The data was presented and interpreted in the following manner:

1. Permission was asked for and granted by the two English teachers whose students were polled, the high school principal, the high school guidance counselor, and the students themselves.

2. There were seventy-seven students who participated in the poll.

3. The two English teachers administered the poll. The instructions were given verbally. The teachers and the students were asked to read them again silently before starting. No time limit was set.

4. Thirty statements appeared on the poll. The responses from which the students were to choose were: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The answers were evaluated using the following rating system: 25 strongly disagree, 50 disagree, 75 agree and 100 strongly agree. The numerical rating system could have easily been reversed. This would have changed only the graphic representation presented on the "results at a glance" charts 1, 2, and 3. The areas to be rated ranged from students feelings about traditional teaching (T): questions 13, 16, 18, 19, 24, 26,

and 27; to questions dealing with their feelings concerning cooperative learning (C): questions 9, 25, 28, and 29; to statements concerning how they felt about school in general (D): the remainder of the questions on the survey. The scale (25, 50, 75, 100) was used only to supply the researcher with some numerical value which would yield a point position on the "Y" axis (vertical) for each of the 30 questions. The average point was obtained by adding each response in each group divided by the number of students in the group. These averages were plotted on the three separate graphs - one for each group. The higher numbers indicate agreement with the statement; the lower numbers on the graphs indicate disagreement with the statement.

It is important to note that the students involved in the survey were unaware that certain questions were earmarked toward traditional or cooperative learning methodology. Only the researcher had prior knowledge of those questions. Each statement must be read carefully to determine the value of the response. The "X" axis denotes each question on the survey. The results are found on pages 29, 30, and 31 of this chapter.

Evidence Which Supports Or Fails To Answer Research

According to the survey taken among the students (T) traditional teaching is fulfilling the needs of some of the students just as Glasser said in his book Control Theory in the Classroom. The answers to general questions regarding how the students felt about school were about the same for all three groups. The majority of students in all three groups felt that their teachers cared about them and were teaching them the things necessary for life outside the classroom. The average response to (T)

Figure 1. Low Achievers.
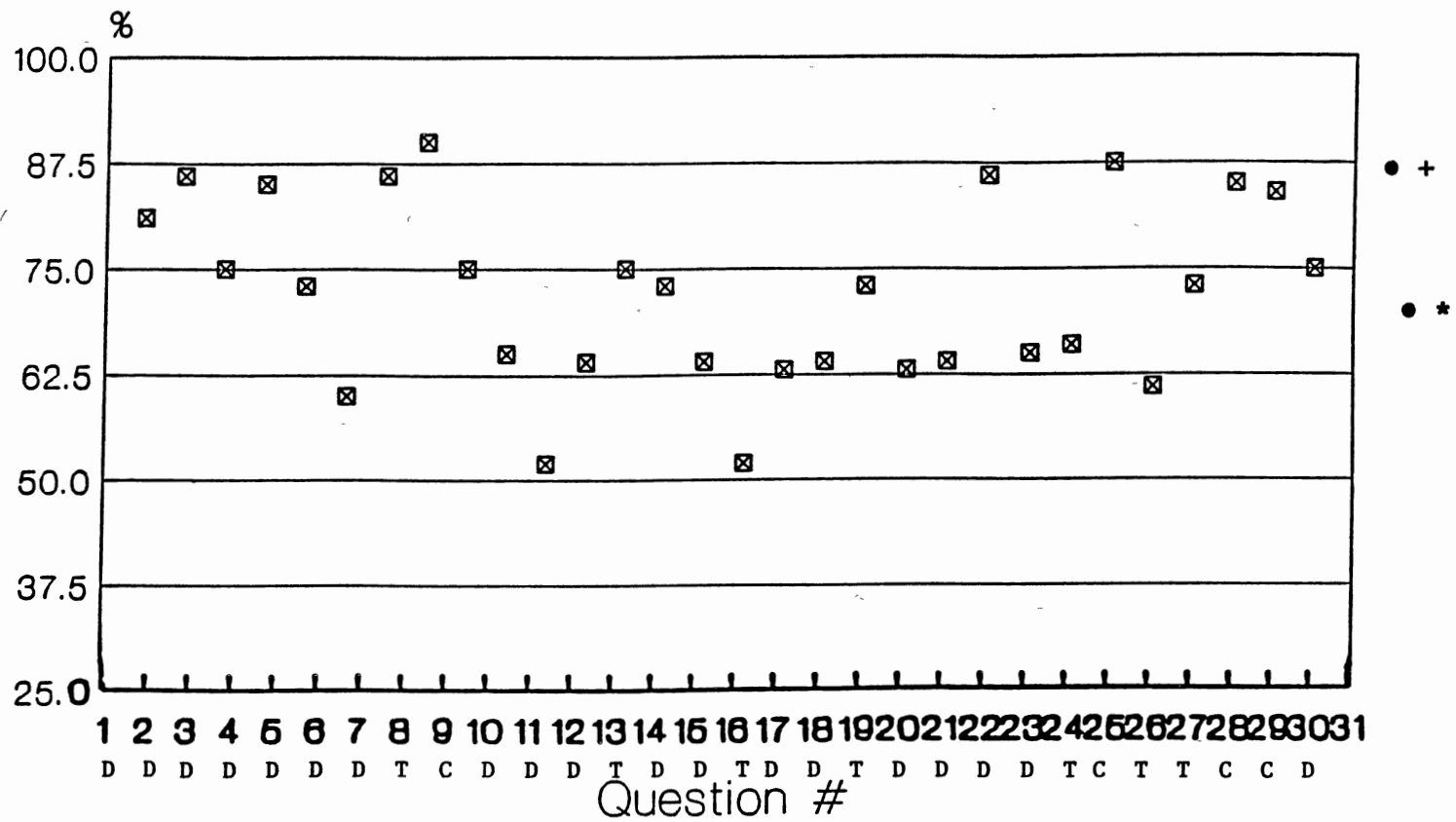
Chart # 1

Number of Students - 18
% Class Ranking - Bottom 1/3

* Traditional question
  average 67.8

+ Cooperate question
  average 86.7

(⁴N 18.9)

%

100.0

87.5

75.0

62.5

50.0

37.5

25.0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
D D D D D D D T C D D D T D D T D D T D D D D T C T T C C D

Question #

⊠   Chart # 2

Number of Students - 37
% Class Ranking - Middle 1/3

● +

● *

● Traditional question
    average 66.2

+ Cooperate question
    average 83.7

$(^{\Delta}_N$ 17.5)

Figure 2. Average Achievers.

