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The Worcester Alternative School : a study in the development of an educational innovation.

John E. Bierwirth

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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THE WORCESTER ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL:
A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN
EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

A Dissertation Presented

by

John E. Bierwirth, II

Submitted to the Graduate School
of the University of Massachusetts in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1973

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A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN
EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

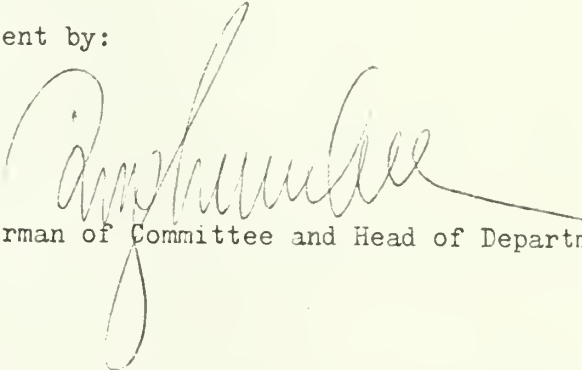
A Dissertation

by

John E. Bierwirth, II

Approved as to style and content by:

Dwight W. Allen


(Chairman of Committee and Head of Department)

Robert A. Mackin

(Member)



Dee G. Appley

(Member)



September 1973

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to:

All those who shared in the excitement, pain and joy of the Worcester Alternative School.

And in particular to:

Debby

without whom this would not have been possible for her help, patience, encouragement, support and love

Ann Lieberman

for her personal friendship and for her commitment to excellence

Dwight Allen

for his excitement, vitality, challenge, encouragement and most importantly, his friendship

Bob Mackin

for his personal and professional comradeship

Dee Appley

for saving me in the nick of time

Mike Lehan

for just being alive and friendly

and to my mother and father

for their years of encouragement and support, for their interest and excitement in my work, and for all the love any two people can give.

The Worcester Alternative School: A Study in the Development
of an Educational Innovation (September, 1973)

John E. Bierwirth, II, B. A. Yale University

Directed by: Dr. Dwight Allen

This dissertation contains a description and analysis of the development of a public alternative high school in Worcester, Massachusetts from August, 1971 through June, 1973.

The Worcester Alternative School was initiated as a joint project of the National Alternative Schools Program (N. A. S. P.) at the University of Massachusetts and the Worcester Public Schools. It opened in April, 1972 with 55 students, grades 10-12 and 4 staff members as a planning school. The following September the school was expanded to 165 students, grades 9-12 and 8 staff members.

All students and staff members in the school were volunteers from throughout the city. The mandate of the school was to create and test out new ideas in curriculum, governance, structure, evaluation and staffing. As such it was to function as an alternative to the traditional high school education.

The dissertation is divided into four parts:

Part I—delineates the historical development of the school from the initial planning by N. A. S. P. and the Worcester school system through the end of the first full year of the school in June, 1973. Particular emphasis is placed on the staff dynamics and the development of an alternative structure and curriculum.

Part II—describes and analyzes the effects of the Alternative School on the school system, the students and the staff members.

Part III—presents a brief description of three case studies of change and an analysis of five key topics—the role of the Director from Worcester, the "unfreezing" process, planning, the role of N. A. S. P. and the University of Massachusetts and a comparison of the data from the school with several theoretical perspectives.

Part IV—presents several ideas on the problem of change, in education and the viability of alternative schools as a change strategy.

Some of the main conclusions of the dissertation are:

- 1) The Worcester Alternative School proved to be a viable mechanism for introducing change into the Worcester Public Schools.
- 2) The Worcester Alternative School was able to create an institution which was significantly different from the traditional schools in the areas of curriculum, governance, structure and evaluation.
- 3) Change in the Worcester Alternative School was a painful, confusing and somewhat chaotic process.

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INTRODUCTION

Public education in America has become a massive paradox. On one hand it is a success beyond the wildest dreams of fifty years ago. More students are being served by more teachers, with more money, books, materials and technological aids than ever before. Large departments of federal and state governments as well as major private foundations have focused generous amounts of money, time and expertise on various aspects of education.

Yet during the 1960's the range and scope of criticism increased manifold. Public education has long been under attack from critics such as Paul Goodman, but it was Charles Silberman, a seemingly moderate member of the education establishment who leveled one of the harshest blasts:

The public schools—those 'killers of the dream' to appropriate a phrase of Lillian Smith's—are the kind of institution one cannot really dislike until one gets to know them well. Because adults take the schools so much for granted, they fail to appreciate what grim, joyless places most American schools are, how oppressive and petty the rules by which they are governed, how intellectually sterile and esthetically barren the atmosphere, what an appalling lack of civility obtains on the part of teachers and principals, what contempt they unconsciously display for children as children.¹

In addition, many of the clients of public education have denounced its ability to serve their needs. Minority peoples have become increasingly frustrated in their attempts to obtain quality

¹Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 10.

education for their children. Schools have become torn with racial strife. Drugs have entered school life and created problems which few, if any, have been able to solve. Students are dropping out of schools at rather alarming rates. This kind of litany is prone to exaggeration, but the simple fact is that public education in the United States is in trouble. Large numbers of people are rapidly losing faith in it as an institution.

Educators have tried to stem this tide through change and innovation, but they have been largely unsuccessful. Some innovations failed because they were defective or were implemented improperly. Some others may have failed because the problems they were addressing may have been due to ills in the society that were beyond the ability of education to solve.

Innovations in education have focused on one or more of three areas—the curriculum, the organizational structure, or the teachers and administrators. Curriculum innovators have created innovations such as the P. S. S. C. physics and the new math. Innovators such as the human relations people have tended to focus on teachers and have proposed innovations such as T-grouping. Those who have seen defects in the organizational structure as important blocks to effective education have proposed ideas such as team teaching and differentiated staffing.

Each of these innovations has had some impact on education but none have had the weight to turn the course of public education. As a result, some people have despaired over the immediate future of public education and have left the system to create free schools. Alien

Graubard described the genesis of these schools in his book, Free the Children:

. . . over the past few years a small, but rapidly growing number of people have despaired over the possibility of substantial changes within the public school system within a reasonable time . . . So in keeping with a great American tradition of self-help, these few parents, students and teachers have decided that if you want good schools and you want them now, you'll have to do it yourself.¹

Paralleling the growth of free schools has been the growth of public alternative schools. While there are many similarities in both the style and content of free schools and public alternative schools, the roots of public alternative schools are very different than those described above.

Public alternative schools are created in the belief that change is possible within public school systems, that they are not beyond the point of possible redemption. Change can and must occur within the system where the vast majority of students and teachers are.

Alternative Schools

A public alternative school is defined as a public educational body which is significantly different from other public schools in the district in the areas of curriculum, governance, and/or staffing. Participation in the alternative school by both teachers and students must be voluntary for the most part.

Alternative schools are a relatively recent phenomenon; most are less than two years old. Yet, despite their youth and despite the very limited number of students and teachers involved, they have

¹ Allen Graubard, Free the Children (New York: Random House, 1972), p. VIII-IX.

been the focus of a great deal of attention. Whole issues of the Harvard Educational Review and the Phi Delta Kappan have been devoted to alternative schools. The 1970 White House Conference on Children recommended the creation of public alternative schools as one of its ten major recommendations in education.

Definitions of alternative schools often fall into the trap of defining particular kinds of alternatives. The concept of alternative schools does not imply a bias toward any one type of school, but refers to a method by which schools within a district are utilized, a method by which those people who are to utilize that school are chosen and a method by which those people are able to effect the policy and organization of that school.

The idea of alternative schools is to restructure education. Instead of essentially monolithic school systems with each school in the district being very much the same, schools would become voluntary assemblages of people working toward common, agreed upon educational goals. The aims from one school to another would depend primarily on the objectives and styles of those involved. Alternative schools would not be locked upon as specific models for education throughout the district. While they would have some effects beyond their own walls, their main purpose would be to serve the needs of their own clientel.

Alternative schools are based on the assumption that different people have different educational needs and that the function of a school is to serve the needs of its own clientel. It is also an

assumption that to try to be all things to all people usually results in failure of some sort. Alternative schools are set up in the belief that a wide variety of needs can be served within a school district, but not through school districts as they are currently structured. The goal of alternative schools is a school system composed of a wide variety of competing alternatives from which parents, students and teachers could choose.

Alternative schools are a change strategy that is both practical and possible. They attempt to avoid the need for consensus which has plagued so many educational innovations. If the assumption about differences in people is correct, then district-wide consensus on one particular educational idea is next to impossible. Alternative schools avoid the need for consensus by creating choice, saying that each group can have its own way without needing to impose its decision on others.

Significance of the Study

Between August, 1971 and June, 1973 a public alternative high school--The Worcester Alternative School--was initiated and developed in Worcester, Massachusetts. That school has not only provided a choice of a significantly different kind of education to 165 students and 7 teachers in the city, but it has also introduced a large number of ideas into the school system and had a major impact on education throughout the district.

The purpose of this study will be to describe and critically analyze the events, processes and effects of the Worcester Alternative

School in order to see whether an alternative school can be a viable and potentially replicable change strategy. If it can, what effects does it have, how does it develop, what kind of problems does it have?

Implications of the Study

The data, analysis and insights of this study are intended to be specific in that they apply to the creation of a particular alternative school in a particular city. However, this study has been pursued in the expectation that many of its findings will be generalizable to other situations in other cities.

It is also expected that the content of this study will be useful to both practitioners, since it describes and analyzes the actions, processes and effects of a replicable change effort and to change theorists, since it provides specific data on an organization undergoing rapid and major change.

Organization of the Dissertation

I have organized the dissertation as follows:

Part I—Contains six chapters describing key events, actions and processes in the development of the Worcester Alternative School from August, 1971 through June, 1973. The chapters are arranged chronologically and follow the development of several major issues and problems in the school as well as describe the development of an alternative curriculum and structure.

Part II—Contains one chapter delineating the innovations implemented in the school and three chapters describing and analyzing

the effects of the school on the school system, the students and the teachers.

Part III—Contains a brief summary of three case studies of change and an analysis of the development of the Worcester Alternative School and the process of change.

Part IV—Contains a short statement of several ideas generated by my experience in the Worcester Alternative School.

Methodology of the Study

This study is both a history, in that it attempts to delineate chronologically key events in the development of an institution, and a case study in that it attempts to critically analyze, make judgments and draw implications from a particular case of a more general phenomenon.

As an active participant in this situation—I was Co-Director of the Alternative School from February, 1972 to June, 1973—I was an eyewitness to most of the events covered. The methodology of this study is similar to Warren Bennis' description of his years at the State University of New York at Buffalo, The Leaning Ivory Tower. It is a personal history rather than either a memoir or a research study.

I have attempted to portray and interpret the major factors in the development of the school. I have no doubt that others occupying different positions inside or outside the school or holding different philosophical biases would have focused on different issues or possibly arrived at different conclusions. Readers will have to judge my biases for themselves.

As much as possible I have tried to retell the events from the notes and statements made at the time. Since my viewpoint was obviously influenced by my formal position and by my feelings on several issues, I have presented several viewpoints of certain pertinent events.

Data Sources

The primary source of data for this dissertation was obtained from a diary of observations I kept throughout the period from February, 1972 to April, 1973. Whenever possible I tried to record the actions and words of the participants as well as my own thoughts. Interviews conducted by myself and others, all documents used in the school, a film made of the school in spring, 1972 (including footage which was not used) and data collected through various evaluation methodologies used in the school served as further data for the dissertation.

In the text I have footnoted all material derived from outside sources. Any unfootnoted material can be assumed to be derived from my own observations.

Limitations of the Study

In addition to the already mentioned limitations imposed by the involvement of the writer there is another factor limiting the study. The period of time under consideration is a relatively short period of time. The long range effects of the Alternative School on the school system, the teachers and the students may be different than those delineated in the study. It also remains to be seen whether the Alternative School can keep its momentum or whether it will begin to

stagnate. If it does slow down, there is a question whether the school will still have the same effects on teachers and students. Many of the effects of the school are very tentative. It is difficult to tell what ideas in the school system will come to fruition in the next few years and what ideas will be rejected.

Chronological Summary

- 1971 July - August--Initial contacts between the National Alternative Schools Program and the Worcester Public Schools
- August 18-20--Mt. Snow Retreat (N. A. S. P. and Worcester)
- October--Kennebunkport Retreat, creation of the initial proposal
- November 4--Worcester School Committee approves proposal and budget for the Worcester Alternative School
- 1972 January--renegotiation of the proposal by Worcester, N. A. S. P. and the University of Massachusetts School of Education Deans
- February--the naming of the co-directors
- March 2--the Worcester School Committee rejects the co-directorship and names the Worcester Co-Director as sole Director of the school
- March 2-30--preliminary planning by the Directors
- selection of site
 - recruitment and selection of students
 - recruitment and selection of staff
- March 27-30--3 day staff planning session
- March 31--opening day; speeches by the Superintendent and the Dean of the School of Education

- April 3-13--initial two weeks of school
- April 13-24--school vacation
- April 26--first meeting with parents
- approval of mandate of school by the Assistant Superintendent for Education
- May 4--appearance of the Dean of the School of Education before the Worcester School Committee
- May --approval of the expansion of the school to 165 students, grades 9-12
- May - June--recruitment of new staff and students
- June 7--staff blow-up
- June 26--July 21--staff summer planning session
- September--reopening of the school
- first eight days of school run as special sessions
 - Marathon
- December--approval of a full budget for the Worcester Alternative School by the School Committee

PART I

Part I is a narrative history of the development of the Alternative School from July, 1971 through June, 1973. I will attempt to give the reader a feeling for the school as well as describe the key events and processes in its initiation and growth as an organization.

Chapter I—describes the initial development of the school from the funding of the National Alternative Schools Program in July, 1971 through the naming of the co-directors in February, 1972.

Chapter II—focuses on the decisions, plans and activities of the co-directors prior to the opening of the school.

Chapter III—describes the first two weeks of school in April.

Chapter IV—describes the events between April 23 and the end of the school year.

Chapter V—delineates the process, issues and problems of the staff summer planning session.

Chapter VI—provides an overview of the first full year of the school from September, 1972 through June, 1973.

C H A P T E R I

Many crucial aspects and problems of the Worcester Alternative School can be traced to the nature and process of its early development. Chapter I explains how two organizations--the National Alternative Schools Program and the Worcester Public Schools--came together and decided to co-sponsor a public alternative school.

The National Alternative Schools Program

In July, 1971 the federal government funded a three-year project at the University of Massachusetts School of Education called the National Alternative Schools Program (N. A. S. P.). The purpose of the program was to help start, aid and promote alternative forms of education within the public sector. It was felt that public alternative schools could be a significant vehicle for change in education and that a program such as N. A. S. P. could be an effective agent and catalyst in that process.

During the first few months of the project it was decided that the immediate and primary focus of N. A. S. P. for the first year should be the development of alternative schools in cooperative arrangements with three different school districts across the country. Each of these projects was intended to be a major program which would have an impact far beyond the limited number of students and teachers involved directly.

The first alternative school was started in Marion, Massachusetts, beginning in September, 1971 with 50 students, grades K-12. Another

K-12 alternative school was developed in Pasadena, California. It opened its doors in January, 1972 after a period of negotiation and planning during the fall.

The third site selected was Worcester, Massachusetts. N. A. S. P. wanted an urban site in Massachusetts and Worcester was both close and had worked with the School of Education on several other projects. A Career Opportunities Program had started several years earlier and Worcester had been the site of a Teachers Corps training program.

Worcester¹

Worcester is a city of 200,000 people located in central Massachusetts. Although the downtown section has recently experienced a boom in new office buildings and stores, it is still largely a factory town. Predominantly middle and lower middle class white it has been only marginally affected by the migration northward of black and Puerto Rican peoples, who still compose less than 10% of the population. Many of the residents are second generation immigrants who have only recently gained real political and economic power. In general the population of Worcester has remained very stable for a city of its size, with relatively little movement in or out of the city in recent years.

Worcester Public Schools

In the second quarter of the century the public school system

¹Data for this section was obtained primarily from documents published by the Worcester Public Schools and from interviews with central office administrators.

While this dissertation focuses on one city, most of the problems and errors described seem to be generic to school systems willing to undertake major change efforts.

underwent a period of stagnation, paralleling a stagnation experienced by the city as a whole. In the last several years the present Superintendent has moved to modernize education. A number of projects have been undertaken lately, mostly on the elementary level. Two large community schools were built and both are using the open classroom/integrated day approach. Several other schools are experimenting with a continuous progress program. The one new high school principal has been able to start a number of innovative projects within his own walls. Strides were made in the areas of in-service training and adult education. Also, money has been poured into new buildings with the result that buildings in the district tend to be very old or relatively new.

Teachers and administrators in the system are to a large degree home grown, particularly at the highest levels. A large percentage grew up in Worcester and went to the Worcester Public Schools themselves. A very large proportion went to local colleges and universities for their bachelor's and/or graduate degrees. The teacher turnover rate is extremely low and most administrators came up through the ranks rather than from outside. Since the appointment of the present superintendent there has been some effort to get younger blood to the top, though most of this has been concentrated in the central administration.

The student population in the public schools has remained at about 30,000 for the last 10 years. Roughly 25-30% of Worcester's students drop out of high school and a substantial number go to work immediately after graduation. Thirty-five per cent of the seniors graduating go to college and another 35% go to vocational and trade

schools. While the passions of the 1960's did not miss Worcester, the schools have been relatively quiet.

Worcester's Interest in Alternative Education

Several years before the Alternative School was first proposed a private alternative program called Dynamy was established in Worcester. Set up by an organization outside of Massachusetts, Dynamy's main function is to provide an alternative for students who have graduated from high school or prep school, but who do not want to work or go to college. Dynamy "interns" come to Worcester for one year, live together in one of several apartment houses owned by Dynamy and spend most of each day working in an internship. Each internship lasts two to twelve weeks and is designed to give students real involvement in some aspect of business, community affairs, politics, the courts, etc. In return for free labor individuals and organizations take interns and teach them or give them practical experience.

In its first two years Dynamy was able to make a substantial impact on many members of the community and on a few central office administrators in the public school system, but it had little or no effect on teachers or students in the system. One reason for this was that it cost approximately \$4,000 in tuition, room and board to be a Dynamy intern. Moreover, the staff and students attracted to the program were primarily from private schools.

