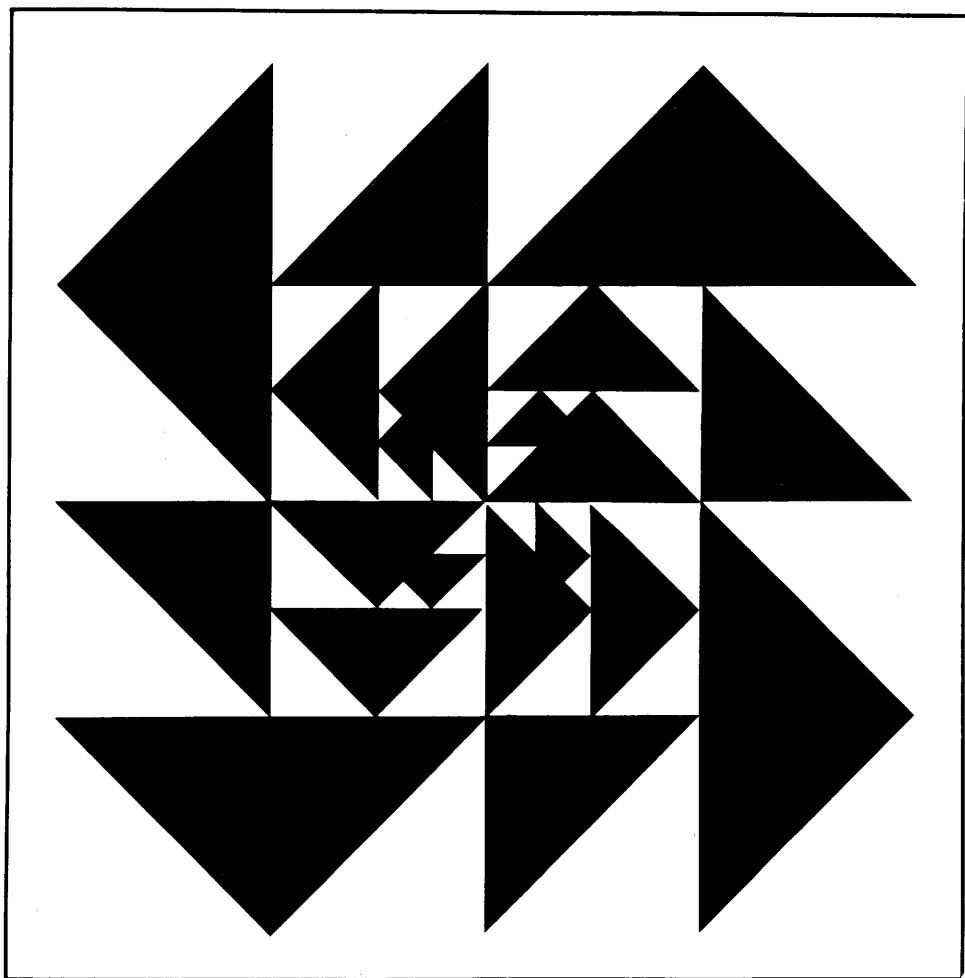


NEW DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

*College-School
Collaboration:
Appraising the Major
Approaches*

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The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute demonstrates that the gap often presumed to exist between university faculty and school teachers can be bridged by building an intensive, long-term collaboration to focus on subjects deemed most important by teachers for strengthening their own teaching.

Empowering Teachers as Colleagues: The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute

James R. Vivian

In the Carnegie Report on high school, E. L. Boyer called for greater emphasis on subject matter in the initial preparation of the teacher and for “a planned continuing education program . . . [as] part of every teacher’s professional life” (Boyer, 1983, p. 178). As Boyer later wrote in commenting on the numerous education studies and reports released in 1983, “We are beginning to see that whatever is wrong with America’s public schools cannot be fixed without the help of those teachers already in the classrooms. Most of them will be there for years to come, and teachers must be viewed as part of the solution, not as part of the problem” (Boyer, 1984, p. 526).