Figure 3. High Achievers.

%

100.0 —

87.5 —

75.0 —

62.5 —

50.0 —

37.5 —

25.0 —

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

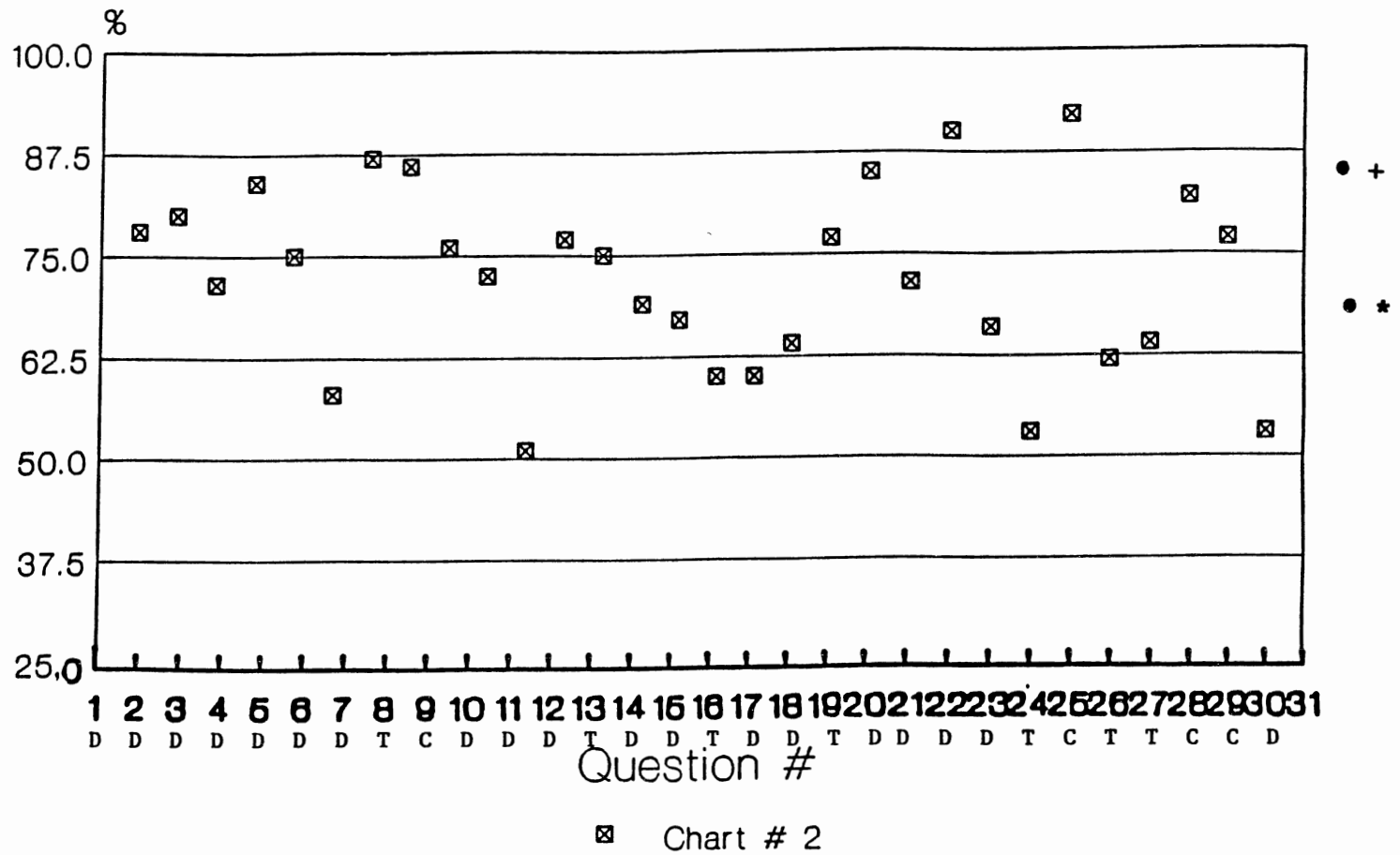D D D D D D D T C D D D T D D T D D T D D D T C T T C C D
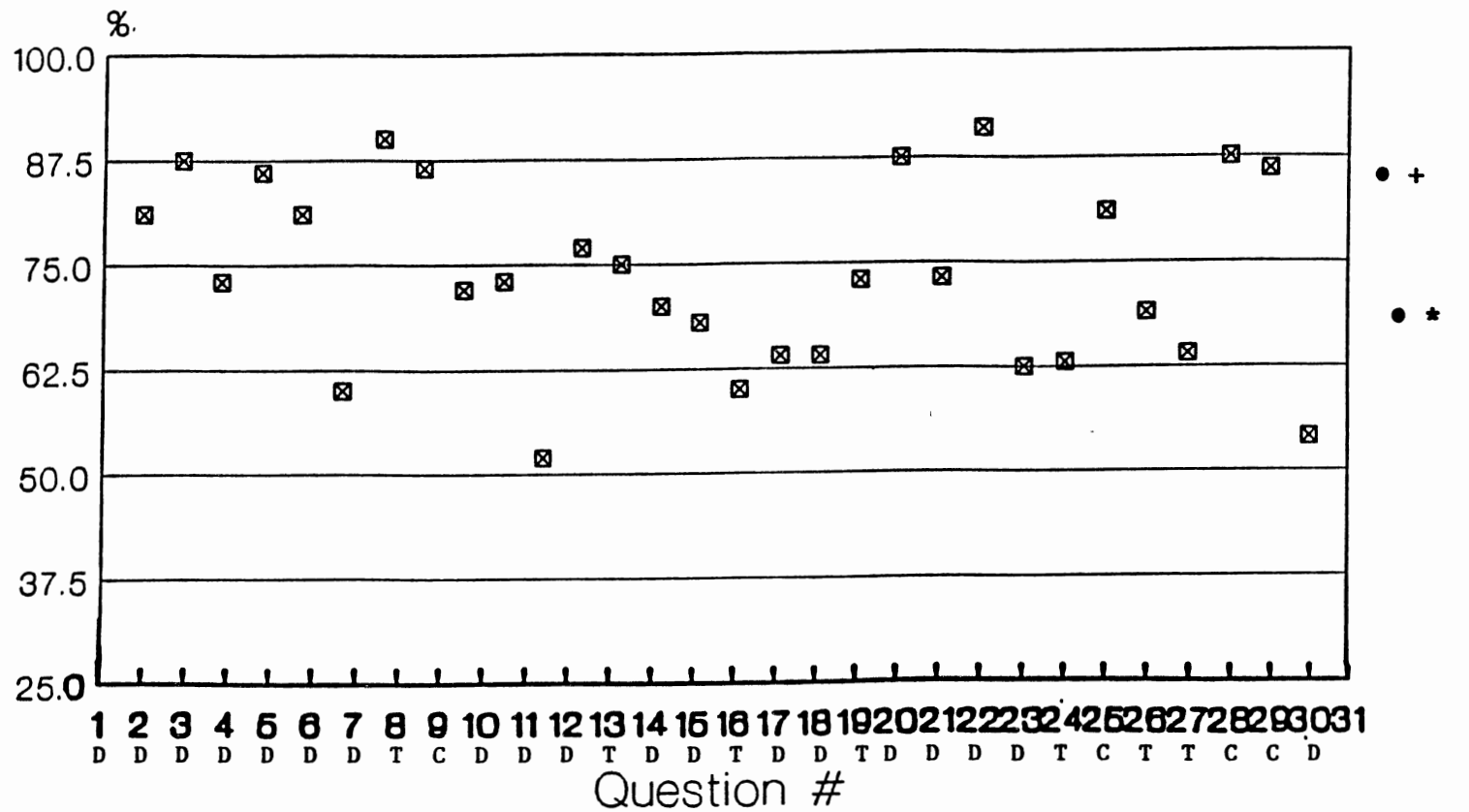
Question #