Once Dynamy was fully operational, they moved to change this situation somewhat. Seminars in alternative education were held for public school teachers and in September, 1971 Dynamy took in a small

number of high school seniors as interns.

Simultaneously the Superintendent became interested in the development of the Parkway Program in Philadelphia and the METRO Program in Chicago. One of the founders of METRO was invited to do a feasibility study in Worcester (subsequently he became a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts School of Education). The Superintendent made two efforts to initiate planning for an alternative program but both were rejected by the Worcester School Committee.

Initial Contacts

When N. A. S. P. approached the Worcester school administration in July, 1971, both organizations had something to gain from the relationship. N. A. S. P. was looking for a site and Worcester wanted money, guidance and support in setting up an alternative school. Since there was a history of successful joint projects, it seemed like a natural marriage.

After several informal discussions between the Co-Directors of N. A. S. P. and the Superintendent and several other administrators in Worcester, a retreat was planned for August to discuss the idea of an alternative school on a much broader scale with a much larger and more diverse group of people.

The Mt. Snow Retreat

While much of what happened between August, 1971 and the following February is relatively insignificant, the mood and the results of the retreats during the summer of 1971 help to explain many of the

future problems of the Worcester Alternative School.

The first retreat was held August 18, 19 and 20 at Mt. Snow, Vermont. There were three purposes to the meeting:

- 1) to acquaint everyone with the concept of alternative schools
- 2) to increase awareness of alternative schools through presentations by people from different alternative schools
- 3) to have people from Worcester discuss Worcester needs

Had these purposes been clearly understood by everyone involved and had they been put into perspective as only one initial step in the process of planning an alternative school, the retreat would have been a success. Many people from Worcester who had had little or no contact with the concept of alternative schools or with any kind of alternative model were exposed to a large number of ideas.

However, the retreat backfired. What could have been a good beginning to the process of creating and implementing an alternative school instead became a source of future problems. False and unrealistic expectations were raised about the planning process and about the Alternative School itself because people did not understand what was happening.

A statement made by the Superintendent on the last night of the retreat was both indicative of these unrealistic expectations and a major cause of them. He said, "we know what we are going to do, we just don't know how we are going to do it."¹ This optimistic statement

¹From interview with Co-Director of N. A. S. P.

reflected the enthusiasm of many present. There was a feeling that some new kind of wonder school was going to be created and that major steps had been made toward its creation during the retreat.

However, this optimism was actually misplaced. The alternative school was not intended to be a wonder school, and Worcester and N. A. S. P. were no closer to creating an alternative school at the end of the retreat than they had been at the beginning. The retreat was neither intended to be nor in fact did it become a time in which decisions were made and yet many people began to assume and act as though it had.

N. A. S. P. must bear much of the blame for this. They set up the retreat and they should have had a clear idea of both alternative schools and of the process by which one was planned. Since they did not, the meeting became diffused, the concept of alternative schools became confused and the planning process became muddled.

One of the reasons that the meeting became diffused was the fact that there were 48 people present. The twenty-six from Worcester were supposed to represent administrators, teachers, parents, students and the community.¹ It proved difficult for N. A. S. P. to respond to so many people with such different levels of interest and knowledge.

¹One of the problems of the Alternative School stemming from the retreat was the composition of the Worcester group. Almost all had been handpicked by the Superintendent and many were the wives and children of central office administrators. While this is easily explained by the shortness of time and summer vacations, few of these people would be more than marginally involved in the Alternative School later. Thus the retreat failed to create a core working group which could become the foundation of an alternative school.

Another problem was the absence of the high school principals. While there were other groups who were not represented, this absence became particularly significant when the Alternative School was later restricted to high school students. The principals felt that the Alternative School was an invasion of their territory, rights and prerogatives.

A greater problem was the group of 15 people from the University of Massachusetts—eight from N. A. S. P. and seven from elsewhere. Among them were a wide variety of philosophies of education and representatives of a number of very different alternatives—from Harlem Prep in New York City to METRO, Chicago to the Alternative Learning Project in Providence, Rhode Island. While this was intended to enlarge the number of possibilities that people could contemplate, it had the effect of diffusing the vision of alternative schools. Worcester people were not thinking of a system of alternatives but were looking for a single model. When N. A. S. P. thought it was enlarging everyone's vision by having presentations on several alternative schools, it was actually confusing the issue.

The larger philosophical and pedagogical questions posed by the concept of alternative schools were not broached. The idea of choice in education was widely praised, but it was not followed through in discussion. Why alternatives should be set up and how they could affect a system were never discussed.

The ideas, concepts and visions provided by the University were additionally hindered by an outside consulting firm which facilitated the retreat. They added some ideas of their own to an already confused situation. They facilitated several sessions at which Worcester people brainstormed the problem and assets of Worcester. All this generated a lot of information which was only marginally related to alternative schools, but which gave many the impression that this new school would be able to use Worcester's assets to solve all of Worcester's problems.

The Alternative School was intended to be an alternative in style and content to the traditional schools. However, the effect of the process facilitated by the consulting firm combined with the enthusiasm of alternative school practitioners for their alternatives created a feeling that the Alternative School could become a new model wonder school.

All this would have been merely misguided had N. A. S. P. made provision for a process by which the participants could have sifted through all of the information and ideas that had been generated by the previous activities. However, N. A. S. P. had not done so and thus the participants were unable to link their thoughts to a concrete planning process.

Many crucial questions such as the number of students, the number and type of staff, the curriculum and even the planning process itself had been raised, but never systematically discussed. Though it had never been clear whether the participants were discussing possibilities or actually defining the school, toward the end of the retreat many people began to talk and act as though some of these questions had been resolved. When the Superintendent made his statement, others agreed with him and a whole series of steps in the planning process was skipped. Many began to talk as though the basic outline of the Alternative School had already been decided. Since no formal decisions had been made that people could check their expectations against, people began to assume that their personal understanding of the Alternative School was the correct one. This created a large number of false and unreal expectations on the part of many individuals.

One would hardly have expected a clear and detailed blueprint for the planning and implementation of an alternative school out of an initial retreat, but one would expect that the participants would have left with a clear idea of where they were and what was facing them in the future. Not only did the participants at Mt. Snow have false and unrealistic expectations for the future, but they assumed that they were many steps farther ahead in the planning process than they were in fact. The enthusiasm of the moment, the blindness or the naivete of N. A. S. P., and the Superintendent's statement all combined to shut off discussion on the key questions concerning the Alternative School before they had even started.

The Kennebunkport Retreat

A second retreat was held several weeks later in Kennebunkport, Maine involving only a few key people from Worcester and N. A. S. P. Facilitated by the same consulting firm, the participants were supposed to follow up the discussions of the Mt. Snow retreat and to prepare a written agreement between the Worcester Public Schools and N. A. S. P. to jointly create an alternative school.

The retreat did not correct the faults of the Mt. Snow retreat or begin to talk about specific decisions on structure, staffing, student population, etc. In fact, it compounded these problems with new ones. How and why this happened will become clear later in this section.

The process of the meeting was to start with the list of problems relating to present Worcester schools that was generated at Mt. Snow

and then to develop an alternative school that would avoid or solve those problems. While useful this process had two negative effects. It defined the Alternative School in negative terms and it also continued the mistake made at the Mt. Snow retreat of thinking that the Alternative School was going to solve all of the problems of the district. The process did, however, create a proposal.

The Proposal

The proposal did not identify what model of an alternative school was going to be implemented. Instead it presented detailed descriptions (56 pages) of three very different alternative schools as an indication of the possibilities available. Those alternatives were the Parkway Program in Philadelphia, the METRO Program in Chicago, and the John Adams High School in Portland, Oregon. There was a one and one third page implementation plan and a tentative budget (see appendix A). There was no list or even a recognition of the crucial questions, such as model, size, staffing, etc., nor was there a process by which decisions could be made on these questions. However, the participants at the retreat did not seem concerned by their absence.

The Implementation Plan

The first item of the implementation plan read:

Representatives from the Worcester School Community and the University of Massachusetts School of Education will jointly discuss the creation, implementation and sustaining of an alternative school to serve students in the Worcester Community.¹

¹Worcester Alternative School proposal, p. 54.

That was something that certainly had to be done, but the proposal carried the words "already accomplished"¹ next to the item. The participants at Kennebunkport felt that those things had already been done, when in fact none of them had been done. There had been no conclusive discussions much less decisions made on any aspect of the Worcester Alternative School.

Since neither Worcester nor N. A. S. P. had a clear idea of a planning process, they did not know what they had to decide when. In addition they were willing to accept the statements of the Mt. Snow retreat without much questioning. They glossed over many crucial areas (staffing, structure, students, etc.) because they felt that decisions had already been made or did not have to be made at this point. They did not double check to see what those decisions were, or even whether they had been made.

Another reason that the participants at Kennebunkport glossed over crucial decisions was that they adopted the idea of a planning school. In a planning school the staff, students, and parents plan a school to suit their own needs while they are actually a part of it. A planning school is thus differentiated from a pilot school or demonstration school where planners create a model on paper and then insert students and teachers into the new system.

There were several sources of this idea. Several people in N. A. S. P. leaned heavily toward the idea of organic growth. Organic growth is simply the idea that institutions, procedures and systems

¹Ibid.

can grow naturally, organically, from the needs, interests and abilities of the particular group of people involved. There was a feeling among the participants that students, teachers and parents had had too little control over the design of educational institutions and they saw the idea of organic growth in the form of a planning school as one possible solution.

Upon adoption of the idea of the planning school, the participants at Kennebunkport decided that they did not have to define the parameters of the Alternative School but could leave them for those involved in the planning school to resolve for themselves later.

This was a gross misunderstanding of the idea of a planning school. For the proper functioning of a planning school a number of decisions had to be made at this stage. What aspects of the Alternative School was the planning school to plan? The structure? The curriculum? Staffing? Or was it to plan everything? The planning school needed a mandate telling it what it was to plan. It also needed a process by which it was going to make the necessary decisions.

To plan effectively the planning school needed to be free of some of the restrictions put on traditional schools in areas such as curriculum, governance, structure, evaluation, etc. This was necessary if the planning school was to create new ideas rather than be hemmed in by the traditional ways.

Most importantly the planning school needed an understanding on the part of others in the system as to what it intended to do. As stated previously, many people in Worcester had false or unrealistic

expectations of the Alternative School stemming from the Mt. Snow retreat. When they heard of the idea of a planning school they assumed that this school was going to plan the implementation of their particular vision of the Alternative School. Thus previous false expectations were compounded rather than cleared up. Even the participants at Kennebunkport had their own individual ideas of where the Alternative School would go, even while they were stating that it could go any number of different ways (e.g., the three models in the proposal).

Surprisingly the idea of the planning school was not mentioned in the proposal even though it was a basic premise of the implementation plan. Thus the idea of a planning school was not even in evidence for someone to question.

The Budget

While the vagueness and confusion of the planning section of the proposal were to cause future problems, the specific details of the budget were to cause problems as well. The budget (see appendix A) showed N. A. S. P. contributing \$39,000 in the first 6 months, \$60,000 in the first full year and \$82,000 in the second full year. Worcester was not scheduled to assume the full costs for the project until the beginning of the third school year.

For whatever reason, N. A. S. P. negotiators had violated both their own philosophy and what they were practically able to give. A basic premise of N. A. S. P. was that alternative schools should not cost school districts any more than it would cost them to educate students in traditional schools. It was expected that school systems should

contribute monies based on the same average per capita expenditure as that of the rest of the district. Yet in the budget drawn up in Worcester, the city's contribution was only 60% of the average per capita amount.

Moreover, N. A. S. P. was unrealistic in what it was pledging. N. A. S. P. had enough money for a deep operational involvement in the first year, but its long range plans called for involvement in additional projects around the country in the following years. These too would need money, yet N. A. S. P. was already committing itself to Worcester for even greater amounts of money in those years.

From the descriptions of the participants how this happened is unclear. No one seemed to have been particularly concerned at the time, but the budget was to cause a great amount of trouble later as the extent of the financial commitments became evident at the University.

The Student Population

In the early negotiations the idea of a K-12 alternative had been uppermost in many minds. However, by the end of the Kennebunkport retreat it had narrowed down to grades 10-12. Who proposed what and for what reasons is very difficult to tell from the stories of the participants, but it is less important than the feeling of uncertainty and mistrust that came out of this question. N. A. S. P. felt that the Worcester people were speaking out of both sides of their mouths--speaking for a K-12 alternative when they did not feel it was possible or were not interested. The greatest area of confusion concerned the feelings of the Superintendent who talked a great deal about student population but left everyone with very different ideas of what he had said.

The misunderstandings resulting from this question caused great bitterness, but they were typical of much of the interaction between N. A. S. P. and the city. Each felt more and more used and confused by the other side.

Initial Planning

On November 4, 1971 the Worcester School Committee approved the proposal by a 6-1 vote. The committee showed some interest in the project, but very little questioning took place at this time. Interestingly when the idea of a planning school was mentioned verbally at this time, it was accepted or at least not challenged.

In retrospect the vagueness of the proposal allowed many committee members to imagine the alternative school in terms of their own ideas. Many questions which should have been addressed at this time were left to be answered by those who would follow.

According to the implementation plan an operating committee was to assume the planning function until a Director could be chosen. A search and selection committee was to be formed to find that person and the planning school was due to open at the end of January.

However, many of the unresolved problems now began to have some effect. Neither the membership nor the mandate of the planning/operating committee had ever been certain, and both grew smaller and smaller as time went on. N. A. S. P. communications had been routed through the Superintendent or his assistants and thus the Superintendent had been able to control who did what. The Mt. Snow retreat had been an attempt to bring students, teachers, parents and community people into the

planning of the Alternative School, but it had had no lasting effect. Fewer and fewer people were left on the planning committee and its function became more and more pre-empted by the Superintendent. By mid November the only major function left to the planning committee was reviewing candidates for the position of Director.

Both N. A. S. P. and Worcester began to feel more and more used. People discovered that many understandings they thought were universal were not shared by others. Communications between N. A. S. P. and Worcester became less and less frequent and more and more bitter. Since no preliminary planning process had ever been laid out, there was no ready mechanism by which these disagreements could be resolved.

N. A. S. P. reacted by putting many concerns in a document entitled, "Criteria for Involvement of the Worcester Public Schools and the School of Education of the University of Massachusetts in the National Alternative Schools Program" (see appendix B). This document spelled out for the first time N. A. S. P.'s feeling on some specific items necessary for the proper planning, implementation and functioning of an alternative school. Several key items are worth mentioning in full:

The establishment of an alternative school must provide for freedom from traditional restraints.

Freedom from regular contractual terms--voluntary participation.

Planning group would be representative of students, parents, citizens, Worcester staff and School of Education staff.

Planning group should set February 1, 1972 as a target date for the actual opening of the Alternative School to allow for maximum student and staff involvement in the evolution of the Alternative School.

Curriculum—eliminating school system imposed and college entrance requirements.

Decision-making. The Alternative School governing committee would have similar representation and autonomy to the Planning Group.¹

On December 15, 1971 the Superintendent signed this document. However, there was no further discussion on the mandate of the Alternative School and thus it resolved nothing. Each of these items was open to a large number of interpretations and there were a great many questions it did not address, such as what kind of alternative school it was going to be.

Moreover, this document was never submitted to the School Committee or distributed to people in either the central administration or in the schools, though N. A. S. P. did not know this until February. Thus when the question of mandate began to plague the Alternative School in its early life, even the vague and limited mandate of this document was not common knowledge.

The Intervention of the School of Education Deans

In the middle of December the planning process came to a complete halt. The three finalists for the position of Director were being interviewed by several Deans of the School of Education to determine their acceptability. During the interview of the present Worcester Director, he referred to the financial arrangements that had been made. As soon as the scope of monetary involvement became clear, the interview halted and within a few days the rest of the planning process stopped.

The Deans of the School of Education were so disturbed by the arrangements that over the next month and a half the leadership of

N. A. S. P. was reshuffled and negotiations with Worcester were reopened. While relatively unsuccessful, the deans were able to obtain a verbal promise that the financial arrangements could be renegotiated during the process of the year and that Worcester instead of N. A. S. P. would pay for the two teachers during the first six months. It was also renegotiated that there would be a co-directorship--one from Worcester and one from the University of Massachusetts School of Education--instead of a single director.

The process of renegotiation was just as confusing as the previous discussions between the University and the city. Additionally confusing was the fact that those who were involved from the University were not to be involved at any point later. At one point several different Deans were negotiating with Worcester simultaneously though separately. None produced any clearer idea of the Alternative School.

One result was a great increase in the amount of mutual suspicion. Misunderstandings were compounded rather than cleared up. Moreover, the co-directorship allowed each party to leave many of its problems unresolved, hoping that its co-director would resolve them favorably later.

The Choosing of the Co-Directors

Worcester immediately named its co-director, a high school math teacher, who had been with the system 16 years. A highly respected teacher, he had served on numerous committees and organizations and was extremely well known and respected throughout the city. He had been invited to the Mt. Snow retreat by the Superintendent, who had

had him in mind for the job as early as that time.

The writer was chosen by the University of Massachusetts and in late February was escorted down to Worcester for questioning by what remained of the planning committee. After half an hour the writer was dismissed and for the next $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours there was a discussion which was so broken and hostile that little was discussed. Several Worcester administrators were continually excusing themselves to go to appointments so that only one quarter of the time was actual discussion. The University people assumed that this strategy was employed so that Worcester people could discuss the situation in private. Late in the afternoon both sides had agreed to the other's candidate.

The First Meeting of the Co-Directors

A few days later (late February) the two Co-Directors met almost clandestinely in the office of the Assistant to the Superintendent. After all the acrimony of the previous months their reaction to each other was anticlimactic in its friendliness.

The Assistant to the Superintendent felt that it would be improper for the Co-Directors to meet in public before the School Committee had approved the nominations. A few meetings were held in private with discussions limited largely to discovering each other personally and to sharing a few dreams about what the school could be.