The State of Teacher Preparation

The needs of teachers in our public schools are compelling. As is the case nationally, a high percentage of teachers in New Haven have minimal formal preparation in their subjects. Only 58.8 percent of New Haven secondary school teachers in the humanities and 36 percent of

secondary school teachers in mathematics and the sciences majored in college or graduate school in the subjects they are teaching. Moreover, because scholarship in these fields is constantly changing, even if a high proportion of teachers had majored in the subjects they teach, they would still need to stay abreast of the developments in their fields.

The present state of teacher preparation in the humanities and the sciences will not be readily improved as a result of new teachers entering the profession. In 1981 nationwide, only 61.9 percent of newly graduated teachers in the arts and humanities and only 43.7 percent of newly graduated teachers in the sciences and mathematics were certified or eligible for certification in the fields they were currently teaching (National Center for Education Statistics, 1983, p. 206). There are already well-publicized shortages of qualified teachers in some subjects and in some areas of the country, even though the National Center for Education Statistics projects that the total demand nationally for secondary school teachers will continue to decline through 1988 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1984). These shortages may well become more widespread and severe at the secondary level as the children of the "baby boomlet," who began this year to increase total elementary school enrollment, begin in the mid-1990s to enter secondary schools (McCarthy, 1984).

In New Haven the current rate of teacher turnover is only about 2 percent. In so stable a teaching force many individuals are reassigned to teach subjects they either have not taught recently, or have never taught before. Furthermore, even in times of higher turnover of teachers, teaching assignments—and therefore teachers' needs for further preparation and new classroom materials—change frequently in response to the shifting priorities of schools, which are so influenced by social and political change.

In short, to strengthen teaching in public schools we must provide for the on-going preparation of individuals already in, and now entering, the profession.

A Microcosm of Urban Education

The demographic characteristics of the New Haven Public Schools mirror urban public education in the United States. In terms of the proportion of the population living below the federally established poverty line, New Haven is the seventh poorest city in the nation. Of the students in New Haven's public secondary schools, more than 60 percent come from families receiving public assistance. The percentage of minority students enrolled in New Haven's public schools is higher than thirty-nine of forty-six major urban school districts surveyed recently. At 83

percent (mostly Black and Hispanic), the rate of minority student enrollment is approximately the same as in Chicago, and higher than in Baltimore, Miami, Philadelphia, Birmingham, Cleveland, and St. Louis (National School Boards Association, 1983). Nationally, the percentage of Black and Hispanic students entering the ninth grade who do not graduate is about twice as great as the proportion of White students who fail to complete high school (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1985). In New Haven, 45 percent of individuals entering the ninth grade do not graduate.

As A. Y. Bailey, Vice-President for Academic Affairs of the College Board, points out, "since this demographic pattern [in New Haven] will become increasingly characteristic of public school enrollment throughout the United States, the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute has chosen, in a sense, to wrestle with the nation's educational future" (Vivian, 1985, p. vii).

A Vested Interest

As Yale President Giamatti has said, "it is profoundly in our self-interest to have coherent, well-taught, well-thought-out curricula" in our local schools and in secondary schools throughout the country. The Institute is important to Yale, in terms of those of its own students coming from New Haven schools, and also in terms of what faculty members who lead Institute seminars gain from the program. They increase their knowledge about public schools and therefore about the educational background of a majority of their own students. Many faculty members also assert that their experience with the Institute has influenced their own teaching and scholarship.

In the absence of a school or department of education, the Institute serves, in effect, as a center for faculty from throughout the institution who care deeply about public education and wish to have a practical, constructive involvement. The Institute draws its faculty from numerous departments of both Yale College and the Graduate School and from the Schools of Architecture, Art, Divinity, Engineering, Forestry and Environmental Studies, Law, and Medicine.

The Institute is also of unquestioned value with respect to the university's relationship with New Haven. In 1984 the University Council on Priorities and Planning wrote: "Yale's principal mission is education. Thus, it seems only natural that Yale concentrate its community efforts upon helping the local public schools meet the enormous challenge of preparing a significantly poor and undereducated population to compete successfully in America's increasingly technical job market" (Council on Priorities and Planning, 1984, pp. 26-27).