⊠ Chart # 3

Number of Students - 22
% Class Ranking - Top 1/3

● Traditional question
  average 67.6

+ Cooperate question
  average 85.2

(Δ_M 17.6)

● +

● *

31

was: chart 1 70, chart 2 68, chart 3 70. The average response to (D) was: chart 1 71, chart 2 70, and chart 3 72. Therefore, the researcher must conclude that since traditional teaching is the method used at the school surveyed that traditional teaching is doing the job in that area. Cooperative learning would probably not yield a higher percentage of positive answers here.

There were some interesting responses to the questions which were earmarked toward (C) cooperative learning. The average response to (C) was: chart 1 84, chart 2 82, and chart 3 83. The majority of students polled in all three groups preferred cooperative learning over traditional teaching; the difference was (approximately 13% points).

The bottom one-third of the students polled preferred teacher explanation over peer explanations (see questions 8 and 9 on the survey and chart 1), but wanted more discussion about what goes on in the classroom with their peers (see question 16). This group however responded (strongly agree, agree) to question #30 which asks if it really matters what method is used to teach them. An average of 75 for question #30 was the result for the bottom one-third class ranking. Students would learn only if they wanted to learn.

The average and high performers answered questions 8 and 9 about the same preferring teacher explanation over peer explanation, but all three groups felt that they were not encouraged by their teachers to seek help from their peers and wanted more student interaction (see question 6). All three groups rated this question a 60 or below.

Both the high and average performers thought that they had some "say" in the

classroom (question 16) but still not enough. The surprising response to question #30 came from the average and high performers. Both of these groups felt that it made a big difference whether traditional teaching or group learning was used. These groups rated question #30 with an average of 51 and 52 respectively. Some of these students wrote notes at the bottom of the survey indicating their preference for cooperative learning groups.

The most important finding, however, is reflected in the average difference (Δ_N) among all three groups' preference for cooperative learning method. The lower one-third rated the difference in favor by 18.9 points (22%); the middle one-third by 17.5 points (22%) and the top one-third by 17.6 points or (21%).

Although the survey was somewhat inconclusive concerning the effectiveness of traditional teaching for today's student, the preference for cooperative learning was notable in the questionnaire and in the follow-up interviews.

Eisner (1991) stresses that interviews should be informal in order to "put the person at ease," (p. 183) and that the interview should be conducted as if one were holding a conversation with the interviewee. With this information in mind, this researcher interviewed five students who had taken part in the student opinion survey.

Method For Selection

Five students were selected by an 11th grade English teacher whose students participated in the student opinion poll. Each student was asked to participate in an interview where he/she would be asked questions concerning his/her feelings about traditional teaching and cooperative learning methodologies. All five students took

part in cooperative learning in their English classes during the 1990-91 school year.

The students were chosen on performance level in their English classes at present. Their names were changed to protect their identity.

Although the researcher was known by each student, an extensive discussion with both the junior English teacher and the school counselor was held. The criteria used to chose the students were standardized test results from at least three years past, performance on unit tests as well as daily work in a traditional classroom setting, and their performance from the 1990-91 school year during the time they were participants in cooperative learning teams in English.

Before each student was interviewed, he or she was told the purpose of the interview, was asked if he or she understood the difference between cooperative learning and traditional learning, and was given the opportunity to opt out if he or she so desired. The results of these interviews follow.

Interview #1 - Joe

As far back as Joe could remember, he had difficulty in school. He is above average in athletic ability and admits that the only motivation to stay in school is sports. He had been retained in elementary school for one year, and although labeled a "slow learner" and placed in special tutoring classes (reading and math), these "special classes" were no longer an option once he entered junior high. Coming from a dysfunctional family, Joe found his parents unwilling to come to school to talk with the teachers and sign the necessary paperwork which would allow him to attend special classes in junior high and high school. He admitted that at times he would

cheat on tests and assignments in order to maintain his eligibility for sports. "I'm slower [academically] then other people. So I have to go at my own pace...You can't do that in regular classwork."