The School Committee Meeting

The following week (March 2, 1972) the names were submitted to the School Committee as Co-Directors of the Worcester Alternative School. Since both salaries were to be paid by the National Alternative

Schools Program, it was only a matter of approving the titles. However, the debate over this question took nearly 2½ hours and the end result was that the Worcester Co-Director had been named sole Director and the writer was not acknowledged to exist by the School Committee.

This action was important because of the effects it was to have on the development of the Alternative School later in the spring. It was also indicative of the style of operation of the Superintendent. Since the School Committee meeting on November 4 when the original Alternative School proposal had been approved, there had been little or no communication between the Superintendent and the School Committee concerning the school. Additionally complicating matters was the fact that there had been a School Committee election in November and a couple of the new members were quite suspicious of the Superintendent.

It was apparent that the School Committee had not been informed of the renegotiation which took place with N. A. S. P. in January or of the "Criteria For Involvement" signed by the Superintendent. Some members of the committee were very disturbed by the changes, by the intrusion of the University personnel and by the co-directorship. The Superintendent was asked why a co-directorship was necessary, why the project had not started in January as originally planned and whether any other modifications had been made on the original proposal. The Superintendent said that a co-directorship had been set up to show that the Alternative School was a joint project, though he said he expected the Worcester Co-Director would be in charge. Under repeated questioning, he denied that there had been any other changes in the proposal,

in effect denying that Worcester had agreed to pick up the salaries of the two teachers in the first six months and that the whole financial package was to be renegotiated.

Several members of the School Committee attacked the University and the Teacher Corps project. They felt that the University had tried to subvert the school system and they demanded that all projects be under complete Worcester control. They wanted all people working in the system to be recognized through the School Committee and they saw no reason why a University person should be given equal status with a person from Worcester.

Accordingly, the School Committee gave the Worcester Director legal control over the school. However, their refusal to officially acknowledge the role of the writer contradicted their fears of people entering the district unrecognized.¹

During the discussion it was evident that most of the School Committee was extremely uninformed as to the nature and plans of the Worcester Alternative School. Moreover, it was apparent that the Superintendent was doing little to inform them either publicly or privately. Several strong supporters of the Alternative School on the School Committee had been both surprised and concerned by the evening's events.

At this point it was very evident how much the Superintendent had controlled the whole process since August, 1971. He had controlled

¹A vote to name the writer Assistant Director was defeated. After the vote the Superintendent informed them that the University would name the writer a Director anyway.

who was involved, who talked to whom and what the School Committee got to hear.

N. A. S. P. and the Worcester school system had succeeded in initiating a public alternative school. It had been created in the midst of much secrecy, misunderstanding, poor communications, mistrust, and minimal involvement. There had been little real planning or even appropriate arrangements made for that planning. A large number of false and unrealistic expectations had been raised, but the process, however flawed and confused, had created an alternative school.

CHAPTER II

In the few days following the School Committee meeting of March 2 a large number of major decisions were made by two people. Though not recognized as such at the time, these decisions were to have more effect on the Worcester Alternative School than any other decisions before or since. This chapter will attempt to delineate some of those decisions and the thoughts that led to them.

Meeting With the Superintendent

The day after the School Committee meeting the Directors met with the Superintendent. He was both reassuring and confusing. He guaranteed that the Worcester Alternative School would have a direct pipeline to him, rather than having to go through normal channels. He said that everything possible would be done to help get the Alternative School off the ground. He also reaffirmed the Criteria For Involvement document.

Yet, when asked his ideas about the school itself, the Superintendent became very vague. The Directors had been told to ask about a K-12 alternative, that he would be interested in the idea. He was interested, but the Directors were more confused than not about what his interests were. He mentioned METRO, Chicago, but it was not possible to tell what he did or did not like about the program. At no time did he mention any problems or parameters that the Alternative School would have to observe in its process of development.

The Directors Alone

While it was evident that a large number of people, both in Worcester and at the University had been involved in the Alternative School up to that point, it was equally evident that there was no group of individuals or even a single person who had been involved in the planning of the school itself in a deep or sustained fashion. Those most deeply involved had been concerned primarily with the nature of the agreement between N. A. S. P. and the city.

While the Directors had shared some of their dreams and general thoughts about education in the ten days since their first meeting, they had given little thought to specific plans or ideas. Now they discussed the options they saw as available and then they made decisions as to what course of action seemed to make the most sense. They made most of these decisions alone.

It was decided that the school should be started as soon as possible with full time staff and students. There was a very definite feeling that the whole project might be shut off if something did not happen soon. The School Committee was obviously displeased and frustrated over the progress of the school. There was a real question as to how much longer they would wait. The new members of the committee were becoming increasingly critical of the Superintendent and the Alternative School was a highly visible and potentially expensive

project.¹ The frustrations and bitterness of both the school administration and the University seemed so great that it seemed possible that one or the other might easily pull out of the project. The school had been due to start in January and already it was March. To delay the school any longer seemed to invite the possibility of someone cancelling the project on the basis that nothing had happened.

Many of the failures of the previous nine months created real problems. It was obvious that many people had very different expectations of the school, but that their understanding of previous decisions was such that they felt their view had been the one accepted. With the bitterness involved, to check out those different understandings seemed like a potential disaster. The discrepancies between the different expectations were so great, that to have made people aware of them, would probably have caused irreversible breaks, leading to the end of the project.² It seemed a far wiser and easier course to move forward than to correct the problems of the past.

The Directors felt that it was important to involve people in the process of the school as quickly and as deeply as possible. Starting the school full time would automatically mean that there would be

¹Although the Worcester Alternative School did not cost more to operate than the average per capita expenditure in the other schools, it was difficult to save money in the traditional schools due to the small number of students taken from each. Savings will be realized over a longer period of time, but this is difficult to explain and is very controversial. What was obvious and visible was that the Worcester Alternative School was going to spend money outside the budgets of the four traditional high schools and that the School Committee was going to pay for some or all of it.

²For example to have informed the School Committee of the real state of affairs, even if the Superintendent had allowed the Directors to do so, would certainly have led to their cancellation of the project.

students, teachers and parents involved. That would give the Alternative School a political backing that it did not have at that point. There were only two people who were guaranteed as defenders of the Alternative School, but to start the school would guarantee hundreds more.

With the press of time, alternative ways of involving people seemed much less practical. One alternative was a series of open planning meetings leading to the opening of the school in the summer or fall. This seemed too time consuming, considering the situation. Any part time involvement did not seem to be nearly as effective a strategy.¹

The Directors did not want to make many decisions on their own, but it was felt that making the decision to start the Alternative School would facilitate involvement, rather than hinder it. Since the first phase of the school was to be a planning school, it was felt that there would be ample opportunity for widespread involvement in the planning of the school after it opened.

It must be said too that the eagerness of the Directors to open the school weighed heavier than their fear of potential problems. It seemed both more exciting and sensible to move ahead.

¹The Directors had adopted Rensis Likert's model of unfreezing, change and refreezing. They wanted to unfreeze people (break old attitudes and behaviors) as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. While it was probable that this strategy would cause problems, the Directors felt that as long as students and teachers could keep one foot back in the traditional grooves that they would resist changing.

Plans to Open the School

Within days a time line was drawn up calling for the Worcester Alternative School to open its doors on April 3, 1972 with 50 students, 2 Directors, 2 teachers, 2 aides and a secretary. All would be involved in a full time planning effort.

The time line (see appendix C) was as crowded as possible. Within $3\frac{1}{2}$ weeks the Directors were to deliver brochures, recruit and select students, recruit and select staff, find a site and make all necessary arrangements for opening the school. In addition they would attempt to promote and explain the Alternative School to people in the schools and in the community, some of whom were already soured on the project. Little time was left for planning the school itself, but the Directors believed very strongly in the idea of the planning school and did not wish to have their plans preclude the planning of others.

A position paper written by one of the Co-Directors of N. A. S. P. and a curriculum specialist at the University of Massachusetts had persuaded the Directors of the importance of organic growth in a planning school. The participants would build a program by and for themselves. Based on their experience in schools that seemed like a very good idea, for neither of the Directors felt that schools were really designed for, or controlled by, students or teachers. Thus the Directors adopted both the idea of a planning school and the concept of organic growth—two ideas that had caused many problems since they had been mentioned at the Kennebunkport retreat.

This is not to suggest that the Directors gave no thought to planning the Alternative School, but rather to suggest their frame of

mind. It was this frame of mind which combined with the administrative inexperience of both Directors to produce a very weak structuring of the planning process.

The Superintendent did not object to starting so quickly or to going full time with students, but he suggested that the Alternative School use several teachers part time. The decision to go full time had been based on a desire to have everyone involved be fully committed to the project. In addition, the Directors felt that the time and emotional demands involved in the Alternative School would be too much for teachers still trying to keep part-time commitments in a traditional school.

The adoption of the full-time school and the Likert change model caused the Alternative School to be started earlier than it might have been otherwise. There was a 10-day vacation in the middle of April which the Directors felt could serve as a rest and recuperation period. The initial unfreezing phase would take a great deal of energy so the vacation would allow both staff and students a chance to recoup. For this reason the Alternative School was opened two weeks before the vacation.

The Breakdown of Certain Assumptions

In planning the opening of the school, the Directors counted on only three things which had been done in the previous nine months—the budget, the investigation of sites by the planning committee and the agreement between N. A. S. P. and the Superintendent freeing the Alternative School from "traditional restraints." During the $3\frac{1}{2}$ weeks

prior to the opening of the school, each of these was exposed as less than it appeared to be.

The first was the budget. While the proposal had been approved in November, the Directors had been told several different figures for the amounts voted by the Worcester School Committee. In trying to pin down the exact amount, no one seemed to know where the information could be found. However, in searching the School Committee minutes it was discovered that the amount allotted to the school had been cut in half on February 2, 1972. The School Committee had shown its displeasure over the progress of the Alternative School only one month earlier, though no one was willing or able to tell the Directors that fact. (It should be remembered also that this date was just after the January renegotiation when Worcester had promised N. A. S. P. to shoulder a larger percentage of the financial burden.)

The Directors also found that they had been misinformed about the site search efforts. Some work had been done, but nothing conclusive, so the Directors started over again. When a site was found in a downtown office building that was both inexpensive and suitable, the Superintendent was invited to inspect it. Two days later he stated that there had never been enough money to rent a site and that the Alternative School would have to take space in one of the buildings owned by the school department.

The Worcester Director had felt from the beginning that searching for sites was a waste of precious time and with this he felt that the Superintendent had betrayed him personally. As second choice the second floor of a semi-abandoned elementary school (the media

department for the city schools was on the first floor) was selected. But it was obvious that the Worcester Director was less than satisfied with the space.

The third agreement, concerning the mandate of the school, was the most important and it did not break until two days before the opening of the school. How that happened will be recounted later, but it is important to note that it had become nearly impossible to count on any promises made by the Superintendent.

The Recruitment and Selection of Students

Over a period of 10 days in early March the Directors spoke at all four high schools. They talked of their dreams, of the idea of a planning school, of redesigning education and of teachers, students and parents working together. Some of the audiences were large, others virtually non-existent.

Most students were excited and skeptical. You mean I can really do this? Are we really going to have this power? Some students were afraid of the risks involved, primarily in terms of college, but also sometimes just afraid of the unknown. For most the ramifications and possibilities of the Alternative School seemed too great to even begin to think about.

The scuttlebutt among students in the preceding months had been that the Alternative School was going to be limited to super-students. Only super bright, activist, independent students would be admitted. Interestingly the rumors among teachers and administrators were exactly the opposite—that it was going to be a program for dropouts and problem students.

The Directors emphasized that it was intended to be for anyone who thought it was right for them. To insure fairness in the selection process, a stratified lottery was proposed (see Appendix D). This way there would be no predetermination of the kinds of students who would enter the program. It was, however, ensured that those selected would be a rough cross-section of the adolescent population of the city as a whole. The student body was guaranteed to contain certain minimum percentages of various subpopulations:

10% minority

10% dropout

50% white

10% honor students

25% male

25% female

20% each grade level

15% each school

It was also promised that there would be no wild cards or any other exceptions to the process.

Many parents called the Worcester Director at night to find out more about the school. Most merely wanted to discover whether it was a legitimate, serious effort. Many were concerned about college and while the Directors could give them no assurances, they recounted the experiences of other alternative schools in this regard. The Worcester Director's experience and reputation in the city helped soothe the fears of many parents.

With 10 days to apply, no promises and no program, 192 students were able to convince their parents to give their written permission and sent in their applications. Out of these, 55 were chosen and the Alternative School had a student body. A large percentage were from the most prestigious of the four high schools (the one in which the Worcester Director had taught), but there were more than enough applicants to fill the quotas of the other schools.

Teacher Recruitment and Selection

Two teachers were selected from a group of 12 applicants interviewed by a committee composed of the two Directors, 2 students, the Assistant to the Superintendent and a parent. Several of the applicants were permanent substitutes looking for a more permanent teaching position, but the rest were regular teachers who were willing to drop their teaching duties in the middle of the year and throw their lot in with a completely experimental venture. While told that their positions in the traditional schools would remain unfilled for a year so that they could return if they had to or wanted to, these teachers were obviously risking their standing in the schools and their professional prestige by coming to the Alternative School.

One of the teachers was an obvious and unanimous choice. Besides a wide variety of teaching experiences, she had been able to set up some real alternatives in her traditional high school English classes. The other choice was much more difficult. Though the committee had stated its commitment to flexibility and personal strength in choosing candidates, the majority of the committee was

initially in favor of one of two men who had had more teaching experience than the other but who was much more rigid personally. The other candidate had the additional liability of being a French teacher, which was really not needed on a staff of four, though he had a wide variety of skills and had spent 3 years in the Peace Corps in Africa.

This was the first test as to whether the Alternative School would hire on the basis of years experience and certified teaching areas or whether it would move toward personal strengths, skills and interests. After much arguing, the former Peace Corpsman was selected.

Staff Development and Planning Period

On Thursday, March 24, the two teachers were notified of their selection (they taught their last traditional classes that Friday) and on Monday, March 27 the 2 Directors, the two teachers, an aide and a secretary assembled at a Boy Scout camp for the first of 3 days of meetings. Also present were two University of Massachusetts interns--one graduate and one undergraduate--and two consultants from the University. One was a group process facilitator, the other a newly joined member of N. A. S. P. who had had some previous experience in alternative schools. The students were due to arrive that Thursday and the planning school would begin on the following Monday.

The staff planning session started well. Everyone introduced themselves and the Directors explained the brief history of the project to that point. They explained the decisions they had made over the previous month and then set up four areas for discussion:

- 1) U Mass involvement
- 2) staff roles
- 3) decision making
- 4) student roles

From this the discussion was then supposed to turn to setting up some specific objectives for the first week of school. All of this was to be in the context of some discussion on educational philosophy and general objectives for the Alternative School.

As the discussion progressed over the three days it became more and more tense and unsettled. It became obvious that there were some very great differences in personal and educational philosophy involved. There were also very different feelings about the traditional schools. Many of the participants made negative comments about traditional schools in the course of discussion, comments that the Worcester Director often tried to rebut.

The worst problems seemed to arise over the process of decision making and what the mandate of the Alternative School was for the spring. For a month the writer had made the assumption that the staff and students would be free to plan and experiment. He had also assumed that the staff as a whole would take responsibility for the Alternative School. For the previous month this is what the Directors had talked about both publicly and privately and thus the expectations of the other staff members were similar to the writer's.

The Worcester Director became increasingly nervous. It was obvious to all that he was feeling a great deal of pressure. As the meetings progressed he began to take more and more of the responsibility for the school onto himself. It was not a question of power,

but of a feeling of responsibility for the success or failure of the project. Increasingly he voiced his fears of things that might happen, problems that might come up or dangers to watch for. At this time these fears seemed troublesome, but to be expected at the beginning of such a precarious venture.

On the second day the staff tried to move ahead and talk about what the Alternative School would do that spring and what it should become. In the middle of this discussion the planning process came to a complete halt.

The Worcester Director revealed that students would have to continue with the same five courses they had had for the previous three quarters of the school year. This possibility had never been mentioned by anyone previously. The understanding of the writer and the feelings of the two teachers up to this point was that the students coming to the Alternative School would be released from their previous commitments. Both students and teachers would be able to plan the school and test out in practice some experimental programs for the three-month period. Yet the Worcester Director's conception seemed little more than a glorified tutoring project. It certainly seemed to nullify the idea that the Alternative School had "freedom from traditional restraints."

In the midst of an extremely heated discussion as to where the Worcester Director had gotten his ideas, the Superintendent dropped in for a visit. As he had done on other occasions, the Superintendent obscured matters at the same time he was clarifying them. He said that while the Alternative School had to respect what the traditional

teachers had done during the previous three quarters of the year, that the Alternative School could give the final grade for each course at the end of the year and that within limits that the Alternative School could define its own experience during the spring. This seemed clear at the time, but it was to plague the Alternative School the rest of the spring.

More important was the fact that some very large seeds of distrust had been sown. Where had the Worcester Director gotten his ideas? Were they the Worcester Director's own feelings or had someone in authority in the school administration communicated them to him in private? Would this happen again? As will be seen, trust was never restored on the staff. Distrust exacerbated many problems, created others, and kept the staff from working as a unit.

Decision-Making

As the meetings went along it was also obvious that different staff members had very different ideas about authority. For such a small staff it was very stratified on a formal hierarchy. It had been the understanding of the writer that the staff would work on a group decision making model, but this model never got started. As the process observer commented later:

The process by which decisions were made never really became clear to me . . . It was certainly not by majority vote, and yet I hesitate to define it as consensus decision-making. Mainly, some issues were left unresolved and others were sort of accepted through an absence of prolonged protest.¹

How serious this problem was to be was not realized at the time. The question of how decisions would be made was left hanging and was

¹ Mary Eliza Smith, Observations, April, 1972.

never formally discussed.

Two other major areas of conflict were also left unresolved. The first area concerned the role of the University. As N. A. S. P. understood it, the Alternative School was to be a joint project. Consultants would come in from time to time, but there would also be a co-director and several interns involved in the day to day operation of the project. Although others did not realize it, the Worcester Director had a very different idea which he stated to a newspaper reporter on March 12, 1972:

They are the specialists. They will tell us how something can be done. We are the implementers. We should be able to determine whether a thing can be done with a student or not.¹

Though the University people did not realize it, they compounded the Worcester Director's misconception by their own actions. Since they were willing and eager to talk of their ideas before the group collectively, their input tended to dominate the discussion.