The relationship between the university and the schools must be both prominent and permanent within any viable larger relationship between Yale and New Haven; and, of the many ways Yale might aid New Haven, none is more logical than a program that shares Yale's educational resources with the schools. Because of changing student needs, changing objectives set by the school system and each level of government, and changing scholarship, school curricula undergo constant revision. Because of Yale's strength in the academic disciplines, further preparing teachers in the subjects they teach, and assisting teachers to develop curricula and to keep abreast of changes in their fields are the ways that Yale can most readily assist the schools. The intent of the Institute is not, then, to create new resources at Yale; rather, it is to make available in a planned way our existing strength, that is, to expand and to institutionalize the work of university faculty members with their colleagues in the schools.

Governing Principles

The Teachers Institute was established in 1978 as a joint program of Yale University and the New Haven Public Schools, designed to strengthen teaching and thereby to improve student learning in the humanities and the sciences in the community's middle and high schools. Four principles guide the program and constitute much of its distinctiveness. First, teachers of students at different levels can and must interact as colleagues to address the common problems of teaching their disciplines. Second, teacher leadership is crucial in efforts to revitalize public education. Third, teaching is central to the educational process, and teacher-developed materials are essential for student learning, particularly in urban school districts such as New Haven's. Fourth, university-school collaboration must be long-term if it is to be truly effective.

Collegiality. Each year about eighty New Haven school teachers, or almost 25 percent of all secondary teachers in the humanities and the sciences, become Fellows of the Institute to work as colleagues with Yale faculty members on topics the teachers themselves have identified. The Institute is organized to foster collegiality. Through the Institute, teachers become full members of the Yale community and are listed in the university directory of faculty and staff. This has symbolic meaning in recognizing them as colleagues, and practical value in making the human and physical resources of the university accessible to them. Teachers who complete the program successfully receive an honorarium, as well as certification of their course of study, if they are pursuing an advanced degree.

The Institute's demanding five-month program of talks and seminars incorporates the fellows' preparation of new curricular materials that they and other teachers will use in the coming school year. The materials

fellows write are compiled into a volume for each seminar and distributed to all New Haven teachers who might use them. Seminar members promote widespread use of these materials by presenting workshops for other teachers during the school year.

A number of the university's most distinguished faculty members have given talks and led seminars in the program. The talks are intended to stimulate thinking and discussion and to point up interdisciplinary relationships in scholarship and teaching. The seminars, which are not regular courses, have the related and equally important purposes of increasing fellows' background and developing new curricular materials on the seminar subjects. As a group, fellows study the seminar subject generally by discussing common readings; individually, each fellow selects a more limited aspect of the subject, and researches and develops it in depth for classroom use. Each seminar must balance these complementary, but in some ways distinct, activities.

Teacher Leadership. In every New Haven middle and high school, teachers serve as representatives of their colleagues in planning and organizing the program. A second group of teachers, Institute Coordinators, coordinates the work of the School Representatives, oversees the conduct of the program, and also has major responsibility for long-range planning, program evaluation, and national dissemination.

Each fall, the school representatives canvass the teachers in their schools to determine the subjects that prospective fellows would like the Institute to treat. The Institute then circulates descriptions of seminars that address teachers' interests, and the institute coordinators, after several meetings with the representatives, ultimately select which seminars will be offered. In effect, New Haven teachers determine the subject matter for the program each year. In applying to the Institute, teachers describe curriculum unit topics on which they propose to work and the relationship of these topics both to Institute seminars and to courses they will teach in the coming school year. In this way, the seminar leaders can tailor the readings and discussions of the seminars to fellows' specific interests and teaching needs.

Long-Term Collaboration. The objective of the Teachers Institute is annually to involve as many school teachers as possible and to offer a range of seminar subjects that span the humanities and the sciences, so that the program can address school curricula, and thus students' education. More than 200 individual teachers have completed the program successfully from one to eight times, and 57 Yale faculty members have given Institute talks or led one or more seminars. Since 1978, the Institute has offered 51 different seminars in the arts and humanities, the social sciences, mathematics, and the physical and life sciences.