Joe needed a method different from traditional teaching which would allow him: "...to tell everybody what I think about the subject and how I learn the way to do it myself." Cooperative learning groups, according to Joe, provided the answer which would enable him to get in contact with himself academically: "...being in groups made me stop and think that I can really sit down; that I can really do it and do it [the assignment] by myself. I can talk among the people [in the group] and they can help me out and then I can do it."

For someone whose initial concept of himself academically was that of a "slow learner", cooperative learning seemed to have given Joe a needed boost in self-image. As he said: "...I would get my work done all the time. I would sit down with other people and actually do it and that made me feel good...it was fun...you got to share stuff [and] it made the subject easier for me."

Since Joe is now back in a traditional setting in English, he was asked if he found it difficult to go back to the teacher-stimulus approach: "Yeah, a little bit, but I was able to adjust because we still worked independently in the group [last year]...you didn't rely on the group to do the work for you. You learned to work individually, but with others." Joe's current English teacher concurs. He is performing "C" and "B" work in junior English and he credits his time in cooperative learning as having helped him "catch-up" on the English skills he felt he lacked.

Interview #2 - Billy

Although Billy's IQ tests results show him to have an extremely high IQ (over 140), his performance in the classroom does not reflect his ability. Labeled "learning disabled" with dyslexia, Billy, like Joe relied on his athletic ability as a motivating factor to see him through academically. When a serious knee injury ended his days as an athlete, he found little reward in the academic realm even dropping out in the second semester of his freshman year. Billy moved from Colorado to Northeastern Oklahoma during the summer of 1990. He started classes four weeks into the school year after his parents urged him to "At least give this school a try."

When the counselor found him to be dyslexic, his parents were contacted, but Billy refused to be placed in learning disability classes for fear he would be called "dumb", and threatened to drop out again if he were forced into any "special" program.

His parents, hoping for the best and eager to do anything to keep their youngest son in school, abided by his wishes. However, the counselor was given permission to talk with each of Billy's teachers and make them aware of his "disability". Billy admits today that most of his problems stemmed from his own attitude: "I would feel inferior to certain students...the ones that were always getting "A's" and all that, they already know most of what they are doing, and you kind of get a sense that they are looking down on you."

When asked about the use of cooperative learning groups in his language arts classes (English II and Speech I), he said that those became his favorite classes.

He said that cooperative learning worked for him last year because "you're dealing with a committee and you can work one on one...you could work it (the

assignment or project) between two people or the whole group could fight it out to come up with an answer." He admitted that the reason he liked it at first was a personal one: "I got to know the kids at my new school faster than if I was in a regular classroom. That was nice."

He was asked if at first he felt intimidated by the group situation: "At first, yeah. It kind of goes back to the inferior deal. I felt [pressure] at first, but it was like they [the group] were trying to teach you...[they're] gonna put some pressure on you to get it [the work] done so that everyone in the group can prosper, not because they're looking down on you."

He commented further about traditional teaching: "When you are in regular class and you raise your hand to ask a question, everybody turns and looks at you. You don't know what they're thinking. but when you're in a group of peers, they're gonna listen to others because they want to benefit themselves...they're gonna listen to others to help them...It's a lot easier to ask questions."

When asked if he felt that cooperative learning may have made it more difficult to work in classes where traditional teaching was the norm, he responded in this way: "There is a part I like about it [traditional teaching] and that is you are given a set of rules that you don't stray from, but that's the part I dislike, too. In cooperative learning, it's a little funny [to say this], but when you're working in a group, you are kinda your own person anyway...You still have to work independently at times, but there's a unity involved. I can work in a regular class, but you don't have the support to lean on others to help you out."

Billy's performance in junior English is below his performance level of last

year while in cooperative learning. His work was well above average by the end of the 1991 school year and he had discovered a talent for creative writing. His dyslexia still causes difficulty. He admits that he finds it hard to participate in the discussion format used in his class this year; "...when I don't care about it, I'm just gonna goof all hour...if I'm gonna have success, then I'm gonna need to work." When asked what he liked best about cooperative learning, his answer was very direct: "It made more sense to me...I actually learned quite a bit."

Interview #3 - Stacy

Stacy is the oldest child in a family of six. She is a varsity cheerleader and is a member of nearly every organization the school has, holding offices in several. She is also co-editor of the school newspaper and is on the yearbook staff. An overachiever with above average intelligence, Stacy sees herself as a leader and is often frustrated by things which do not go "her way." She feels she is capable of learning no matter the teaching method, but admits that, although she found cooperative learning a worry for her at first, she prefers it over traditional teaching now: "The first time it [team learning] bothered me especially when I heard we were going to have our grades averaged together. I was worried that, you know, someone wasn't gonna study." She admits though that positive peer pressure used by the group she was with to get everyone to study worked: "...when it all came out, we had a hundred, so I was happy."

Although she was aware that groups were not homogeneously teamed, she did admit some frustration with members of her group that she felt were "lazy". "I know

there are people who don't catch on to things as easily as others, and I felt frustration when I knew they were being lazy. But as we went on, they weren't lazy any more, because they realized that we [the better performers] weren't going to make the grade for them. They were going to have to get in and do it too."

She also was a little surprised when people she had thought of as "poor or average students", ones whom she had known for years, would speak up in a group situation when they would not in a traditional setting. "Some of those people were really quiet when we started the group, like...as we went along through, they'd say "That's not right, I know that's not right...because I didn't read that." And they'd argue with us, so we'd have to look it up and a couple of times they were right. We found that everyone is wrong once in awhile...even the smart kids."

She feels that too often, especially in a traditional setting, students are too quick to "buy" a teacher's explanation: "...the teacher has gone through college and everyone thinks, yeah, they must be right. They went through college and they know this stuff. But its not that way in the group. We'd make each other look it up [the answer] and prove we were right."

Stacy, who sees herself as a leader, was not threatened by the new role the teacher played in the classroom with cooperative learning teams. "I don't see that as a hindrance. I was used to the teacher doing all the talking and everything, but in groups you have to look for yourself and you're learning it better that way because you...look deeper into it [the subject]...[I felt] that we could keep our interpretations because in literature for example no one knows what that writer was really thinking when he wrote...We all had our different opinions...not just the teacher's."