As the process consultant stated, the University input had the effect of "discouraging initiative, growth and a real sense of ownership by the staff members."² Combined with a growing bitterness and mistrust in the discussions, by the time the school was started on Monday, the University people had been left almost wholly responsible for the initiation of the school. Staff members were not silent for lack of knowledge but from a real sense of alienation from the planning process.

¹Worcester Gazette, March 12, 1972.

²Mary Eliza Smith, Observations, April 1972.

Though the University people saw themselves as individuals in one large group of people, the other staff members began to see two groups. This delineation was made most sharply in discussions over the use of jargon. In some cases it was a legitimate claim against the language of the University people, but it was apparent that much more was at stake when the former English teacher stated that she did not know what "homogeneous" grouping meant.

University people were frequently challenged as to their motives and ~~their~~ commitment to education. It was implied that their commitment could only be proven by how long they intended to remain in Worcester. The replies of the University people to these challenges became shorter and cooler each time.

The second area of conflict concerned the inability of the group to understand or allow for personal differences of behavior or opinion among its members. Major conflict was most often started by some individuals lack of adherence to group norms. Most frequently this occurred when the Worcester Director expressed his concerns about standards and grades and his feelings about traditional schools. Very quickly discussions became debates. Accusations prompted other accusations or extreme defensiveness.

The inability of the Worcester Director to work with the staff was compounded by his personal incapacity to feel comfortable in an environment with the potential for rapid change. Coupled with his feelings of responsibility, this incapacity determined and helped to intensify the Worcester Director's defensive behavior at the planning sessions. The Worcester Director was acting more and more like a

principal in his superficial actions. Playing less and less of a part in the planning, he was answering telephones, playing host to visitors and talking to reporters. Several times he was called back to the group by the other staff members, but this only caused growing amounts of acrimony on both sides.

The Alternative School had staff, students, a site and a mandate (although the mandate was vague and confused). All this had been done in less than one month, but the cost of such speed was now being seen in the confusion, acrimony and lack of trust on the staff. By the time the school opened, the staff had already divided into conflicting groups. The staff did not discuss differences of opinion or philosophy, but escalated them into sources of conflict.

The brief attempts at group planning had been sidetracked by personal conflict and by disputes over the mandate of the school. Moreover, the University-Worcester polarization was such that by the end of the planning session the Worcester people were ready to leave the responsibility for initiating the Alternative School to the University people.

CHAPTER III

After the first two weeks of the Alternative School ended, everyone took a very much needed vacation. There had been some attempts to discuss the overall philosophy and structure of the school, but most discussions were tedious and rather diffuse. Learning experiences were started or tentatively scheduled, but in many cases there was little thought or planning given to them. Some students were deeply involved in the school, while some others had simply stopped coming. The staff was holding itself together, but substantial discussions were becoming nearly impossible and most staff meetings had turned into long and often bitter debating sessions.

The First Days

It had started well. The staff and students had assembled for a few hours on Thursday (March 31) with staff members introducing themselves and answering a few questions. On Monday everyone had assembled to eat lunch and to hear speeches by the Superintendent and the Dean of the School of Education.

In the speech given by the Dean, he delineated his ideas of a planning school (that the School be free to plan and experiment for the spring) and asked the Superintendent if those were his notions as well, which the Superintendent did. The Dean also elaborated on certain

problems he saw in many traditional schools which he hoped the Alternative School would address. This excited most of the staff and students, but made the Worcester Director nervous and totally alienated the three high school principals who had come to the lunch and who sat grimacing with their arms folded in the corner of the room.

Starting Tuesday the Alternative School was left to itself to plan. The plans for these first few days of the school were suggested primarily by the University Co-Director and two other people from the University--one of whom was to leave at the end of the second week. Since the staff planning session, most of the other staff members had held a "wait and see" attitude and would neither suggest ideas nor take real responsibility for what was to happen. Possibly this was due to the extent and style of the University participation, but the acrimonious tone of the staff meetings and a feeling of helplessness on the part of the Worcester staff members probably had as much to do with it.

The plan that the University people came up with started with large and small group meetings focusing on the overall goals and objectives of the school. The University people wanted staff and students to rethink what education meant to them, what they would like education to be and how they thought a school could be designed to serve those objectives. Having come to some consensus on these general objectives, the staff and students were then to proceed with defining specific areas or procedures in the school in light of those objectives. For example, if shared decision making was a general objective, how should the governance structure be set up so as to achieve that objective? The University people felt that it was important that people proceed

from the general to the specific so that the organization of the Alternative School would reflect its philosophy. They felt that proceeding from the specific to the general often led to lack of cohesion or conflicting elements within the same organization. (If there was no general direction to the school, then everyone would take off in their own direction.)

Whether this process or modifications of it would have worked remains unknown. It was obviously unfamiliar to all those directly involved, both from Worcester and from the University and a very difficult process to guide, but its downfall came for another reason. Periodically one or more staff members would take actions which would frustrate, distort, or totally sabotage it. While some of these actions were probably conscious, others were not. The net result was that the process became confused and directionless and that very few general objectives or goals were talked about. For four days, the school was seemingly unable to stay in one direction for very long, often sidetracked into trivial issues.

Staff Meetings

Each day long staff meetings were held to discuss the events of the day and to plan for the next. Everyone recognized that the school was struggling but the staff would not coalesce to confront the situation as a group. The divisions between the University and the Worcester staff members became more severe. The University staff members who had run the meetings that day frequently accused other staff members of sabotaging their efforts or jumping on them when they made mistakes, rather than helping them. Worcester staff members in turn would accuse the

University people of doing a poor job or of excluding them from the process.

Plans for the following day would be left unresolved. Critics of the previous day's events would be unwilling to put forward suggestions of their own or to help improve the plans of others. The result was that each evening several members of the staff from the University would sit down and plan the next day's events, thus perpetuating the daily cycle. The only result of these daily staff meetings was increased anger and bitterness.

The Building

The only break in this cycle of daily school meetings was an attempt to fix up the building one day. Staff and students had begun to get used to their new home, but it needed some work to make it truly livable. The Alternative School was located in an old elementary school (built in 1893) that had been abandoned when a new community school was built nearby. Located about 10 minutes' walk from the center of the city, it was easily accessible by all bus lines.

There were six very large rooms, two medium size rooms, one small corner room and a teachers' lounge with a stove and refrigerator on the second floor. When the Alternative School started it was limited to about half of the space, though no reason was given as to why the other rooms remained locked.¹ Old elementary school art work, alphabets and portraits of Lincoln and Washington enlivened the place but

¹They were opened later after much dickering with the Assistant Superintendent for Buildings. The teachers' lounge with its stove and refrigerator plus the only toilet facility on the floor was to remain locked all year. This room was the possession of one person on the first floor, who did not want to share her facility.

a fire had left a great deal of smoke soot on the walls.

One day everyone came with sponges and pails, but this effort was limited to a single day. Some people had become discouraged by the stubbornness and omnipresence of the soot, but the effort was limited primarily by a feeling that this was not education and that the staff and students had to get on with more important business.

Interest and Skill Sheets

Late Thursday (April 6) one of the aides made a suggestion which saved the Alternative School from grinding to a halt. She suggested that everyone take a piece of butcher paper and tell who they were and what they were interested in on it. Everyone could then find other people to do things with.

There was a mad scramble for paper and felt tip pens. Within an hour there were sheets of butcher paper hanging all over the school. Everyone had tried to show a little special flavor in either the style or the content of their sheet.

People started wandering around, looking at what had gone up. Conversations could be heard around the building, starting up with something like, "I didn't realize you were interested in that." For the first time people went home with a sense of accomplishment. This also started a tradition of putting all announcements, notices and any other communications on the walls.

Those who had hoped to have everyone address the goals and objectives of the school on a systematic basis first were exhausted and

only too happy to let this new activity take hold. They were quite willing to let others take the responsibility for guiding events.

The Setting Up of Learning Experiences

Friday it was decided that some tentative learning experiences could be set up. The intent was to use the interests as stated on the butcher paper as the basis for groups to get together, but this never really happened.

Neither teachers nor students were yet ready to embark on entirely new ventures. As soon as "schedules" and "learning experiences" were mentioned, students began to look around for English, Math, U. S. History, etc. Most of the staff met them half way by setting up some fairly traditional courses.

The rush back to classes gave everyone something to do. The previous few days had been confusing and even frightening. At that time it was impossible to tell what the effect of the first few days had been on either staff or students, but they were obviously much more at home in such traditional activities as setting up and choosing classes.

All classes were not at the Alternative School, however. Some students had remained in one or more of their courses at the traditional schools. Others had latched onto the idea of internships¹ and were already negotiating with individuals or organizations to spend time with them over the remainder of the spring. While limited to a small

¹ Internships are defined as learning experiences on site in the community supervised by people at the site. For example, several students had internships in a law firm learning about law and lawyers. They were unpaid and their learning was guided by people in the law firm.

number of students initially, internships were the first break with the traditional course structure.

Most of the week before vacation was devoted to the exploration of possible learning experiences and to the setting up of schedules. Classes started slowly, but by the end of the week many students and staff were already locked into rather rigid time commitments.

Problems

Some of the problems evident before school opened continued and several new ones were added. The tension on the staff increased considerably. With the more traditional activities of the last week before vacation, one would have thought that much of the tension would have been relieved. Instead it fed upon itself.

A graduate student from the University, who was to become a full-time intern a few weeks later, was practically shouted out of his first staff meeting when he made a suggestion. Like all comments that implied any kind of criticism, his comments were met immediately with counter-accusations from one or more of the Worcester members of the staff. He was painted as an interloper from the University who was to be defended against. Some of the anti-University feelings had gone beneath the surface, but they rose immediately when any new intern or visitor appeared from the University.

Staff meetings were held every day, often lasting 3-4 hours. Despite all the talking, very little was decided. Disagreements could arise quickly over any issue and boil over into major and wide-ranging arguments. The presence of students at staff meetings embarrassed

some staff members whenever there were arguments. They felt that the policy of open staff meetings was wrong and often hinted loudly that they wanted more privacy. However, they were never willing to ask that staff meetings be closed.

Town Meetings

By this time, meetings of the whole school had become a permanent fixture. Before the school had started the idea of a Town Meeting as a governing body had been discussed and accepted. Based on the old New England style of democratic government, the Town Meeting had been tried in many alternative schools and although there were difficulties with it, it seemed superior to anything else available. It was accepted quickly in the Worcester Alternative School in the first few days and became very much a part of life, as well as one of the major areas of discord.

One problem was that staff members brought their arguments into the meetings. Any time one staff member made a comment, there was usually at least one other staff member who would counter or undercut it. Comments by students were frequently picked up and used by a staff member to make a point of their own. For the most part students were usually crushed and confused by the staff arguments. They said they could not understand why the staff members were arguing so bitterly and why they were not providing more leadership in the school. They did not want to be told what to do, but they did not want the staff to give up its authority either.

While the staff was dominating Town Meetings, several staff members were continually demanding that the students participate more. In most cases one staff member's demand would be echoed by two or three others, one after another, unconsciously thwarting their own stated objective.

At one meeting one student agreed with these comments and was surprised when the most vocal staff member shouted, "Well I know what to do about that" and walked out of the room. Three of the other six staff members followed her lead. After a few moments of dazed silence, the student said that she had not wanted them to leave but only them to shut up some of the time, to participate, but not to dominate.

Role Confusion

The starting of the Alternative School had caused far more visible dislocations in the staff members than in the students. The initial period of the planning school had been designed to unfreeze its participants and whether they were unfrozen or not, staff members were confused about their roles.

Everyone had adapted very easily to the habit of using first names, but other things were not so easy. Teachers had reverted back to the traditional teaching modes in the academic area, but they were not sure whether they were right or not.

The students were also confused, but unlike the staff members they were willing to be patient for a while and let matters sort themselves out. The staff felt compelled to talk and act, and instead of admitting their own confusion trapped themselves with their own

rhetoric. Very often their words and their actions were in direct contradiction. They recognized that they had special responsibilities as staff members, but were unable to turn that into real leadership.

The Alternative School had left them without a familiar or comprehensible structure. There were none of the old grooves. Due to the nature of the discussions in staff meetings, staff members were unable to use that forum as support in their efforts to change. Each member was left to solve his/her problems alone.

Some of the confusion over roles and expectations was voiced by three staff members later:

This school had no clear conception. I don't know what this school set out to do.

We were trying to get a bunch of people together with very different conceptions of what education means . . . trying to put a group of people together with very different dreams is hard. We were trying to build a school on those differences.

When I came to this job, I had a sort of vision that somebody charged, or maybe it was me, that this was _____'s alternative school . . . somebody was going to lay a heavy hand (on me). What was going on here? Who was responsible for it? Did you know?¹

Staff members were often so confused that there was a real difference between what they were doing and what they were saying. One student commented on this from his perspective:

Some teachers around here don't take on the responsibility they say students should take on.²

From their statements and actions it was evident that the staff did

¹Worcester Alternative School film

²Ibid.

want to assume those responsibilities, but they did not know how. Staff meetings could have been the place where individual staff members could have talked about their confusion and have supported each other through their transition. Instead the acrimony of staff meetings made the transition more difficult. The failure to foresee and to provide for this transition must be laid to N. A. S. P. and to the poor planning of the early stages.

Continuing Questions Over the School's Mandate

Additionally unsettling to staff members was the question of the mandate of the school. Though assured by the Superintendent, staff members were constantly in conflict over this question. The question arose primarily with regard to student schedules. Students were getting very different cues from different staff members. Some were telling them to explore, to find things they were interested in, while others were telling them that they had to schedule five classes that were the same as the ones they had left.

A few days before vacation the staff came to a tentative compromise on the question. Students would not have to take five distinct classes, but could be involved in a varying number of experiences depending on their magnitude. Students did not have to adhere strictly to the courses they had taken previously. This seemed to settle the question for the moment. It was not complete freedom to experiment, but students were not locked into continuing the five courses they had been taking.

Problems With Other School Personnel

The question of the mandate of the Worcester Alternative School was also unsettled with respect to other school personnel. Up to that point relations with the high school principals and most members of the central administration had been proper but distant. As long as the Alternative School did not trespass on their territory most people felt that the Alternative School could do anything it wanted. Yet to run the school properly at all meant that it had to enter everyone's territory at one point or another.

Two meetings were held the week before vacation to clarify relationships between the Alternative School and the rest of the system— one with the high school principals and another with the directors and coordinators of various areas. At the first meeting were the four high school principals, the Assistant Superintendent for Education, the Director of the Secondary Principals and the two Directors from the Alternative School. As soon as the discussion started it was apparent that the Superintendent had told no one else what he had told the staff members of the Alternative School at their staff planning session concerning their freedom to experiment. Moreover, it was apparent for the first time that the Superintendent had told other school personnel very little about the Alternative School or the mandate he had given it, however tentatively. The Alternative School had a direct pipeline to him, but there was a lot of information that needed to go to others as well for the Alternative School to function.

The principals took the attack from the beginning. They wanted to certify Alternative School teachers, Alternative School courses and give the final grades for the year to Alternative School students. Many of the principals were openly resentful at having to deal with a former math teacher and a young University graduate student. The central office administrators were only interested in causing as few problems as possible. What saved the Alternative School was that everyone was willing to leave the final decision left up to the Superintendent. The Worcester Director promised to pursue this with the Superintendent and once again the matter of mandate seemed settled.

The Directors and Coordinators of the special areas were all in favor of the Alternative School. They said it could do whatever it wanted except in the area they controlled--e.g., if the Alternative School was going to have art, then it had to be controlled by the Director of Art, be run by a certified art teacher and be taught in the approved ways. This of course would have crippled the Alternative School and had to be avoided. Instead of relying on the Superintendent to resolve this case as well, the Worcester Director got into an argument that was to become a running battle with the Directors and Coordinators over the next three months.

The Return of the Director of Special Programs

Complicating the relationship of the Alternative School to the central administration and the rest of the school system was the return of the Director of Special Programs. The Director of Special Programs had been ill between August and March and had thus been unable to

become directly involved in the development of the Alternative School. Under normal circumstances he would have had supervision of the project from the beginning. Shortly after his return he began to involve himself in the operation of the school. However, the Assistant to the Superintendent who had been the main central administration contact for the Alternative School did not relinquish all of her involvement for two reasons. She had close personal contact with the Superintendent and she had the primary responsibility for contacts with the University of Massachusetts.

The effect of this was to tug the Alternative School in two different directions at once. Not only did the two individuals have very different educational philosophies,¹ but they represented two distinctly different chains of command within the central administration. The Director of Special Programs was under the Assistant Superintendent for Education and thus part of the same chain as the traditional schools.² On the other hand the Assistant to the Superintendent reported directly to the Superintendent. Though obviously a problem, the Superintendent did not resolve this dual command situation.

Who to report to and whose word to accept as school policy became a dilemma for the Alternative School. It was decided to work with both individuals although the Worcester Director tended to talk to the Director of Special Programs and the writer tended to talk to

¹The Director of Special Programs was more conservative in curriculum and more authoritarian in governance vis-a-vis the Alternative School than the Assistant to the Superintendent.

²Additionally he was responsible for all Directors and Coordinators of areas such as Art, Music, Physical Education, etc. and thus was responsible for keeping peace between them and the Alternative School.

the Assistant to the Superintendent. Unfortunately the differences in opinion at that level tended to coincide with and thus compound differences in opinion between the two Directors.

The Worcester Director

At this time several personal characteristics of the Worcester Director became increasingly apparent. The Alternative School and its success had become an overriding mission in his life. He was working day and night on the school, speaking wherever and to whomever he could to try to convince people of the viability of the Alternative School. (This effort was often at the cost of his personal life). He identified with the Alternative School so closely that he very often seemed to react to program criticism as though it was a personal attack on him. Statements about problems in the school were responded to as though they implied personal criticism.

The pressure placed on him by the School Committee and the school administration was considerable, but he added to this his own fears and pressures. This pressure became bottled up inside as he took the whole responsibility for the school on his own shoulders.¹ As he said in one Town Meeting, he was "putting his whole life on the line."

