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COOPERATIVE TEACHING

A

LOOK TO THE FUTURE

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In recent years, the trend in educational systems has changed considerably in many respects. One of the greatest changes can be seen in the organizational pattern of the elementary school. The current trend in Grades 1 - 6 all over the United States is away from the traditional, or self-contained, classroom toward a more departmentalized approach-- the Cooperative Teaching program.

Many factors over the past two decades have contributed strongly to this change. One was the weak science and mathematics backgrounds that were uncovered in high school graduates who served in World War II. Another was the widespread criticism of American schools for being "soft" and "frill-laden" that rose in the wake of the Russian launch of Sputnik in 1957. A third and equally important factor was the increasing awareness on the part of educators of the limited leadership opportunities for career teachers. These influences all seemed to highlight the weaknesses of the self-contained classroom and added impetus to the amount of cooperative, or collaborative, activity among teachers, particularly in the areas directly connected with classroom teaching.

There are many forms of Cooperative Teaching, but all fall into five basic patterns: Theoretical (Hierarchical), Departmentalization, Multi-age Grouping, Nongrading, and a

subgrouping of several less formal patterns developed to meet the special needs of the school or area.

Broadly speaking, Cooperative Teaching finds teachers routinely exchanging pupils to share unique staff competencies; grouping by curriculum areas or by pupil experience; having responsibilities for specific or total aspects of the curriculum; involving lay assistants, and varying combinations of all of these and other arrangements.

The Cooperative Teaching trend has also had a definite effect on mechanical aids to teaching, as well as on the physical plant itself. Since most of the types of patterns involve varying sizes of class groups, increased emphasis is placed on more sophisticated equipment and more flexible school buildings which allow for individual study needs as well as large group instruction.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly the extent of the Cooperative Teaching program in this country. However, the overwhelming majority of reports from pilot projects and observations from individual teachers and principals involved have been positive and optimistic. All signposts point to the fact that Cooperative Teaching will be one of the outstanding organizational patterns in education tomorrow.