She also sees a difference in herself now that she has returned to a traditional classroom style after having been in cooperative learning: "In traditional, you know, I never felt like I could reach over and ask someone...hey, I don't understand...like you could, well, you could ask the teacher, but if she didn't explain it the way that you could understand, you know, then you still couldn't understand and apply it...but, with your friends, they can explain it on a level where you can understand...they're the same age and everything...Now, after cooperative learning I realize that it's okay to go and ask people. It's not cheating. I don't feel I have to do everything by myself."

Stacy continues to do well in her classes. She admits that she misses the contact with her peers now that she is again in a traditional setting and also recognizes: "...that there were plenty [peers] who made a lot of improvement in English."...and continue to do so because they have decided that they can do it, and their attitudes have changed. But, she had no difficulty returning to the teacher-stimulus approach.

Interview #4 - Lynne

Lynne is an extremely gifted student. She was allowed to skip her freshman year and take advanced courses in order to graduate early. She comes from a very stable home. Her mother is a secondary English teacher and librarian, and although her parents are divorced, Lynne seems unaffected by the break-up since she was very young when it occurred and her mother is extremely devoted to both Lynne and her older sister.

Far more mature than her fifteen years, Lynne has never had difficulty in

school, and although very popular with her peers, prefers to work independently in the classroom. "I prefer to work alone and form my own opinions. If I don't understand, I can always ask the teacher for his opinion...the teacher is after all an authority on the subject. And I get too impatient in group work. The teacher is more readily available and more willing to help in a traditional setting." Lynne felt that in cooperative groups: "...you don't learn to think as much independently, I don't think."

She also saw a difficulty in what she saw as "grouping the wrong people together and the higher students getting used." She went on to say that the independence of the top student is threatened when the group is constructed "wrongly". "...that's the way I feel, because when just everyone has input, then you don't have the chance to do things how you want them done."

She felt that at times there was value in cooperative team-learning. "There were times when it was something that could be discussed in a group and you could see what others thought about it and you could maybe change your own opinion. Or if you didn't know what your opinion was, you could get input from everyone." She also said that the best place for cooperative learning was outside the classroom: "...study groups outside the classroom are used. Kids will find the smart kids to study with, studying for tests together, so it doesn't really matter...I felt like when the groups were done the way they were done in the classroom that some people got a free ride."

Lynne remarked that her biggest frustrations came in group learning when "you can't make others see your point. They have to accept it or you argue forever or you just give up." She also said that she could accept a blending of the two teaching methods, both cooperative learning and traditional teaching.

Although she preferred the traditional approach, she saw improvement in some of her slower classmates and felt that out of fairness cooperative learning should be used at times during the year but certainly not every day. She enjoyed forming her own opinions on things and did not want to have to explain them to those with whom she felt "wrongly" grouped.

Interview #5 - Susan

Susan is a very quiet, soft spoken young lady, the youngest of three. She has two sisters who are quite a bit older than she. Susan has a normal IQ, but is a very low performer. She is extremely shy and rarely speaks with anyone. She has few close friends and is pretty much a loner.

Although her grades improved when in cooperative learning groups, she has not maintained that improvement since returning to a traditional learning approach. "I liked cooperative learning. It was a lot better for me. My grades came up a whole lot...we got in groups and we helped each other." Part of her explanation for grade improvement she recalls was that she was more apt to ask questions in the group. "I never would ask the teacher to explain something. I would just try to figure it out myself. It's just too embarrassing to ask something in front of the whole class...I didn't like sitting in rows either. When you were in a group you felt like friends. We all helped each other."

She admits that she doesn't like the formality involved in traditional classroom settings. "I understood better when I felt like I had the right to talk. I really wanted to study because I didn't want to let them [the group] down...I just can't get myself to

do it this year."

Although Susan admits that she can work independently when she wants to, she felt more motivation to do the assignments when she was sharing what she was doing with others. She admitted that she had made some attempt to form a group outside the classroom, she abandoned that idea when it was apparent that living in the country made it difficult to get together with people on a regular basis. The study group was abandoned. She simply ended with: "If I could choose, I would choose cooperative learning. It helped me a lot."

Summary of what was found

Based on the findings of both the opinion poll and the student interviews, the researcher concluded that cooperative learning is the preferred methodology among the students polled and interviewed. In addition, the lower performers who participated in the interviews felt more motivated in group situations.

The surprising answers concerning cooperative learning as a viable substitute for traditional teaching came from the average performers and the top performers on the opinion poll. A preference for cooperative learning is clearly shown. Survey questions #24 and #25 provide a basis for this conclusion. These students indicated that they had no trouble learning regardless of which methodology is used, but preferred cooperative learning teams.

The lower performing students, both in the interviews and on the poll, indicated a preference for cooperative learning, but with more involvement from the classroom teacher. In addition, this researcher must conclude based upon the evidence presented

in both the interviews and the opinion poll, that cooperative learning teams create greater active involvement by all students. and can be a useful method by which to reach a greater number of students.

All children, if given a chance, have the ability to discover that which is best within themselves. Cooperative learning can give them that chance.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As a poet once said of his craft, "Real poetry doesn't say anything; it just ticks off the possibilities. Opens all the doors. [The reader] can walk through any one that suits [him]." (Morrison, 1988) Perhaps an analogy can be made here concerning the crafts of teaching and learning. Perhaps the teacher should see himself or herself as the key to those doors of possibility. Children do bring an enormous amount of knowledge with them into the classrooms, but when they sit passively with all that knowledge locked inside and are rarely encouraged to share what they already know so that they can make sense of new materials, then only one door is open to them: the door of reactive passivity. And this door, when gone through, offers little in the way of freedom and choice, for there is nothing but another door to go through - straight ahead - and it is labeled "Sameness". How wonderful it would be if a ring filled with keys were handed to the students, and the teacher were to say, "Here are your possibilities - door #1, door #2, door #3, and so on and so on, and one more - marked ` unknown'. Choose whichever you wish. Be prepared to get "Zonked" every now and then, but take the risk."