¹ A year later he put this in more perspective:

In the last six months I have felt much easier. Before that I was not so much afraid that we would collapse, but that we would be stopped before we got started. Maybe I was much more afraid than anyone else, but I think it was real.

Those fears and pressures began to manifest themselves in several ways. The Worcester Director wanted to have students schedule exactly where they would be during the day and then have all these schedules in his own hands. He wanted all students to call him personally if they were not coming in, and he wanted someone on the staff to go after students who had not been attending. The fear was that something would get out of hand or that something would happen without his knowledge. He felt that he would be blamed for everything and that he could not trust anyone else to keep control.

Some of the fear came from within himself, but much of it should be seen in the context of his 16 years' experience in traditional schools. His expectation of his role were very much defined by his image of a high school principal, though he had never had any administrative experience himself.

The First Crisis

Some of these fears came to life when four students skipped school and were caught drinking by the police. This was not a direct reflection on the Alternative School, but happening as it did in the first two weeks of school and in view of the very tentative nature of the school, it was a very serious matter. No one in the school administration ever blamed the Alternative School for this, but this was not known at the time.

The Worcester Director decided not to confront the actual issue at a Town Meeting, but said that something terrible had happened (he would not tell what, although most of the students and staff knew what

had happened) and that the school would be ruined. He gave everyone a lecture on irresponsibility, from people not cleaning up the school to students who were not doing a full academic schedule.

Instead of pulling the school together to face a crisis collectively, the school was pushed further apart by one person taking the responsibility for the crisis upon himself alone and then blaming everyone else for doing it to him. As this process continued over time, it was to become more and more destructive to both the Worcester Director and to the Alternative School.

CHAPTER IV

Everyone came back from vacation (April 24) full of hope. Few, if any, expected the series of events over the next month and a half which led to a complete rupture of the staff. Nor for that matter did anyone foresee the course of development of an alternative structure for the school. In retelling this chapter I have tried to jump back and forth from one process to another so that readers may understand the simultaneity of several very different processes.

The Directors Argue Over Mandate

The downward path of staff relations began with a discussion between the two Directors. The conversation started with the mandate of the school for the rest of the year, but in the process of discussion the Worcester Director finally let out what had been inside for one and a half months. He said that all the special stuff was for next year, that a planning year was a traditional year with planning for the next year. Whatever the mandate, the Alternative School should finish the year doing what the students had done before. If the students had a chance to do a few other things, that was enough freedom for that year.

He was worried about the freedom of the aides and the interns; he wanted them under tighter supervision. He was very disturbed by the students who were involved in fewer than five courses. He added that the Superintendent was not the problem in terms of freeing the school to experiment, that he was.

He stated that he had stayed quiet though he knew that most of the staff was trying to take the school in another direction. However, he said that he had been advising students on the basis of his assumptions rather than what the staff had agreed to before vacation. He said that he saw no discrepancy between what he was saying and what the rest of the staff was saying.

The rest of the staff was surprised to learn of his feelings at the staff meeting the following day and more surprised that he had not revealed them up to that point. However, since the Directors were due to meet with the Director of Special Programs later that morning to clarify the question of mandate, the discussion was put into abeyance.

Meeting With the Director of Special Programs

The Superintendent had promised the Worcester Director that he would clear up the question of the Alternative School mandate and the problem of the five credits after the Directors had met with the high school principals. This had not happened and the Director of Special Programs stepped into the picture.

At the meeting the Director of Special Programs said that he saw no reason why students could not cut off their courses at three quarters of the year, taking the average for the first 3 marking periods and make it the final grade for the whole year (except in the case of laboratory sciences, which had to be completed). He suggested that the Alternative School staff make a full written proposal which he would submit for approval to higher administrators. However, from his statements it seemed that the Worcester Alternative School would

finally be free to experiment with whatever it wanted for the rest of the spring. All this was accepted without protest by the Worcester Director.

That afternoon the staff got together in its first genuine group effort of the year. Hammering out a memo, the staff as a whole decided to put down the proposal it felt to be the most optimal and hoped it would pass. The group poured themselves enthusiastically into every word. An hour later the proposal (see appendix E) was hand carried back to the Director of Special Programs.

The First Meeting With the Parents

Due to the staff's uncertainty and the haste with which the Alternative School had been set up there had been no meeting with the parents as a group. Many parents had talked to some member of the staff, in most cases the Worcester Director, before the school had opened, but they still had many questions.

The parents' meeting (April 26) was less a meeting than a presentation by the Worcester Director who gave everyone an exciting look into what the Alternative School was trying to do. This was somewhat difficult to do considering the staff's confusion over the mandate of the school, but he discussed his hopes and ideas for the future rather than any problems of the present.

Many parents started the meeting quite skeptical, particularly those with students who came home confused each day. Yet, for the most part the staff's fear that parents would see their confusion and then press them, turned out to be unfounded. All of the parents may not

have been convinced, but the majority liked what they saw and heard. Most were willing to suspend their judgment concerning any current problems they had heard from their children, because they liked what the Alternative School had set out to do and they felt confident of the staff.

After the parents' meeting concluded, the Director of Special Programs came in with approval of the staff proposal. The staff left reassured by the reaction of the parents and excited by the clarification of the mandate.

Staff Problems Continue

Within a day the staff started arguing about the proposal, rather than talking about what they wanted to do. It was agreed that students did not have to continue any of the five courses they had been carrying (except laboratory sciences) and that other learning experiences could be tested in their place for the remainder of the spring. Other questions remained. Who decided what got credit? Could an intern be defined as a staff member? Would every student have to take five distinct courses or could they have a varying number of experiences? What was the relation of traditional courses to other types of learning experiences?

As the arguments continued it became obvious that staff members had some very different value orientations. There is a naive assumption in most alternative schools that because they are alternatives that everyone in them will naturally have similar ideas and value orientations. The experience in most cases is exactly the opposite. People

in alternative schools not only have very different philosophies, but they tend to care much more deeply about their ideas and thus are more prone to conflicts. The one common factor tends to be a dislike of traditional schools with the result that alternatives are often defined in negative terms as anti-schools, rather than in terms of their own positive, but different goals. The pattern was the same in the Alternative School, except that there was not even a common bias against traditional schools. The problem, however, was not the differences in philosophy, but the fact that it was difficult to get them out in the open in complete form.

One example of the difference in individual philosophies was manifested in the discussion of student programs. The Worcester Director felt that students should be told what to do, that they should set out specific schedules and then stick to them. The ideas of the former English teacher were diametrically opposed. She felt that students should be allowed to search and experiment though under guidance, and thus should be allowed to change their schedules. Staff relations might have been easier if staff members had been able to talk in depth about their own philosophies, but the comments were usually limited to a sentence or two in the process of an argument.

One afternoon the writer stood with his nose three inches away from that of his Co-Director, demanding that he get his assumptions out, that he test out his ideas and that he participate in meetings instead of either telling others what to do or being silent. Ironically

the Worcester Director said that this was the first time that the writer had communicated with him.

As much as other staff members the Worcester Director was confused about his own role. As he stated in the film made of the Alternative School, he felt that when he had been made Director that the school had been given to him, that it was his school. Yet it was obvious that that had not been the case, even though he sometimes expressed his feelings that it should be so. One Friday when he returned late to find that the Town Meeting had broken up before he had arrived he said:

They have the rest of the week to fool around; we agreed that Friday, the Town Meeting is mine.

Asked whether the Town Meeting was not for the whole school, he said, "No, it's mine."

Whatever part the Town Meeting played in confusing the Worcester Director's role, it also helped in the evolution of a new one. The school as a whole started taking responsibility for some policy decisions, policy that he would have had primary responsibility for in a traditional school. Often he opposed the decisions but he learned how to live with them and to learn from them:

. . . some things I opposed, but we tried them. A couple of things I thought would not work have been the most successful.

I was concerned about visitors. I knew this would be a fish-bowl. I brought it up at a Town Meeting and I got shot down. The kids said, 'we don't see it as a problem.' Now I lost on that and in losing I found it was not so bad.¹

¹Worcester Telegram, April 30, 1972.

However, the role of the Worcester Director was complicated by the pressures exerted on him by several central office administrators. He was told by the Director of Special Programs and the Assistant Superintendent for Education that they no longer wanted to deal with anyone else but him. They told him the school was his responsibility alone. Later the Superintendent added to this pressure by telling the Worcester Director that he should shape things up. However, the Worcester Director did not reveal these statements at the time and thus no one else on the staff was aware of these new pressures.

The Development of an Alternative Curriculum

During the same period an alternative curriculum and an alternative structure started to grow. Most students and staff members had initially locked themselves into rather rigid schedules and academic structures. Over the weeks following vacation some of this began to break down. More informal and less traditional learning experiences filled in (a study of the courts, farming, a field study on old people, etc.).

While some of this change may have been due to the drastic unfreezing process of the first few days, it seems primarily to have come from a slow realization of the freedom and opportunity they could do something different.

As students and staff members became dissatisfied with what they were doing, old courses changed, collapsed or simply faded away for lack of interest. Learning became much more informal, much less course oriented. Many students started taking independent studies.

A theatre group was started. Staff and students started taking many field trips, often on the spur of the moment. Some wild projects, such as an airplane trip to Cape Cod, were talked about though few actually happened.

Staff members were still confused about their roles in the academic area, but they tried some new ideas and were surprised by some developments. Students often responded to their greater freedom with increased responsibility and initiative:

The students in the [drama] class just did things themselves. They decided who would be the parts; they self-cast it . . . I have been in¹ drama for a while, but this has never happened before . . .

This freedom brought some new problems as well:

They're not going to like some of the ways I'm going to talk to them . . . We had a scene to do and I had to go around collecting everyone. B. objected to this and said while she realized it was necessary, that the students should be allowed to come by themselves. But they weren't coming . . . when a group is scheduled and these 6-8 people have said they will be there [and are not] . . . I resent that . . . You're not accepting what I have to give . . . maybe I should wait for them . . . wait until they feel it is important for them.²

Another staff member talked of how she had learned to deal with some students who were not showing up:

. . . having a student not show up for 3-4 days . . . I don't see my responsibility to tell a student what they should do with those 3-4 days, but it is my responsibility to know what they're doing. I'll call someone up on the phone and ask, to let them know that I'm concerned.³

¹From Worcester Alternative School film.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Some students had difficulty understanding what staff members were doing:

I'm still from the old school and teachers should teach. We have a lack of organization along with teachers saying you come to us . . . We should have either a little organization and teachers saying come to us or a little disorganization and teachers saying I'm going to come to you and give you a class.¹

Though disorganized, people were beginning to think about what the school should be. They were exploring alternative methods of teaching and learning. Though little had come to fruition at this point, many of the traditional grooves had been broken.

Student Behavior

After the confusion of the first few days of school, most of the students had begun to respond remarkably well. Though confused about their roles, they were far more patient than the staff members. They were also much more relaxed. At several Town Meetings students told staff members to slow down and to stop worrying. Most of all they tried to explain to the staff that there was no need to argue so vehemently.

Some students stopped coming to school. Most of these had had attendance problems in traditional schools and the Alternative School had little effect on them. Some other students became lost with all this freedom and spent their time playing ping-pong or doing some other time-consuming activity. In traditional schools many students had

¹From Worcester Alternative school film.

walked passively through the day, going to classes, listening to the teachers and doing homework. They had floated through life buoyed up by the structure. They had always been lost, but the Alternative School made it much more apparent. All of these students floundered, but some were eventually able to take more control of their lives and education.

The majority of students, including some former dropouts, were willing and excited to come to school. As they began to realize some of the possible learning experiences available to them they helped staff members dismantle old courses and devise new ones. Most students liked the opportunity to use their own initiative as well as their new found freedom. Learning was put in a different context:

I was taking business courses at Doherty [High School]. I wanted to work in a department store so that I could get the real experience instead of studying in classes. At Denholm's [Department Store] people are teaching me a lot of things I didn't know.

The ability to make significant choices and to take more responsibility for their learning affected many students:

In a regular school I wouldn't get to use a videotape or even to see one. Even the stuff they give you, they treat you like a little kid. The teacher always has to be there telling me what to do, and I wouldn't be able to do it by myself. Now I can use a videotape whenever I want.

In regular schools you took the class, did what the teachers told you to do. Here anyone can be teaching anyone; you can do what you want to do.²

¹From Worcester Alternative School film.

²Ibid.

The idea that students might teach students and even staff members had been mentioned as early as the March recruiting sessions. For the most part knowledge was imparted by teachers, but during the spring several students initiated courses of their own. One girl who had been absent from the traditional high school 40% of the time started courses in weaving, African Studies and Women's Studies, all of which she knew more about than anyone else in the school.

To many students the most significant change was in their own self image. As one student said:

You can't show what this school is. I feel like a person here, in a regular school I don't.¹

Students began to feel pride in themselves and in their education.

The Development of an Alternative Structure

To facilitate and legitimize this learning, various credit systems were proposed. When the school had started there had been no definite plans for an alternative credit system, beyond the feeling that the files should be open and that some sort of portfolio system should be used. When the question of mandate and the continuation of the five courses was in doubt, further thought in this direction had been put in abeyance.

When the Director of Special Programs approved the proposal written by the staff concerning the mandate of the school, the staff decided that a modular credit system should be put in use for the

¹From Worcester Alternative School film.

remainder of the year (see appendix F). It was written as a proposal and submitted to the Town Meeting for approval. (The Town Meeting had become more and more a formal governing body in addition to providing a public forum.)

To the dismay of several staff members the proposal was voted down. Staff members had said all along that they could be outvoted by the students at a Town Meeting. This time it actually happened.

The defeat of the modular credit proposal was not caused by an antagonism toward the proposal itself but toward the way it was proposed and the memories it evoked in many students. They liked their new sense of freedom and identity. Their growing pride gave them a sense of power. The modular credit proposal reminded them of the traditional schools and they retaliated by defeating it. Several students described their feelings:

They just handed it to us . . . They didn't explain it was just a proposal.

Some kids felt they were telling us . . . This is an Alternative School and that's not an alternative.¹

The defeat of the modular credit proposal further confused staff members about their roles and responsibilities. They were trying to adapt but the change was difficult, especially for the Worcester Director. He later commented on his feelings during this time period:

¹From Worcester Alternative School film.

I was trying to make a flip-flop from a traditional to a free-flowing situation and I was doing a hell of a job pretending, but it wasn't working . . . after that it was easier because it wasn't _____'s Alternative School, but the Worcester Alternative School. The students are the ones who have to make it work . . . no way was I going to make any decisions that were going to block what they wanted to do.¹

The Advisor System

Within a week a staff member came up with another proposal--an advisor system. Each student was to pick an advisor from the four most senior staff members. The student and the advisor would then work out together a total program geared to the specific needs and interests of that student. There were no stipulations as to the exact nature or number of learning experiences or their type. Staff members would treat each student individually and then on the basis of their own judgment decide whether a student's program was acceptable. It would also be the advisor, rather than a set of rules, who would decide whether the work a student had done was sufficient for promotion or graduation.

This was a much more flexible individualized system and it was passed practically unanimously by the Town Meeting.

The Dream

Despite the problems and the chaos that had been and the difficulties that were to come, the staff and students of the school began to feel stronger and stronger attachment to the school because they felt it had a chance to fulfill their dreams. Whatever its failings at any given time, the school seemed to offer a real possibility of fulfilling people's dreams:

¹From Worcester Alternative School film.

This place is really great compared to that other place I was in. It's day and night, heaven and hell.

I'm not disappointed with the dream, I just don't see it yet.¹

Most people felt that it was their school, for better or worse. They had faith in it as an institution to respond to them and to provide for them.

Some Staff Values Come Out

By the middle of May it was obvious that value conflicts were frustrating virtually all communications between staff members. To try to deal with the situation an open-ended staff meeting was scheduled for Monday, May 15, when everyone could talk about their ideas on education, their personal and educational philosophy and their personal values. Though several staff had mentioned the idea of a process facilitator, most of the staff, including most of those who had mentioned the idea, were too suspicious to have anyone come in from outside.

Before the meeting had gone very far, it broke into an open battle over a question asked by an aide. In the process of discussing some of her hopes for the school, the aide asked whether it would be possible for a group of staff and students to take an extended trip. The writer replied that he thought it was possible and that the idea should be explored further. However, the Worcester Director said that there would be a tremendous number of problems and that he saw real trouble. He said that the writer was irresponsible for suggesting

¹From Worcester Alternative School film

that it should be explored further. He explained that he was trying to protect the aide, that he was trying to save her from trouble. When the aide asked whether she might not be allowed to try, the Worcester Director offered no encouragement, got angry at everyone and then went quiet.

Later when the Worcester Director spoke of his feelings about the school, he mentioned the pressure from the outside (not specifically who or what) pushing in on him and the problems of the co-directorship. He said that dealing with another co-director was difficult enough, without having to deal with everyone else involved.

The writer stated his feelings that the problem was one of values, that many of the Worcester Director's difficulties and pressures were manifestations of his own values rather than accurate assessments of the situation.

As more and more staff members spoke the only unresolvable problems seemed to be between the Worcester Director and the rest of the staff. As the meeting became more intense the division became him versus everyone else. In rather vulgar terms he began to talk about what "they" would do to him. He defined his role as dealing with those above, rather than with the rest of the staff. One staff member then said that there was little way that there could be separation between the two groups of people since what decisions were made above would very much affect what happened below.

The Worcester Director said that since he seemed to be so much of a problem that he would withdraw from meetings. In reply an intern

stated that he was taking a unilateral act, rather than seeing himself as part of the group, and that group decisions were needed to take care of group problems. At this the meeting just petered out, but the division between the Worcester Director and the rest of the staff had been much more sharply defined.

N. A. S. P. and the Worcester Public Schools

From January to April both N. A. S. P. and the city had been too exhausted from the previous negotiations to talk at all. In April however, the relationship was once again in active "renegotiation." The two main topics at this time were the size of the school and its budget.

On May 4 the Dean of the School of Education appeared before the Worcester School Committee. For the first time, the School Committee was told that alternative schools were not just pilot projects for a new type of school. They were not demonstrations, but alternatives that people could choose from. He said that the Worcester Alternative School was only one kind of alternative and that the school system should think about opening others that would be very different.