In the humanities, Institute offerings have included studies of a particular genre of literature, thematic approaches to literature, seminars on the teaching of writing, and interdisciplinary approaches to literature and history. Additional seminars have examined state and local history, and have focused on recent American, British, or Latin American history. The Institute has also offered several seminars on material culture and architecture. In the social sciences, Institute seminars have explored themes in American adolescence and the American family, often approaching these topics from historical and cross-cultural perspectives. Through various Institute seminars, from architecture to medical imaging, teachers have worked on applications of math, and some seminars have concentrated on math, including statistics. In the sciences, the Institute's work has taken a strongly interdisciplinary approach. Several seminars related study of the physical environment to human biology and human history; others also integrated the physical and life sciences and incorporated advanced medical technology. Through these Institute seminars, fellows have developed more than 430 individual curriculum units for use in school courses.

Curriculum Development. The Institute's approach differs from conventional modes of curriculum development. Classroom teachers, who best know their students needs, work collegially and intensively with Yale faculty members, who are leading scholars in their fields. The Institute does not develop curricula on certain topics only because they are important in terms of recent scholarship; rather, it brings this current knowledge of a field to the assistance of teachers in the areas they identify as their main concerns. The Institute involves no "curriculum experts" in the usual sense, who would themselves prepare new materials, train teachers in short-term workshops to use these materials, and then expect the materials to significantly improve classroom teaching. Instead, the Institute demonstrates that long-term collaboration between school teachers and university scholars can produce teacher generated curriculum materials of high quality pertinent to student needs, and can have a real influence on teaching and learning in the schools.

What fellows write, then, is not "curriculum" in the usual sense. They are not developing content and skill objectives for each course and grade level, nor are they preparing day-by-day lesson plans for their courses. Institute units also differ from traditional curricula in form; they are not composed mainly of lists and outlines of topics to be covered. Rather, teachers research and write in prose on a manageable topic within the seminar subject and describe strategies for introducing that topic in their own teaching.

By writing a curriculum unit, teachers think formally about the

ways in which what they are learning can be applied in their own teaching. We emphasize that the Institute experience must have direct bearing on their own classes. This balance between academic preparation and practical, classroom application—as well as the depth and duration of our local collaborative relationship—are central features of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute.

Finance

The cost of the Institute stems from our belief that the program is, for university and school participants, a vital professional activity for which they should be remunerated accordingly. Yale and New Haven schools together support a major share of the total cost of the program. A considerable portion of the remaining need has been met through strong support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. We have been pleased also to receive operating funds from numerous foundations and corporations—including more than fifty local businesses which see our efforts to improve the public schools as important to the economic development of our city and region.

In 1982, after five years of developing the Teachers Institute as a model of university-school collaboration, Yale and the schools decided to seek a \$4 million endowment to give the program a secure future. The present endowment campaign underscores our deep belief in the long-term significance of the Teachers Institute to the university and to our community's public schools. It also represents our determination to demonstrate that effective collaborative programs can be not only developed, but also sustained.

Evaluation

Our evaluation practices thus far have included four principal activities: (1) review by outside consultants; (2) written evaluation by all participants; (3) surveys of curriculum unit use; (4) and a system-wide analysis of the program using lengthy questionnaires with many responses that are quantifiable. The results of these evaluations offer real encouragement that collaborative programs can assist our schools in specific ways.

Consultants. The annual evaluations by outside consultants have been particularly gratifying. In his report in 1981, E.L. Boyer wrote: "The impact of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute far exceeded my expectations. . . Rarely does [school-college collaboration] get to the heart of the matter—helping teachers and advancing the quality of education. The Yale-New Haven teacher project is a dramatic exception to this rule."

T. R. Sizer wrote in his report in 1983:

I share the view of my predecessor “visitors” that yours is a remarkable program, for its clear and useful focus, for its simplicity and—above all else—for the atmosphere of constructive collegiality between Yale and New Haven teachers that has been created . . . The arguments for the current scale are powerful. All too few school “reform” efforts get the scale right; almost universally they are too ambitious.

N. C. Francis evaluated the program in 1984. He wrote in his report:

[The] experience and current presence [of the Teachers Institute] as a cooperative venture in and of itself argues for the absolute need for it to continue to be an example of how these difficult change ventures between colleges and universities and schools can be developed and nurtured. Its efforts have inestimable value for a number of local school districts, colleges and universities, all of which are talking about the need to work together, but are uncertain about how and where to start.