Traditional teaching structure offers very little risk. The student follows the

teacher through his or her particular door. Tests are taken; homework is done; and some students pass through. But what about those students who cannot get the teacher's key to turn the lock? What about those students who get "stuck" in the door frame? Or miss the door completely and walk into the wall?

Conclusions Based On Findings

The researcher must conclude based on the findings in both the survey and the interviews that students want some control over their own learning structure.

Youth is construed as having a private language, but if adults, as Eisner (1991) says, will really listen, youth will speak in intelligible terms. All those youths with whom this researcher conversed spoke loudly and clearly: "We know you teachers care; we know that what you are saying is important - but let us speak and think for ourselves, too. Let us have some say in how our academic world should be structured. Let us talk among ourselves and reach conclusions. Do not feel the need, teachers, for questions that not only demand closure, but also call for a repetition of what you think. Please allow us our opinions, too."

Cooperative learning-teams based on the data used in this paper and explained in Chapter IV may be the answer to that plea for autonomy. While traditional teaching helps students to learn through extrinsic means, true cooperation among peers as well as student/teacher leads to trust and the beginning of intrinsic value rewards. Children are so attuned to one another that peer tutoring coupled with positive interdependence can do nothing but help especially when new material is introduced. New knowledge can still be added to the old knowledge brought by each student to

the group without interfering with individual construction.

Impart Of The Study In Terms Of What Was Learned

The impact of this study in the researcher's opinion is one of significance. Children do have strong opinions concerning their own academic environment. They spend the majority of their first eighteen years in the classroom and they want some say in how this time is spent, especially during adolescence.

The fact that the majority in all three groups polled in the survey realize the need for a decent education shows that they care about their future and what goes on in the classroom which may affect it. Although there were some students who said that students would learn only if they wanted to regardless of what method was used, all three groups preferred the learning-teams, and the key words seem to be "fun" and "opinion". William Glasser (1986) says that fun is a priority for school. It is after all a social "scene" first; but having one's own opinion and a chance to voice it was a priority, too. Most of the students did not feel that enough opportunities are given in a traditionally structured classroom which allowed for student ideas and input.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Limitations Of The Study

The strengths provided by the research found in this paper are notable. Traditional teaching methodology is passive. The students who were interviewed favored methodology which allowed them to speak their own opinions without fear of being singled out in a classroom full of students with all eyes riveted on them. In small groups, once an atmosphere of comfort was in place, that fear was alleviated.

Students felt they were on common ground even though the groupings were done heterogeneously.

Students represented in the low to average performance groups, stated on the survey, that they strongly agreed that cooperative grouping was the best way to learn. Many who had never understood English grammar, for instance, say now that for the first time they understood and their grades reflect it today. Many students who failed or performed poorly in English under traditional teaching methodology saw their grades improve by a letter grade or more with cooperative learning groups.

It also must be noted that there are weaknesses and limitations in the research findings which must be reported if integrity and objectivity are to be maintained. The primary weakness in this investigation is the lack of any real scientific inquiry. Subjectivity in any research, if not presented carefully, can lead to the conclusion that the research is merely opinion and therefore biased. The general research designs chosen to reach conclusions --a student opinion poll and student interviews -- were used to formulate answers to the research questions posed. Therefore, the reader may see this as limiting since no teachers, no parents, no administrators, etc. were polled or interviewed, and construe this as a weakness in the findings.

Implications For Future Research Studies

The previous paragraphs emphasize the value of student opinion coupled with their own experience in school. Educators must learn to listen to what students have to say. The research is not the intent to suggest a complete replacement for traditional methodology. Instead, the intent was to question its usefulness for <u>all</u> students.

Further investigation, in this researcher's opinion is warranted to see if a marriage between the two methodologies might not be feasible. This study found that the high performers and some average performers felt that it made no difference to them which methodology was used - they would learn anyway. However, it made a big difference, especially to the low performers.

Summary

It has been the intent of the researcher from the outset of this investigation to present a study of the ineffectiveness of traditional teaching methodology in today's schools. Traditional methodology alone does not hold true to the democratic ideal of offering a free and equal education to every American citizen through high school. However, coupled with cooperative learning groups where students feel they have some input into what they are being taught as well as coming away with the feeling that their opinion counts, then perhaps that democratic ideal will have a better chance at becoming real. According to Glasser (1986), each of us wants to feel that he/she belongs, has some power, has a chance at freedom, and has some fun.

The researcher has concluded based on the findings in the data that proactive involvement in the classroom is not only wanted, but is almost demanded by today's students. Traditional methodology by itself is not answering that demand. Cooperative learning groups, however, may do just that. With this in mind, the researcher recommends further study concerning the rationale which continues to support traditional methodology as the only way to teach despite continued evidence to the contrary.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

October 14, 1991

To: Ms. Debra Riddle
               Chairperson
               English Department
               Caney Valley High School

From: Sheila K. Warwick

Re: Student Opinion Survey

Dear Ms. Riddle:

I am writing to request permission from you to allow me to conduct a student survey in your junior and senior English classes. I am particularly interested in those students who have had experience with the cooperative learning methodology.

May I make an appointment to conduct this at your and your students earliest convenience? I plan to use the results as part of research for my master's thesis.

Any cooperation in this matter will be gratefully appreciated.

Thanking you in advance.

Respectfully yours,

Sheila K. Warwick
Master's candidate
Oklahoma State University

SKW/bmh

October 14, 1991

To: Mrs. Debra Core
             English Department
             Caney Valley High School

From: Sheila K. Warwick

Re: Student Opinion Survey

Dear Mrs. Core:

I am writing to gain permission to conduct a student survey among your tenth and eleventh grade English students. I plan to use the results as part of my Master's Thesis.

May I hear from you at your earliest convenience?

Respectfully yours,

Sheila K. Warwick
Master's candidate
Oklahoma State University

SKW/bmh

November 10, 1991

To: Mr. Holly Ward
            Principal
            Caney Valley High School

From: Sheila K. Warwick

Re: Student Opinion Survey

Dear Mr. Ward:

I am writing to request that I might be allowed to conduct a survey among the students who were involved in cooperative learning last year under my guidance as part of the research I am using in writing my Master's Thesis. I have already gained permission from Ms. Debra Riddle whose English students will be those surveyed.