The Dean tried to relieve some pressure on the school by saying that he understood that there had been some problems associated with the school, but that no one should worry because that was to be expected.

The Dean's visit was important for several reasons. He put the notion of alternative schools and the concept of the Worcester Alternative School in much greater focus for School Committee. He also was able to negotiate a new financial arrangement between N. A. S. P.

and the city with the Assistant to the Superintendent and extract a promise that the writer would be given the formal title of Co-Director in August.

A complete agreement was hammered out after several meetings between members of N. A. S. P., the Worcester Alternative School Directors, and several members of the central administration. N. A. S. P. pledged to commit a substantial sum of money (though less than half of what had previously been committed) and several people full time to the project. In return, Worcester agreed to fund a budget equal to the average per capita amount spent on students in the traditional schools.

The number of students was to be expanded to 160--the same as the number originally projected in the first proposal submitted to the Worcester School Committee in November.

Disagreements Over the Number of Students

Due to the arguments on the staff and the concern for what was happening at that moment, the Alternative School had only been able to focus on planning for the present. However, the press for a new budget and the requirements of both the Worcester School administration and N. A. S. P. pushed the issue of school expansion to an early decision--a decision that most of the staff and students in the school did not even know was being made. Thus when the decision was announced many people felt it had been thrust upon them.

Though most people eventually agreed with the decision to enlarge the school, the process by which that decision was made was a sore point

for a long time. It served primarily to reinforce a fear on the part of some staff and students that despite the protestations of the Directors that the Worcester Alternative School would make its own decisions as a school, a few people inside and outside the school (primarily the central administration and the Directors) were making most of the important decisions.

Most of the staff members understood there were problems dealing with the central administration and that they would have ideas about our future plans on an overall basis--number of students, staffing and budget. However, few of the students felt much responsibility to the system. While acknowledging that the central administration had power and control over money, students felt no obligation to give away control of the school to the central administration, if possible.

The terms of the original proposal had not been known throughout the school and the announcement came as a surprise to most students and staff members. Many of the things that staff and students valued--the closeness, the personal contact, the informality--all seemed threatened (by both the expansion and the process by which the decision was made). The planning process seemed a sham. If that kind of decision could be made without their knowledge or power to influence, then what other decisions could and would be made without them. Students had only recently begun to feel that they could actually affect their own school. This blow caused many to react rather angrily.

These feelings were not alleviated by the actions of one or both of the Directors, who were sometimes rather defensive about their roles in the decision.

India Week

As feelings in the school over the expansion issue began to quiet down and before the staff began to wrangle once again, a most extraordinary week happened at the school. A woman from India, who was a visiting teacher in the Worcester Public Schools for the year, came to spend a week at the school. All activities which conflicted with "India Week" were cancelled. Students and staff were able to talk with her for long uninterrupted periods of time. Formal discussions trailed into hours of informal conversation. On Thursday she took a group of interested staff and students to the Boston Fine Arts Museum.

All week long the mood of the school rose and rose. (Spring weather had finally arrived as well.) The culmination of the week and perhaps one of the best events in the school all spring was a community meal on Friday. The woman from India agreed to cook an Indian meal, provided everyone agreed to help.

As the morning progressed she became the director of a rather massive effort. Groups of staff and students were continually running off to get another pot or utensil from someone's house. Others would run to a nearby store to get a missing spice, more rice, or some needed ingredient. Some people were working at the stove, while others chopped meat or peeled the skins off almonds.

About three quarters of the school became involved in this effort. The mood was such that everyone broke out singing several times. People were working together and for the first time the school looked and sounded like a community. All types of students, from three different grade levels and from every area of the city plus a wide

variety of people as teachers and an assortment of interns from the University had finally become a single body.

Staff Unity Disappears

Staff unity could not even survive one weekend. The division between the Worcester Director and the rest of the staff broke into open conflict on the following Monday (May 30). In discussing the students' programs, it became obvious that the Worcester Director had ignored the understandings derived from the staff proposal approved by the central administration that the rest of the staff had agreed to several weeks earlier. The Worcester Director stated that he was ignoring those agreements when he had been working with his advisees or when he was talking to other students. He had been telling them that they had to continue the same five courses that they had taken up to that point.

He spoke against the advisor system and the way the school was working. He stated that he would go along with things for the moment, but that the rest of the staff had better be prepared because he was going to attack everything during the summer planning session.

He said that he could not understand what the rest of the staff was doing. As far as he was concerned there was "only one way to teach," that there were courses one just did and that all students should be taking 5 classes (whether they were called learning experiences or courses). He said that the school had no standards and that he wanted to "get those _____ out of here [staff meetings]."

As the arguments grew more heated, several staff members

became personally offended by the language of the Worcester Director. One aide left and soon after, the meeting collapsed.

Later that afternoon several staff members met in one of the teacher's rooms. Some people were so angry that they were ready to confront the Worcester Director and to resign if he did not change. Other resignations were talked about as well, but it was decided to do nothing until other people in Worcester and at the University had been asked their opinion of the situation.

The Assistant to the Superintendent and the Dean of the School of Education were both apprised of the situation and on the basis of their advice, the staff members decided to wait and see what would happen.

Recruitment of New Students

During this time period recruitment of students for the following year had begun. Brochures and applications were distributed in every school. In addition teams of staff and students went to speak to interested students. Since it had been decided to add Grade 9 to the Alternative School for September, 1972, a total of six junior high schools and four high schools had to be covered. Staff and students also spoke with organizations and agencies throughout the city.

At these meetings it was easy to see how much the Alternative School meant to many of the students. It was also easy to see how much more articulate they had become in the past weeks about their education and its role in their lives. When prospective students asked questions it was usually the Alternative School students who responded. Their

answers were reasoned, but also passionately in favor of the concept of the Alternative School.

Most of the meetings were large and well received, but at about half the schools principals or guidance counselors had screened the students who wanted to come. In some cases this was done by having sign-up lists so that guidance counselors could try to dissuade students they did not want to have leave. In other cases some guidance counselors and principals started spreading rumors about how bad the Worcester Alternative School was. (In some instances the guidance counselor or principal had been pushed in this direction by students from the Alternative School who wanted to flaunt their new independence in the face of their old enemies.) At one school guidance counselors went so far as to select the names of students they did not want around the school any more.

In some of these same schools guidance counselors asked most of the questions at the meetings and tried to harass the staff and students from the Alternative School.

Many parents who had interested sons or daughters called their principal or guidance counselor to ask about the Alternative School. Most answered the questions to the best of their abilities, though the information they gave out was often incorrect. However, others tried to scare the parents of the "good" students who called them. Parents were told such things as: your child will never get to college, it's just for minority students, it's just for dropouts, it's in a bad area of town, and so on. Very rarely did these people suggest that

the parent call or visit the Alternative School to get the information first hand.

The initial recruiting period in March had not been marred by this kind of active opposition. While there are verifiable comments from two principals which show that they were unalterably opposed to the idea of the Alternative School (though they saw it as a useful place to get rid of troublemakers), the feelings and motives behind the actions of the other principals and guidance counselors was less clear. The unorganized campaign against the Alternative School in May and June on the part of these people was probably due to the feeling that the Alternative School was relatively successful and thus a threat to them and their system of education. This need not have happened had there been better planning and communication in the early stages of development of the program. The Alternative School missed many opportunities for positive interaction.

Wednesday, June 7

One part of the student recruitment process was a large meeting held Wednesday evening, June 7. All interested parents and students were to come and meet with the staff and students of the school and to ask whatever questions they had. Planning for this meeting had been taken over by a group of students, aided by several interns.¹ They realized that the school was under attack and they wanted to show

¹Through May and June as the full time paid staff became more and more ensnarled in staff problems, the graduate interns and the rapidly maturing students began to assume more and more responsibility for running the school.

people what they felt the Alternative School meant to them and what they felt it could do educationally.

On the afternoon of that meeting the Worcester Director called a special staff meeting. The meeting lasted 45 minutes and he was the only person who said a word. He said that he was "tired of being persecuted" and then taking each staff member one at a time, he proceeded to destroy them with a list of faults, problems and mistakes of which each was guilty. At the end he stomped out and slammed the door.

The remaining staff discussed the situation and were almost unanimous in favor of mass resignation. However, it decided to lay out the whole situation to the Director of Special Programs before any firm decision was made.

The Director of Special Programs asked that nothing be done, but that the meeting that night continue and that he have a chance to talk to the Worcester Director first.

Approximately 150-200 new students and parents attended the meeting that night. Staff members, including the Worcester Director, spoke about the school, but primarily it was the students who ran the meeting. The highlight of the meeting was an open letter, which is reprinted in full below:

TO: Parents and Friends

THE WORCESTER ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

BY a student (Shelley)

Many of you who are present have been greatly misinformed about this new type of school. Many think that it's a school for slow or stupid kids. Many think that it's for lazy kids who now don't have to do

anything. Or maybe just for kids who cannot adjust to a regular public school. Actually it isn't any of these, but it is an alternative. It's a school in which physical education is not the most important matter. A school where knowledge and ability are much more important. Here a student learns to be responsible. He is not just a spectator in an over-crowded classroom but instead someone who participates. He accepts the fact that all schools are not like prisons and that learning is a challenge and can be enjoyable.

The students respect the teachers and the teachers in return respect the students. We have the freedom and independence, which was once fought for so greatly. The student learns because he wants to, not because someone is forcing him. You will not find anyone who does not want to learn at the Alternative School. We have greater opportunities to learn what we want to, or more important what we need to learn. The informal atmosphere tends to cause more ease and greater satisfaction in learning.

I find myself working a lot harder and learning a great deal, something which I hadn't done at the other school. I believe I am not only speaking for myself but for all of the students.

Perhaps you won't believe this school to be all I've stated. I am asking of you to examine and understand the way we function. Just be a little open-minded. Maybe then you can also appreciate the importance of this school.

Thank you.

The meeting was a resounding success, judging from the comments of parents and the large number of applications that were turned in that night.

The Staff Conflict Wanes

On Thursday, June 8 a meeting was held between the two Directors, the Assistant to the Superintendent and the Director of Special Programs. On the way to the meeting the Worcester Director said that he would not sit down with the whole staff and try to work things out. He wanted definite times and places where he had been wrong. When it was suggested that it might be a question of style, he stated that if that was so, he should go because he was too old to change. He said that he had

never had any problem working for anyone before nor had anyone had any problem working for him. Asked "how about working with someone" he did not reply.

At the meeting each Director described some of the problems he had been having as well as some of the pressures he had felt. The writer described the problems of being an outsider and the pressures from the University to renegotiate the agreement between N. A. S. P. and the city.

Most of the meeting focused on the Worcester Director. He told of some of the pressures he had been feeling and of not understanding why the staff was reacting to him the way they were. He said that he did not know that he had a direct channel of communication to the Superintendent. He also said that he had not talked to staff members about the pressures he was feeling and that he had not talked with other staff members about what they were doing.

The Worcester Director then talked about some of his personal feelings. He talked about feeling very much alone, of trying to deal with problems by himself, rather than sharing them with others. He said that while he had been a teacher, he had been against "snooper-vision" and felt that he had been a good administrator in the Alternative School by letting the staff members teach whatever and however they wanted to in their classes.

The problems of the position of the Worcester Director and some of the pressures on him were reflected in two statements made by the central administrators during this meeting. At one point the Assistant to the Superintendent stated that the concerns the Worcester

Director was talking about should have been shared with the staff as a whole and discussed in staff meetings. Later, however, the Director of Special Programs blasted the Worcester Director for being too laissez-faire, for not giving more leadership.

Over the next several weeks staff relations quieted down. There was no resolution or talking out of personal differences. The previous months had been painful and it seemed that everyone was ready to just let matters drop for the moment.

Student Selection

Despite some harassment over three hundred students applied for the 125 new student places. Once again selection was done by lottery, with the minimum percentages much the same as in the first lottery. A waiting list was chosen to fill any spots vacated by students who decided not to come.

Only two students who were part of the planning school chose to return to the traditional schools. One was afraid of her chances of getting into college. The other returned with rather mixed emotions, mostly under pressure from her parents:

The main reason I decided to leave is that I found that a structured school is what I want. My parents want me back in a traditional school . . . I'm going to really miss things, trips and other staff that's really good, but that interferes with your other classes.¹

Selection of New Staff

Four new staff members were selected from a group of thirty-one applicants by a committee composed of the Directors, teachers (the

¹From the Worcester Alternative School film.

former English teacher was one), students, parents and representatives of the school administration. Although the final four people were interviewed and finally selected by the Superintendent, the real selection was done by the members of the school. How much of a change this was for Worcester can be seen from the Worcester Director's reaction when this selection committee was approved:

But that's not the way things are done.

Surprisingly, even with the large differences in educational philosophy among panel members a group of four teachers were selected without too much trouble. They were selected first of all for their personal qualities and secondly for the interests and skills they could bring to the school. They were also selected for their diversity as a group. A brief profile of each gives an idea of what the selection committee was looking for.

--male, young, black--went to a local university . . . had been a guidance counselor and racial trouble shooter in the worst middle school in the city . . . interested in urban problems, Afro-American and African literature and history.

--female, middle-aged, white--had taught throughout the United States . . . was teaching physical education in one high school in Worcester . . . had taught English, history and math elsewhere . . . interested in outdoor survival skills and child development.

--male, young, white--had done student teaching in Worcester . . . first generation Greek immigrant . . . math teacher, but interested in Greek philosophy, mythology and ancient history.

--male, young, white: 5 years' teaching in a suburb of Worcester . . . rather conservative and traditional in outlook . . . taught U. S. History, sociology, and political science.

The Planning School Peters Out

In the three weeks of June school activities other than the recruitment and selection of new staff and students began to slowly fade away. School did not so much end, as just peter out. Advisors tied up students' learning in their own particular fashion. The Worcester Director continued to argue with the high school principals almost every day about some aspect of students' grades or records. Crucial, but unresolved questions remained (the decision making process, credit, student programs, etc.), but everyone seemed too tired to start arguing about them again.

Two events marked the final week—a large meeting for all new students and a mock graduation ceremony. The new students' meeting was attended by about 70% of the students selected. Addressed primarily by the Worcester Director who introduced the rest of the staff, the new students became excited, enthusiastic and confused as they were told what the Alternative School had done and how it had operated that spring. One series of remarks made by the Worcester Director is worth singling out because so many students were to remember them in the fall:

In this school all decisions are made in the Town Meeting. If you want to have something done, you must make a proposal to the Town Meeting and have it voted upon. The same thing is true for me. Any decision I want to make, I have to make a proposal to the Town Meeting.

After the large meeting new students were broken up into several small groups run by the old staff and students. The purpose of these groups was to brainstorm ideas about what students were interested in and possible learning experiences that might cover those interests.

The old students were much more articulate and imaginative than the new students in this exercise even if one were to take into account the new students' nervousness and unfamiliarity with the situation.

The mock graduation showed how much of a community the school had become and how openly people had become in expressing their feelings. A Worcester Alternative School song was composed and played onto a tape recorder. Graduation certificates were drawn up and old shells from a trip to the beach were awarded as prizes. There was a parade around the school and by this time most everyone was crying. A few days later school ended and the students went home for the summer.

CHAPTER V

In May it had been decided to have a staff summer planning session. The session was to have a number of purposes:

1. to integrate the four new staff members
2. to seek some resolution to the staff conflicts of the spring
3. to review the process and the results of the planning school
4. to get organized as a staff structurally and academically for the start of the 1972-73 school year.

Though much was accomplished, the summer planning session did not resolve the staff conflicts of the spring. Some conflicts (personal or issue) were pushed aside, unresolved, while others came to dominate the topic of discussion to the extent that other issues could not be discussed.

Chapter V will be divided into four sections—the set up of the staff summer planning session, the staff dynamics, the main issues of the session and the problems remaining at the end of the session.

The Set Up of the Staff Summer Planning Session

By the middle of May it had become clear that a large number of personal and substantive issues (decision making, credit, advisor system, etc.) were not going to be resolved during the operation of the planning school. Even before the blow-up of June 7 staff conflict had already become so great that it was obvious that a great amount of unpressured time would be needed to resolve and heal it. While a great number of ideas had been tried out during the planning school,

some time was obviously going to be needed to review the results and then to try to put them together in some organized form.

Realizing how long it had taken for the original four staff members to become adjusted to the environment of the Alternative School and to each other, it made sense to try to share some of this experience with the new staff members before they were under the pressure of having to deal with students and classes.

Due to the nature and the high level of staff conflict, it was felt that students should not be involved in the summer planning session. The Alternative School had nearly fallen apart because the staff had been unable to work together. Summer was the time for the staff to come together as a team so that the same problems would not occur again in the fall. It was felt that the presence of students would complicate this process.

The planning session was set up for a three and one half week period, from June 26 to July 21. While all of the staff members were in favor of having a facilitator, most of the staff was so distrustful of each other that they were unwilling to delegate the task of finding a facilitator to another staff member. There was a particular distrust of getting anyone associated with the University of Massachusetts. Consequently the Director of Special Programs was asked to find a facilitator, one who would be as non-controversial as possible.

The site of the planning session was also a compromise. The Worcester Director had offered to hold the sessions at his house, but this was opposed by nearly everyone else. People felt uneasy that it was his home territory and not neutral ground. The Director of

Special Programs suggested an air conditioned meeting room that the school system had as part of its Adult Learning Center. The room was neutral ground, but it was also very small.

Quite often during the planning session the atmosphere in the room became very stuffy. It was very difficult to relax or feel comfortable and after the second hour of each daily session the room very definitely had a depressing effect on the discussion. People tired quickly and they became much less sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others. While most of those present felt this, no one made a suggestion that the session be moved elsewhere.

The idea of a staff retreat had been rejected primarily because several staff members felt unable to leave their families for any extended period of time. There also seemed to be a distrust or perhaps even fear of having to be together for a session as intensive as a retreat.