District-Wide Study. A comprehensive analysis of the program in 1982 showed that the Institute has significantly increased teachers’ knowledge of their disciplines, raised their morale, heightened their expectations of their students’ ability to learn, and has in turn improved student learning. About half of the participating teachers reported that the Institute contributed to their decision to continue teaching in our public schools. With respect to the future, only 11 percent of fellows said they did not intend to participate again in the Institute. Eighty percent of teachers who had not been fellows said they would take part, or would consider participating, in the future. This confirms our belief that the Institute will continue annually to attract first-time participants together with former fellows on a recurring basis.

Plans. Over the next three years, the Institute will conduct a series of studies on the ways in which university-school collaboration can strengthen teaching and learning in public schools. Specifically, with the advice and assistance of our national Advisory Committee composed of distinguished educators and philanthropists, we will further investigate the bearing of the Teachers Institute on the preparation, effectiveness, morale, and retention of public school teachers.

Recommendations

The Department of Education recently surveyed over 9,300 school districts nationwide for existing partnerships. Of the 46,000 partnerships they identified, only 5.2 percent are partnerships involving colleges and

universities (United States Department of Education, 1985). First, then, we must work not only to sustain the national movement for partnerships in education, but also to increase the participation of colleges and universities within the movement.

There is, in my view, no more important recommendation in the Carnegie Foundation Special Report on school and college (Maeroff, 1983) than the one that calls for universities and schools to develop genuine partnerships based on the needs of schools as determined by their principals and teachers. Both aspects of this recommendation are essential: not only that universities and schools work together, but especially that those of us in higher education encourage our colleagues in schools to show us the ways we can marshal our resources to address their needs.

From our experience in New Haven, I would offer the following guidelines for the successful implementation of the Carnegie recommendation.

Definitions. "Collaboration" is a term currently used to describe quite varied activities. I mean by the term something specific. Collaboration arises from a recognition of mutual interest between school and college—between city and college—that must become more widespread if we are to improve our public schools. Within a partnership of institutions there should be a coequal relationship of colleagues, a volunteer association of individuals who choose to work together, of allies in league to improve our schools. An equal importance must be attached to what each partner brings to the relationship. The aim is to work together without everybody changing place.

Resources. Because institutional and other resources are never adequate, an early step in establishing a collaborative program is to assess the resources that can be made available to meet the needs of schools, and then to apply these resources in an intensive way where the need is greatest. Institutional support must come from both sides of the partnership; tangible and highly visible evidence of such commitment is essential. Participants should be compensated as generously as possible, in order to make their collaboration both demanding and professionally important.

Aims. We especially need to encourage partnerships between schools and colleges and universities that concentrate on teaching and on the continuing engagement of teachers with their fields. Cooperative efforts should insist on a direct application in school classrooms, and not merely assume that their work together will somehow improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

Limitations. A tendency in establishing collaborative programs—as in school reform efforts generally—is to be too ambitious. Programs will succeed only if they have well-defined and manageable goals; they should avoid making impossible claims.

Evaluation. Precisely because collaborative projects can achieve only limited, though important, results, participants must be confident that their efforts are worthwhile. An on-going evaluation process is therefore integral to a program's design and should be used perennially to refine both goals and activities. Because collaborative programs are often, unfortunately, seen as nontraditional—because they may not be regarded as central to the mission of either institutional partner—they have a special need to provide sound evidence of their results.

Teacher Leadership. The most successful projects may well begin small, investing real authority in teacher leadership and developing organically based on the needs teachers identify. In that way, programs are not guided by preconceptions, but grow from their own local experience. Efforts at school improvement will not succeed without teacher leadership. In this country we have too long held teachers responsible for the condition of our schools without giving them responsibility—empowering them—to improve our schools.

Duration. For these reasons, and for the benefits to be lasting, effective collaborative programs must be long-term.

Finally, an observation: In universities we assume that on-going scholarship is indispensable to good teaching. The Teachers Institute demonstrates the similar value to school teachers of on-going study and writing about their discipline. Through a collegial relationship with teachers from the university, this continuing engagement with their subjects becomes part of school teachers' professional lives.

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James R. Vivian has developed and directed the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute since its inception in 1977. In 1983 he organized the Yale Conference on the role of colleges and universities in strengthening teaching in public schools, which was attended by chief state school officers and college and university presidents and chancellors from thirty-eight states.