I will be most grateful for any cooperation you are able to give me in regards to this matter.

Thanking you in advance.

Respectfully,

Sheila K. Warwick
Master's candidate
Oklahoma State University

SKW/bmh

November 10, 1991

To: Mr. Ben Brown
             Guidance Counselor
             Caney Valley High School

From: Sheila K. Warwick

Re: Student Opinion Survey

Dear Mr. Brown:

I am currently writing a Master's Thesis. I have received permission from Ms. Debra Riddle and Mrs. Debra Core to use a survey with their English students. However, I need to ask your help. If you are willing to see me, I will explain the nature of the survey in person.

May I hear from you at your earliest convenience?

Sincerely yours,

Sheila K. Warwick
Master's candidate
Oklahoma State University

SKW/bmh

APPENDIX B

INSTRUMENT

STUDENT OPINION POLL

Student Opinion Survey for Master's Thesis

To: Junior and Sophomore Students

From: Sheila K. Warwick

Subject: Student Opinion Survey

The purpose of this survey is to help me know how you feel about school in general. There are no right or wrong answers. Be very honest. Your answers will be used as part of a chapter in my Master's Thesis, but your name will not be used. If you don't understand the question, please ask about it. Circle your answer in the appropriate column.

Mark only one letter per question.

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The teachers try hard when I have a problem to help me work it out.	A	B	C	D
2. My teachers do a good job in teaching basic skills (reading, grammar, etc.)	A	B	C	D
3. I have time to practice and use the basic skills I have learned.	A	B	C	D
4. I understand that what I learn in the classroom has meaning in my life outside the classroom.	A	B	C	D
5. The behavior of the students in this class is generally OK.	A	B	C	D

6.	The teacher encourages us to get help from classmates if we don't understand something.	A	B	C	D
7.	I am encouraged to ask questions of the teacher if I don't understand something.	A	B	C	D
8.	I understand better if the teacher explains the subject to me.	A	B	C	D
9.	I understand better when a friend or another classmate explains something to me.	A	B	C	D
10.	My teacher tells me when I am performing well.	A	B	C	D
11.	I tell my teachers when they are going a good job.	A	B	C	D
12.	I am learning things from my teachers that I should be taught for real life experiences.	A	B	C	D
13.	I understand why the subject-matter is being taught (poetry, short story, essay, history, math, etc.) and how it relates to my every day life outside the class room.	A	B	C	D

14. I know the goals   A   B   C   D
or plans used by
faculty to present
quality education
at school to help in
real life situations.

15. The teachers really   A   B   C   D
care about the
students and try to get
to know them personally.

16. Students have some   A   B   C   D
say about what goes
on in the classroom
(what is taught; how
it is taught).

17. I involve my parents   A   B   C   D
in the things which I
learn in school each day.

18. I take the lessons   A   B   C   D
learned in the
classroom and use
them in everyday life.

19. What I am being   A   B   C   D
taught makes sense to
me in regards to
everyday life outside
the classroom.

20. I go to school because   A   B   C   D
I want to, not because
I have to.

21. I set aside regular   A   B   C   D
time every day or night
for homework.

22. My parents know what   A   B   C   D
I am doing in school
(what subjects I am
enrolled in and how
I am performing in
them).

23. My parents don't see any reason to come to school unless I get in trouble or get poor grades.

    A B   C   D

24. Traditional teaching (lectures, taking notes, study questions, tests, sitting in rows) is the best way for me to learn.

    A B   C   D

25. Group learning (discussion in small groups sharing answers, studying for tests together), is the best way for me to learn.

    A   B   C   D

26. I feel more comfortable when I work on my own.

    A   B   C   D

27. Group learning lets average or below average students have a "free ride" at the smarter students expense.

    A   B   C   D

28. Slower students or students who have difficulty in a subject can benefit more in group learning.

    A   B   C   D

29. Group learning helps students make sense of life outside the classroom by teaming them with people they might otherwise not have a chance to get to know.

    A   B   C   D

30.	It doesn't make any	A	B	C	D
	difference whether group
	learning or traditional
	learning is used in a
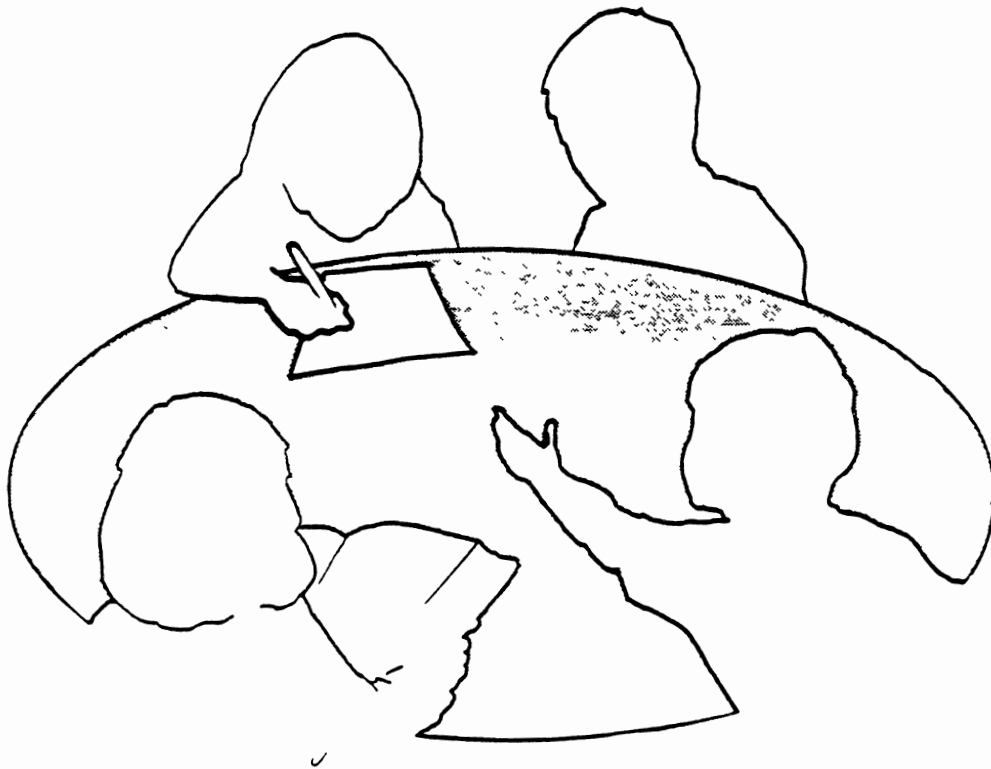	classroom. Students do
	only what they want to do
	anyway.