What was proposed instead was a series of daily meetings from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. These sessions were so long (4 hours) that they became tiring and ineffective. Each day everyone geared up to talk about a number of issues, hammered away at them for four hours, venting their personal biases and frustrations and then went off their own separate directions. There was little time for less formal and more personal interaction, as it was not "business." Also by the end of each session staff members did not really feel like talking to each other. Over a period of weeks this daily process became destructive of effective task discussion and made any other kind of personal interaction more difficult.

Staff Dynamics

It had been hoped that one function of the staff summer planning session would be to resolve some of the conflicts within the staff that had crippled the school during the spring. Instead the conflicts widened to include the new staff members as well. There was some diffusion and some lessening of tension, but this was due more to lack of interest in continuing certain battles than it was to resolution or compromise.

The Focus On Old Problems

Particularly in the first half of the summer planning session, discussions became mired in old problems. Old staff members often seemed more interested in gaining acknowledgment for their own viewpoint than they did in discussing questions openly. They seemed to want to absolve themselves of blame or to place it elsewhere. Histories of the school or particular problems were extremely prone to personal bias and unresolved problems quickly rekindled old debates.

The effect of this was to preclude discussion that might have moved toward potential solutions for certain problems. Old staff members focused on defining the old problems in their own way and new staff members were left with a lot of information about personal biases, but very little knowledge of the actual situation. When new staff members joined the discussion they were often forced to take sides, rather than being allowed to share their ideas. Time that was used to debate the personal views of old problems pre-empted time for the solution of key questions or discussion about new ideas and future possibilities.

While absolving themselves of any blame for the existing situation at the Alternative School, old staff members were unwilling to delve deeply into their personal values and assumptions. There were plenty of personal opinions given, but no one was willing to go to the source of the conflict. In some part this was due to the issue orientation of the meetings. Discussions which became philosophical were squeezed out as being off the topic. However, most of it was due to an intolerance and a distrust in the group which made most people, old and new, unwilling to expose themselves. As a result, opinions were debated instead of philosophies being discussed.

Distrust

The most debilitating factor in the group discussions was the lack of trust that most staff members had for the group. Few people wanted to expose their own ideas for fear that someone else would attack not only their idea, but possibly themselves as well. The facilitator commented frequently on people taking what he called "cheap shots" at each other. Questions were often less for information's sake than they were for undermining a comment. To protect themselves, individuals either made unsubstantial comments or protected their ideas as defensively as possible. Sensitivity to others seemed to disappear almost completely sometimes.

When new staff members were involved in a discussion, trust levels were considerably higher. Not only were old staff members willing to trust new ones, but they felt less threatened in a discussion with another old staff member if there was a new staff member present.

By the end of the planning session the new staff members had succeeded in raising the trust levels of almost all conversations. The price they paid was that they were much less trusting themselves by the end of the session.

The lack of trust also manifested itself in the group's inability to break into smaller work groups. There was a tendency to want to discuss all but the smallest issues in front of the whole group rather than allow a subgroup to come to a decision on a question.

The Worcester Director vs. the
Former English Teacher

Prior to the middle of May, staff members had taken different sides on different issues. People who had been together on one issue might be vehemently opposed on the next. After that date, the staff remained multi-polar on most issues, but these issues became secondary to the conflict between the Worcester Director and the rest of the staff. In many ways that conflict was sharpest between the former English teacher and the Worcester Director.

During the staff summer planning session, that personal conflict deepened to the point where rarely would one of the two make a statement that the other would not oppose. On every issue they seemed directly and vehemently opposed. (The Worcester Director was usually in a minority position on most issues vis-a-vis the rest of the staff but those conflicts were not as personal or as vehement.)

To the former English teacher the Worcester Director was rigid, authoritarian, frequently personally offensive, a male chauvinist, and very traditional in his conception of education. To the Worcester

Director she was an impractical idealist, disloyal, obstructive and somewhat anarchistic in her methods.

At times this conflict calmed down, but it continued to grow throughout the summer and was to be the dominant conflict in the fall. Due to the loudness and articulateness of both of these individuals, it was rare that their conflicts did not end up dominating discussions.

The Role of the University People

The three individuals from the University—the Director and two graduate interns—tried to play a smaller role in light of the effects of the large University role in the initial staff session in March. Since the three spent two hours in a car together each day travelling between Amherst and Worcester, it was possible for them to discuss issues. Ideas that they came up with would then be presented at the meeting the next day.

These joint ideas were welcomed for the most part though there was a lingering anti-University feeling. This was somewhat exacerbated in discussion by the fact that all three tended to agree on almost all issues and thus sometimes appeared to others as a bloc.

Issues

The conflicts on the staff revolved around several key issues—power, the role of the advisor, the number of learning experiences a student had to take, contracts, and scheduling flexibility. In May the Worcester Director had warned the rest of the staff that while he would acquiesce to certain things during the spring, he was unhappy with the direction of the school and that he would challenge it during

the summer planning session. With that warning, other staff members had prepared themselves and were ready with their own counterattacks. The following is a description of some of the arguments surrounding each issue and the resolution, if any, of the conflict.

Power

Ever since the staff planning session in March, the question of power and decision-making had been confused and troublesome. The Worcester Director had sole legal responsibility from the point of view of the school system, but there were by title two Directors. In addition there was a general notion that power should be delegated to the staff as a whole and to the student body where and when possible. There were mechanisms in both cases to receive that power--the staff meeting and the Town Meeting--but it had not been resolved during the spring as to exactly what decisions should be made where and by what process.

The Worcester Director had been very uncertain of his own power within the administrative hierarchy of the school system. He was called a director, but his job was more like that of a principal than that of a director. This uncertainty compounded his confusion over his role inside the Alternative School. He had spoken often of the school as a democratic body and had gone along with the decisions of the Town Meeting, but his tone and mood often seemed to indicate feelings that were exactly the opposite.

With the start of the summer planning session the Worcester Director laid out his concern about the issues of authority and power:

Where does the power lie
 Where does the responsibility for making a decision lie
 Who do we go to
 They have wanted me to be a benevolent dictator

The issues of power and authority were on the minds of many other people as well and yet there was only one formal discussion on the question, and that was extremely brief. In the pamphlet written at the end of the summer, there was a statement that read:

Final authority in the Alternative School will rest in the position of the Directors, as mandated by the Worcester Public Schools and the University of Massachusetts.

The Directors will serve to maintain the interests of all the constituencies of the school, delegating authority to other individuals and groups within the school community where appropriate—i.e., staff meetings, advisors, Town Meetings, Open Houses, etc.¹

However, it would be incorrect to assume that this statement reflected the feelings of the group as a whole. It was written by one person (the writer) and it did not resolve anything. Most staff members were in favor of a much more differentiated decision making structure, but they were unwilling to put it into practice. The teachers wanted to allow the Directors more freedom to make decisions on their own but the teachers did not trust them personally to make decisions they could live with. On the other hand the Directors seemed unwilling or incapable of delegating, rather than just sharing power.²

¹Operational Framework, p. 11. The Operational Framework (see appendix G) was written at the end of the summer by the writer to summarize the results of the staff summer planning session.

²The difference between delegating and sharing is that to delegate is to give someone else responsibility for an area (even though the person in authority might have to keep final legal responsibility) while sharing is merely allowing someone else to work with the person in authority. Delegation demands more trust and confidence on the part of those in authority and allows subordinates to be involved in areas on a day-to-day basis.

As mentioned in the section on distrust, the staff seemed incapable of breaking into smaller work groups. All important decisions had to be discussed in the large groups. In addition, the decisions of some of the work groups were questioned there, too. While everyone talked of delegating responsibility for certain areas, no one seemed ready to let anything important out of their own sight. This led to some rather humorous situations when staff members who had over-committed themselves to work groups had to try to be in two or three places at once.

Although the old staff members had seen what difficulties these questions of power, authority and decision-making had caused during the spring, they, like the new staff members, seemed more willing to leave these matters unresolved than to delve deeply and resolve them.¹

The Role of the Advisor

After it had been instituted in the spring planning school, the advisor system had quickly become the foundation of the school, but it also became the center of controversy. To some it represented a mechanism for allowing maximum flexibility and individuality while maintaining a high level of student accountability. Within the state and city legal requirements for a high school diploma, a staff member could respond to each student individually, measuring their program against his/her own personal professional standards. To others, it

¹In fact, it was never clear what the process of decision making was during the summer planning session. It was neither majority rule, nor consensus. Issues were just talked about until they died or no one spoke against them.

represented a system without rules or standards, with decisions made on the whim of each teacher.

The role of the advisor was obviously a difficult one. The intent of the system was to break down traditional institutional standards in favor of more personal individualized ones. Since there were different standards among staff members, there were some discrepancies from one person to another, but not so great as to cause any visible problems during the spring.

During the summer planning session the Worcester Director attacked the whole concept of the advisor system. In the face of over-whelming opposition he retreated, but his attention went to two other issues, the number of experiences a student had to take and contracts.

The Number of Learning Experiences

The question of how many learning experiences a student had to be involved in was at the heart of most of the discussions during the spring. At that time it had been a question of the mandate of the Alternative School. Did a student have to finish the five courses they had been involved in up to that point? With the arrival of summer, the mandate of the Alternative School was open, but this issue of the number of learning experiences did not die.

Several times it seemed that there had been a resolution on the question. However, the matter would rise again and it would

become clear that there had in fact been no resolution.¹ The main argument centered over whether students had to be involved in five distinct and approximately equal experiences or whether they could set up programs with varying numbers of experiences, with a total amount of learning roughly equal to that of five standard credits.

Those in favor of equivalency were in the majority, but the issue was never completely resolved. Instead, it became diverted into a discussion about the phasing of students.

Rather than set down rigid rules for everyone, it was decided to create a phasing system which would move students from a structured to a more unstructured situation. The system as it was decided upon was as follows:

- all students would enter the Alternative School as Phase I students.
- the switch from Phase I to Phase II would be the decision of the advisor and the student.
- as before, the advisor would be the person who made the final decisions on a student's program.
- the requirements of each phase were as follows:

¹The way in which these agreements would break down reflects on both the quality of the decisions in the staff meetings and the character of the Worcester Director. Decisions were rarely reviewed or formally stated as decisions with their exact wording spelled out. Frequently decisions came when people were tired of arguing. When decisions broke down it was most often due to the Worcester Director. Whenever he was in disagreement, it was likely that he would challenge decisions over and over again. He had done this during the spring and he continued to do it thereafter.

Phase IPhase II

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) mandatory support group attendance 2) mandatory attendance 3) enforced diversity, which means one learning experience in each of the following five areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I English/Communications II Arts III Sciences IV Body Skills V Social Studies/History | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) participation in the school community 2) educational diversity 3) participation in learning experiences |
|---|--|

While everything was still left up to the advisor, those who had been afraid of the flexibility of the advisor system felt more confident with a Phase I-Phase II system in operation as well. However, several of these items were never defined or agreed upon (such as enforced diversity, participation).

Contracts

During the spring a contract system had been set up, but it had not been followed by everyone. The contract form had spaces for the objectives of the learning experience, the activities to be pursued and the method of evaluation. Some students and staff members had objected to the idea of contracts, but most were just not ready to use them.

The discussion during the summer revolved around two issues—whether or not contracts had to be written to be valid and whether or not a contract had to be made in advance in each learning experience

for it to count toward graduation. This issue was talked about at length, but not resolved. The majority opinion was that written contracts should be used wherever possible, but that it was not possible to make hard and fast rules across the board.

Scheduling Flexibility

During the spring it had been exciting to hop into cars and go off on some instant field trip or to cancel scheduled classes for some special event, but this had also caused a large number of problems. Staff members would disappear and leave half a class teacherless. Students would disappear and leave a class with few, if any, students. Planning in that situation was difficult, continuity impossible.

No one wanted to curtail field trips or to lessen the number of special events, but everyone wanted to structure them so that their interference with other learning experiences would be minimal. This was one area where there was unanimous concern and also where the solution was accepted by everyone.

The solution was to divide the week up into scheduled and unscheduled time. Scheduled time was for regularly scheduled classes and meetings. Unscheduled time was for field trips, special events and meetings between students and advisors. If a staff member wished to schedule a regularly scheduled class in the unscheduled time block, that was permitted, but students had the right to go on field trips on that day without penalty.

Problems Remaining

Several of the issues discussed already were left uneasily

resolved--staff conflict, power and decision making, the role of the advisor, contracts and the number of learning experiences a student had to take. There were in addition several other areas which were either discussed and not resolved or not discussed at all (delegation of responsibilities to staff members, educational diversity, etc.). While it is inconceivable that the staff could have sat down for three weeks that summer and have solved all of the problems of the Alternative School, the continual staff conflict minimized the group's effectiveness to the point where the staff was insufficiently prepared for the opening of the school in the fall.

The area where this was most crucial was curriculum. Part of one morning had been devoted to staff members brainstorming courses they might teach. This was beneficial in that it gave each staff member an idea of the interests of the others, but this process was not pursued further because most staff members were unwilling to commit themselves to certain learning experiences at that point.

It was decided to hold a curriculum "Marathon" in the first week of school in the fall. Modeled after the "Marathon" at the University of Massachusetts School of Education, the "Marathon" was designed to allow staff members to present to interested students the learning experiences they were interested in teaching.

Since staff members were unable to identify what offerings they intended to present at the Marathon, there was no possibility for overall planning and coordination in the area of curriculum. Individual staff offerings could neither be coordinated with other offerings in

the school, nor could they be coordinated with the other kinds of learning options available to students.

The effect of this lack of thought and organization in the area of curriculum will be seen in the next chapter. At the end of the summer planning session it was not a concern to many on the staff.

The staff summer planning session had integrated the new staff members, but it had resolved few conflicts and it did not leave the Alternative School staff prepared for the fall.

CHAPTER VI

Chapter VI will attempt to give a broad overview of the development of the Alternative School from September, 1972 through June, 1973. The first section of the chapter will focus on the problems of the first eight days of school, while the remainder will focus on various problems and issues, how they developed and what effect they had on the Alternative School.

The First 8 Days of School

When the Alternative School reopened in September, 1972, it was discovered that approximately 20 of the students selected in June had decided to remain in the traditional schools.¹ What happened in the first eight days of school made another 20 students decide that the Alternative School was not for them either.

To restart the Alternative School and to integrate all of the new staff members and students into the alternative structure and learning environment the first eight days of school were devoted to special events. The days were described in the Operational Framework:

For the first week and a half in September, the Alternative School will be on special schedule. Four primary tasks will be set.

1. Working on the Physical Environment
2. Taking care of administrative procedures
3. Establishing a sense of community
4. Developing the curriculum

Many of the tasks will be taking place every day or even simultaneously.

¹Most of these students decided to remain because of parental pressure, pressure that was often the outcome of a discussion between the parents and a principal or guidance counselor at a traditional school.

The function of this kind of special period is to involve everyone in the process of the school and the school community as intensively as possible. Only about one third¹ of the school (staff and students) will have participated in the Alternative School previously and it will be important to integrate the newcomers into the whole school very quickly. This will also serve to help people focus on exactly what the Alternative School is and how it functions.

A curriculum 'Marathon' will run 3 days so as to familiarize students with potential areas of learning they might wish to opt for. At the end of the Marathon, classes and other curriculum offerings plus other experiences will be scheduled. Students will be expected to have their individual schedules (for the first cycle) completed at the end of the first eight days.

A special supper will be held for all parents and friends on Wednesday, September 13, 1972.²

The first eight days were bumpy and chaotic ones. Some of this was due to circumstance, some to poor staff planning, but mostly it was due to the large number of new people. It was as though the Alternative School had started from scratch, but with four times as many people involved. Under this pressure the school was bent badly, but it did not break.

The Absence of Three Staff Members

On the first day of school not only were there 10 new graduate and undergraduate interns to be integrated into the staff, but one teacher and two aides were missing. One aide was never heard from and the other called up two days after school started to say that she was in Colorado and that she would not return for three weeks. The teacher had contracted nephritis in rural Africa and was unable to communicate with the school for one week.

¹ Actually the figure should have been one quarter.

² From Operational Framework, pp. 12-13.

Several staff members were able to assume additional responsibilities, but they were taxed very heavily. Two staff members had almost thirty advisees to work with. The combination of absent staff and new interns unsettled and burdened the staff at precisely the time when it should have been the most stable and organized.¹

Student Confusion

While it was expected that the Alternative School would be confusing to many students, several things had been created to alleviate the confusion. Instead, most of them backfired and became part of the problem.

The curriculum Marathon had been intended to open students' eyes to all of the possible learning experiences. However, most students did not understand the purpose of the Marathon and the number of offerings overwhelmed them. In addition to the 70 offerings at the Alternative School itself, students could choose any course in any traditional school in the city, internships, courses at several colleges, adult enrichment classes at night and/or independent study. While this wealth of options seemed impressive to staff members, it was overwhelming and confusing to students. They had no idea what they had to take, what they should look at, or even what the process of setting up an individual program was.

Most new students had come to the Alternative School with very little knowledge of how the school operated. The conceptions they had

¹The idea of substitutes was rejected. The Alternative School had found that it did not need substitutes and that they were not able to function effectively in such a new environment on such a short term basis.

were for the most part erroneous. Some students thought they did not have to do anything if they did not want to. (Many of these left after they found out that work was expected of them.) Others thought that it operated like a traditional school, but offered different kinds of courses. Whatever the misconceptions, they left most students unprepared for the reality of the situation.

It had been intended that senior staff members acting as advisors and support group leaders would be able to clarify the situation and help students find their way. Instead staff members frequently confused the situation even more. Many staff members were confused and uncertain themselves and it was very difficult for them to relieve students' fears.

Students received conflicting answers from different staff members. Since many crucial issues had been left unresolved during the staff summer planning session, staff members were often answering questions on the basis of their own viewpoint rather than school policy. Many students were left not knowing who or what to believe.

Support groups were supposed to meet daily during the first two weeks so that staff members and students could help each other through the period of transition. However, support groups were often unable to serve this function. Students frequently came to meetings looking for concrete answers and hoping to be told what to do. Instead, they received fuzzy answers and discussions of possibilities.

One effect of this confusion was that many staff members discarded Phase I--Phase II and contracts as being too much to handle. It seemed difficult enough without having to explain about either of those ideas.