Adapted from Keating, Barbara, Mercedes Pickering, Bonnie Slack, Judith White, A Guide To Positive Discipline, (p. 59-62; 99-102).

APPENDIX C

COOPERATIVE LEARNING SAMPLE

Learning to Cooperate-Cooperating to Learn

Oklahoma State Department of Education
Gerald E. Hoeltzel, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

IDEAS FOR SUCCESSFUL COOPERATIVE GROUPS

1. Students need to be grouped as randomly as possible. Try for heterogeneous groupings even within a class of students who have been homogeneously placed together based upon ability level.

2. Occasionally, try to create some sense of competition among the groups.

3. Each group should complete a carefully structured task which results in a product.

4. There is the obvious need for students within each group to share materials, resources, and ideas.

5. Students stay on task more readily as the teacher imposes the challenge of time limits.

6. The individual is to be held accountable, but there should be group rewards and or recognition for everyone in the group which "wins." There are no "losers."

7. The teacher serves as a valuable resource, facilitator, and observer who can truly monitor both individual and group work, circulating through the groups, recognizing groups that are working well and working with groups that are having trouble either academically or cooperatively.

8. Positive interdependence in working toward mutual goals helps students to improve their interpersonal as well as individual skills.

9. Don't intervene in groups any more than necessary. Let them work out problems with minimal assistance.

10. Closure opportunities abound as group members are called upon to identify critical attributes, justify selections, and defend conclusions.

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Jigsaw Technique

Dividing the academic tasks among the group members, who each do one part of the assignment, is one way to develop responsibility and promote interdependence. This is the way it works

1   Each person reads his/her own section

2   Same sections meet together in an expert group to discuss the section and plan how to teach teammates

3   All "experts" go back to their original groups and teach the work to the others.

Grouping for Jigsaw
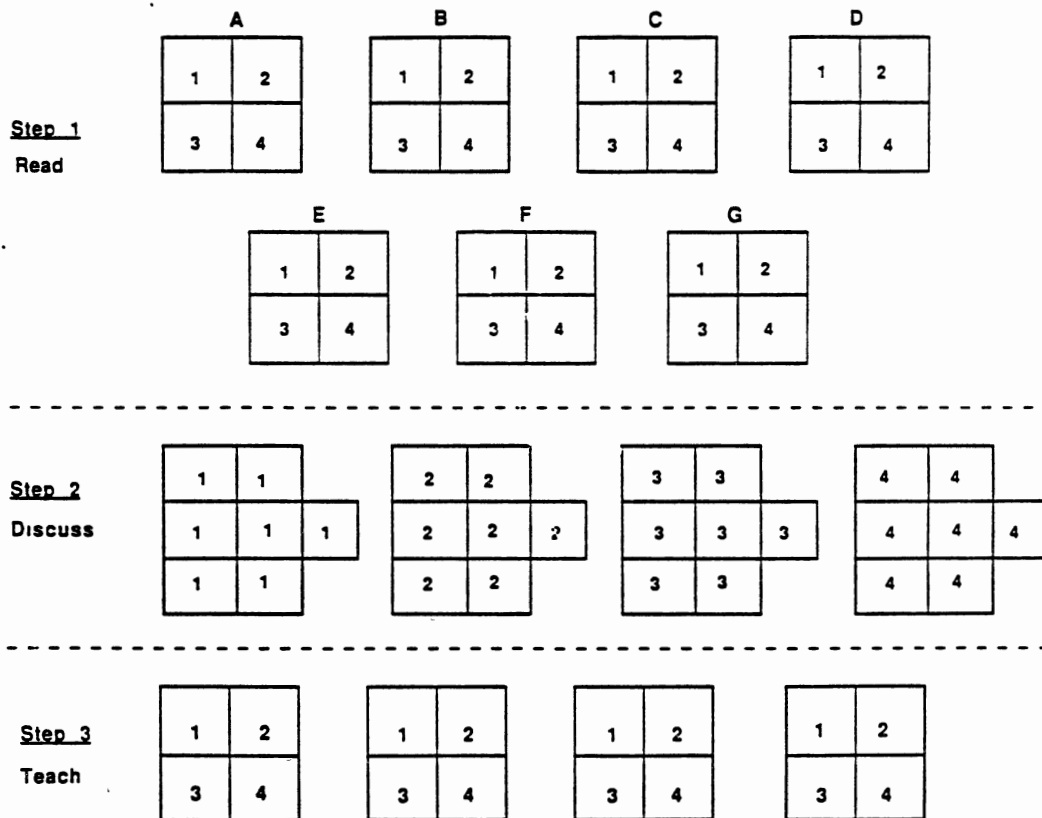
VITA

Sheila K. Warwick

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: AN INQUIRY INTO A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE REACTIVE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical: Married for twenty-five years to William E. Warwick, a manufacturer's and industrial sales representative and co-owner of Arrow Industrial Marketing in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Three children, Matthew, 22, a senior at Oklahoma State University majoring in Business; Meredith, 20, a sophomore at Northern Oklahoma College at Tonkawa majoring in Banking and Finance; and Amanda, 13, eighth grade at Caney Valley Mid-High, Ramona, Oklahoma.

Education: Bachelor's Degree in Education; elementary education and secondary language arts with minors in journalism, speech, sociology and anthropology, 1966, Pittsburgh State University, Pittsburgh, Kansas; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1992.

Professional Experience: Twenty-three years experience in public school instruction at Caney Valley School District I-18, Ramona/Ochelata, Oklahoma. Four years experience in first, second, and fifth grades. Nineteen years in secondary language arts with experience in eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade grammar, world literature, American literature, British literature, speech, drama, debate, creative writing, journalism, newspaper, French, Spanish, and German-by-Satellite.