Schedules

After six days, students were asked to start drawing up schedules for the first seven weeks. This was extremely difficult as most students had still not figured out how they were supposed to choose learning experiences and what the requirements were.¹ Compounding the confusion were the conflicting statements students received from staff members, particularly over the question of how many learning experiences they had to take.

In this atmosphere some students panicked. Some left and never returned. Others dealt with their confusion by signing up for several courses in the traditional schools. Those were safe and comprehensible, though they were to have the effect of tying some students up in rigid daily schedules that they would be stuck with for the rest of the year.

The Pot Luck Supper

One event which did work well was the pot luck supper held during the second week of school. Organized by two staff members and a group of students on two days' notice, the supper was designed to bring together informally staff, students, and parents. Over 400 people attended the meal and the array of food they brought was startling. According to the Assistant to the Superintendent who attended the meal it was one of the largest parent meetings she had ever seen in the city.

¹There was a master schedule for courses in the Alternative School, but students did not know what many of them were. There was also little connection between all of the different types of learning experiences. For instance, students could not see all of their choices for U. S. History at once.

The Results of the First Eight Days

The confusion of the first eight days was difficult to unravel. It set a tone and a precedent for the whole year. The Alternative School had not been pulled together, but in fact had been badly fragmented. Some students had left the school. The curriculum was a sprawling smorgasbord of offerings with staff and students scattered all over the table. Some students had reacted to this disorganization by setting up programs that had little to do with the Alternative School.

Some students had already adapted to the learning environment of the Alternative School and others were to do so over the next few months, but the first eight days had not functioned as an effective transitional period. The staff had been so overwhelmed and so confused individually and collectively that they had not been able to help students very effectively. In some cases they had actually confused students more. One result of this was that some students saw this confusion as indicative of a lack of school policy. They lost respect for the Alternative School as an institution and for the staff as a group of people.

The Staff

During the 1972-73 school year, the staff of the Alternative School changed considerably. There was conflict but it became considerably lessened over the course of the year. For the first time, on two occasions, the staff was able to talk at length about philosophy, goals and objectives. The Worcester Director changed considerably as a person and began to play a stronger administrative role. The University

role was considerably lessened and by the end of the year the operation of the Alternative School had been turned over completely to the Worcester staff. Interns from local colleges and universities began to play a larger and larger role.

How these things happened and what effect they had on the development of the Alternative School will be discussed in the following sections.

Staff Conflict

Many of the staff conflicts of the previous spring surfaced again during the 1972-73 school year, but the context had changed considerably. In the spring there had been no organization, no curriculum, and no school. In the fall there was an Alternative School with its own procedures, patterns and structures, even if they were confused. In the spring the staff had had to create a school; in the fall they were trying to run one. With patterns and structures to fall back on, staff members did not engage in conflict that was nearly as vehement or as caustic as that of the previous spring. In addition, staff meetings were held once a week for one hour instead of 3 to 4 times a week for 2 to 4 hours each.

Staff conflict was continuous but much lighter. The one exception to this was the personal conflict between the Worcester Director and the former English teacher. As stated in the previous chapter, this conflict had become sharply defined during the staff summer planning session. After ten days of school, both of these people seemed to be trying to line up supporters for their positions

among both staff and students. Most staff meetings and Town Meetings were occasions for them to clash. After several months the conflict subsided somewhat but it was still great enough to make the former English teacher resign in February.¹

As in the summer planning session, the former English teacher tried to convince people that the Worcester Director was loud, rigid, traditional, authoritarian and untrustworthy. In turn, the Worcester Director tried to convince people that the former English teacher was subversive, counter productive and disloyal. Both individuals were very strongly committed to the Alternative School, but they had very different personal philosophies, value systems and philosophies of education. Neither seemed capable of talking out their differences with the other. Unfortunately there was very little pressure from the rest of the staff for them to resolve their differences since the rest of the staff itself was deeply divided as well.

As in the previous spring, many of the staff conflicts were very personal with their roots in the differences in values and philosophies held by the individual staff members. Also as in the previous spring it was difficult to get any deep or substantial discussions in these areas. One reason for this was that staff meetings became

¹In June, 1973, the other original teacher resigned partly from weariness and partly from disagreement over the running of the school. Since the writer and the one graduate student from the University who had been present since May, 1972 also left in June, the Worcester Director is the only person left from the original planning school staff.

increasingly dominated by the Worcester Director and his administrative concerns--new forms to be filled out, calls from central administration, procedures for a meeting the following Tuesday, etc. Philosophical discussions or discussions on the general direction of the school were often pushed aside as being off the topic, not being "business." Another reason for the lack of philosophical discussion was the same fear and distrust that had pervaded staff meetings during the spring and summer. Staff members were not supportive of each other or of their ideas. Individuals often ended up being attacked personally for their ideas.

Staff members were often more open about their concerns and ideas in the Town Meetings. The effect of this could have been to include students in the discussion of major policy question. Instead whenever a question of major importance was raised, students were shoved aside while staff members debated among themselves. If students spoke, they were often used as pawns in arguments between two staff members.

However, there were two occasions when staff members did discuss substantial issues. One was started by a definition of goals and the other was at the staff retreat on Nantucket Island.

Goals Meetings

On the prompting of two consultants from N. A. S. P. the Alternative School staff started a process of goals definition and prioritization. After several brainstorming sessions a list of 10 major goals was agreed to by everyone:

- respecting people for themselves
- developing a community
- shared decision making
- place for real learning
- self-awareness
- awareness of society
- awareness of the environment
- the school should be an open system
- to aid people in expressing their needs and goals and to help them experience those needs and goals
- service¹

The goals process was never completed and these 10 goals were never prioritized. One long meeting was held in which prioritization was discussed, but no decisions were made and the topic was never brought up again. That one meeting stands as the only time the Alternative School staff held a formal discussion on goals.

While all felt that the first four goals--respecting people for themselves, developing a community, shared decision making and a place for real learning--were collectively the most important, there were very different shades of emphasis between individuals. Some people felt that the prime responsibility of a school was to develop the cognitive skills of students while others maintained that an environment of individual and collective respect had to be established for students to learn effectively. This was linked to a disagreement as to whether developing a community should come before student academic achievement.

In probing these disagreements, staff members became aware of the fact that they had very different conceptions of the role of a

¹It is interesting to note the de-emphasis of skills in these goals. This seems to have been part of the continuing reaction against the traditional schools.

teacher and the function of education. One group, composed of the younger members of the staff and the interns, felt that the major responsibility of education was to help students in their critical examination of themselves and the world around them. They felt that teachers should help students to see racial, sexual and social stereotypes and to help students define themselves rather than be defined by those stereotypes. This was an active, interventionist model of a teacher. Other staff members, primarily the Worcester Director and one other teacher felt that the function of education was to prepare people for their roles in society. They thought that students should be made aware of their social responsibilities rather than having them think about breaking out of roles.

One goal which was agreed to by everyone was shared decision making, although how this goal was operationalized had obviously been a source of great disagreement. The whole area of decision making will be discussed in another section, but an excellent example of the problem of how shared decision making is operationalized occurred at this time. On the day prior to one of the goals meetings two students had been found drinking in a room in the school. The Worcester Director had talked briefly to them and then told them to leave the school. The staff was simply informed of this fact and the students in the school were never told. Some staff members felt that this was a matter for the whole staff to confront and to take action on. In addition, several staff members felt that this was a matter that should be taken before the Town Meeting. The Worcester Director reacted personally

and abruptly to these opinions and no one felt like raising the question again.

The result of the goals meetings was that staff members had a clearer idea of each other's conceptions of the school, their role and the function of education. However, there was no increased respect for each other's opinions and diversity was still a weakness rather than a strength of the school. The main problem was that the process was discontinued at the most important point. There was no resolution or compromise on priorities and thus there could be no common agreed upon conception of the school.

The Nantucket Island Retreat

During the fall the University people proposed that the Alternative School staff take a retreat one weekend. The initial response varied from enthusiastic to very negative, with opinions spread across the continuum. Many staff members were neutral, but suspicious. After a while all except one staff member agreed to go. The one who did not agree did so on the basis that he was unable to come, though he did not indicate whether he would have come had he been able.

As with the summer planning session, the retreat was limited to staff members only, though full-time interns were included. There was a general recognition that staff communication and staff cohesion were very poor. Staff members felt that they needed time together away from students and away from the school.

Starting with the discussions in the cars on the way to the ferry, the whole pattern of staff interaction and staff communication

changed. Individuals talked about the Alternative School, education and their lives. Other staff members listened. There was no attack and counter attack.

Tension and defensiveness slipped slowly away as staff members got to know and trust each other as people. Much of the retreat was devoted to wandering around the island, shopping in town or running up the dunes. Informal discussions went on all day and often late into the night.

Several formal sessions were held to discuss questions about the school. In general the focus of the discussion was on defusing some of the conflicts of the past rather than in planning for the future. Staff members tended to concentrate on areas they felt they could discuss without major conflict because each additional conflict-free discussion brought the group to a higher level of collective trust. It seemed that no one wanted to discourage that process by raising a problem that was so large that the group would be pushed into conflict. Some obvious areas of conflict such as decision making were only tangentially raised and minimally discussed. Other areas such as where the Alternative School was headed were not raised as formal discussion items either. Staff members wanted to confront the future together. They put off major policy matters until some of the interpersonal value and philosophy conflicts had been dealt with.

The two major areas of disagreement on the retreat did not divide staff members along previous conflict lines. One disagreement was between the older and younger staff members. The younger staff members said they were disappointed because the Alternative School was

not what it could be. Older staff members said they were satisfied because the school was markedly different from the traditional schools. A couple of staff members, particularly the Worcester Director, said that they were not ready to push too hard too fast.

The other disagreement concerned the ramifications of actions taken by staff members. The interns and one younger teacher were neither aware of, nor particularly concerned that certain actions¹ could have potentially disastrous repercussions for the Alternative School. Other staff members tried to tell them of the politics of the school system and how easy and dangerous it was to get in the middle of a controversy.

Neither of these disagreements caused real conflict, however. As the retreat ended, staff trust and confidence had reached such a relatively high level that staff members began to refer to the "Spirit of Nantucket." Staff members felt that they were together as a group and ready to face the future.

Yet, within a few days back at the Alternative School, the "Spirit of Nantucket" had disappeared. Staff communication and cohesion returned to their old norms. Staff meetings returned to attack and counterattack and personal conflict.

The retreat had created a momentary rather than a lasting situation. Since the retreat had not dealt with the future, it could

¹The action that keyed this discussion concerned two staff members allowing students to drink wine in their presence at a support group meeting.

not change the Alternative School by helping create a new one. On the other hand, the retreat was also incapable of changing the existing structures and behavior norms. What existed was too strong and entrenched for the retreat to effect. Several times during the year staff members talked fondly of the kind of discussion and personal interaction they had had on the retreat, but they were either unwilling or incapable of creating that kind of situation in the Alternative School.

Decision Making

While decision making was obviously shared, it was difficult to pinpoint what kind of decisions were made by whom and by what process. For most of the year the Worcester Director drew more and more power closer to himself. Though he shared responsibilities with different individuals and delegated other areas to the staff meeting and the Town Meeting, the process of decision making was confusing and troublesome. Though everyone had a large say in how things were done, there were few group discussions devoted to searching for solutions to problems.

Many staff members were concerned that one or both Directors might make arbitrary decisions without their consultation at any time.¹ Since the areas and the processes of decision making were not delineated,

¹As mentioned in Chapter IV, in the previous spring the decision to expand the Alternative School had been made by the Directors, N. A. S. P. and the central administration without direct staff or student input.

staff members did not know where and when arbitrary decisions might come and thus they were constantly nervous about what might happen. Due to the fuzziness of the decision making process, staff members had great difficulty in telling whether a statement made by a Director was a personal opinion or a matter of school policy. In fact, few decisions were made arbitrarily by one or both of the Directors, but the uncertainty was damaging enough.

These feelings were compounded by personal distrust, particularly of the Worcester Director. Two incidents are sufficient to illustrate the source of some of these staff concerns. One involved the admission of students outside the regular procedure. It had been formally agreed by the staff and students in the Alternative School and approved by the central administration that student selection would be by stratified lottery. The idea of "wild card" admission--special admission at the discretion of the Directors or the staff--had been specifically rejected twice. However, during the summer of 1972 the Worcester Director admitted several students on his own, without consulting anyone else in the Alternative School or in the central administration. While one or two of these students were cases of special need, the others were capable and successful students.

When the school reopened in September, the Worcester Director did not explain what he had done. It was only under pressure a month later that he revealed his actions to the staff and students in the school, though most people had realized what had happened by that time. After some discussion, the Town Meeting gave the Director the right to

admit 10 "wild card" students per year, but this was rejected as improper by the central administration, who asked that no "wild cards" ever be admitted.

What disturbed everyone was that this involved an important policy decision that had been formally approved by the school and central administration (it was even written down). Yet the Worcester Director had acted on his own in direct contradiction. People were afraid that the Worcester Director would act on his own in other situations, whether or not he had been given a mandate to do so.

Another incident was very different but equally disturbing. In the second week of school two staff members were dismissed--an aide and an intern. The aide had returned to school 10 days late without excuse and both Directors agreed that she should be dismissed. However, the rest of the staff was not brought into the decision, but merely informed of the fact by the Worcester Director. The intern was dismissed by the writer for reasons that the writer and the intern agreed to keep private. Both of these dismissals occurred at the same time and their effect was described by a visitor from the University:

The fact that _____ was not dismissed in a public fashion aroused specters of the traditional system of arbitrary abuse of teachers and students. Several of the staff members were concerned that reasons were not given for his dismissal and that perhaps a similar fate could be awaiting them. This could bring more distrust and aid the estrangement that is existing between the director and the staff.¹

¹ Observations by Bill Marshall, September 26, 1972.

Though there were no further staff problems of this kind or any more disputes about "wild cards," these and one or two other incidents augmented an underlying fear and distrust on the part of the staff toward the Directors.

The Worcester Director

Much has been said about the Worcester Director in the course of Part I, but it would be useful to identify how he and his role changed during the 1972-73 school year.

During the previous spring the Worcester Director had been the predominant individual in the school but there were other staff members and several students who were both strong and visible. By October, 1972, however, he had become the dominant personality. This is not to say that he necessarily led the school or that people followed or even liked him. What it meant was that his concerns tended to dominate discussion, that staff meetings focused on him and his administrative problems and that his moods affected the mood of the school. People, problems and things in the school tended to be defined in terms of him. Any time two individuals, staff or student, talked about anything concerning the Alternative School, the name of the Worcester Director usually entered the conversation.

To people outside the Alternative School it was not the Alternative School but the Worcester Director's school. This was true whether the people were teachers, principals, central office administrators or ordinary citizens. To a large extent this was due to the

fact that the Worcester Director was not only an effective spokesman for the school but also because he had spoken about it anywhere, any-time he could.

This identification of the Alternative School with the person of the Worcester Director had advantages and disadvantages. Many people in the city of Worcester knew and respected him. They would listen to him when he spoke about what the Alternative School was trying to do. He gave the school additional legitimacy in many peoples' eyes. Many parents were reassured of the validity of the Alternative School merely because of his presence as a Director.

Since the start of the Alternative School, the Worcester Director had tended to identify himself personally with the school. He had often reacted to criticism of the Alternative School (internal or external) as if it were criticism of himself. In the spring of 1972, staff and students in the Alternative School had had no difficulty separating him from the school. However, as he became more and more the dominant personality in the school, staff and students began to define themselves more in terms of him than in terms of the school. It became very difficult for people, including the Worcester Director, to separate his personal feelings from the policy of the school.

Since all aspects of the school tended to become defined in terms of some aspect of the Worcester Director, individuals who were troubled about the school would criticize him personally. People often felt and acted as if it were necessary to change him in order to change the school.

One effect of this was for staff and students who were dissatisfied with the school to blame the Worcester Director for the problems of the school and then to absolve themselves of the responsibility for finding solutions. This compounded the Worcester Director's tendency to see everything that happened in the Alternative School as his sole responsibility. These two tendencies combined to feed on each other and accentuate each other's effects on the school.

During the year the Worcester Director changed in both his formal role and as a person. He began to take almost all of the responsibility for administering the operation of the school.¹ In this capacity he began to think more and more about possible solutions for administrative problems.

As the year went along, he learned how to deal with problems without reacting so violently. He was able to take more criticism and he learned how to suspend his judgment. He became more reflective and began to think more about the long range future of the program.

Interns

As the year progressed an increasing number of student teachers and interns from local colleges and universities wanted to become part of the Alternative School. In addition to three graduate students

¹One reason for this was the fact that the writer had announced his intention to leave at the end of the school year. The writer's administrative function became less operational and more involved with planning and special projects (credit systems, redesigning the school, the evaluation model, etc.). Added to this intention to leave was the fact that the writer was never proposed as a Co-Director to the School Committee as had been promised. As a result, many students did not know what the position of the writer was.

from the University of Massachusetts there were two students from Worcester Polytechnical Institute who spent the whole year at the school. Other interns came for shorter periods of time from Clark University, Holy Cross and Assumption College. During the winter and early spring there were as many as 15 interns present at one time.

Not only did interns have to plan and implement their own courses, but they had to run around the school to find students to teach. This whole process was terrifying to some interns. However, most contributed several curriculum offerings and added significantly to the atmosphere of the school.

While often naive about education and school politics, interns adapted much more quickly to the Alternative School than the regular staff members did. They tended to be more in touch with the personal problems of students and they were often able to respond to students' academic needs better than the regular staff members.

What was most surprising, however, was the fact that interns made a large number of suggestions as to how to improve the school. This often brought them into personal conflict with the Worcester Director, but several interns showed real ability in defining major problems and proposing solutions for them. Part of the reason they may have been able to do this may be due to the fact that they were not under the pressure that other staff members were. They had more free time and were not subject to the often conflicting demands from parents, students and the school system. Whatever the reason, interns were able to contribute a disproportionate number of new ideas.

Town Meetings

Town Meetings remained an important, but uncertain part of the Alternative School. For some students the Town Meeting held no interest or importance. Some others felt that it was an important symbol of student participation in decision making, but felt no personal compulsion to attend. One quarter of the student body attended and participated regularly. For a while the Town Meeting was moved from day to day to try to attract more attenders. This succeeded only in confusing people and the meeting went back to being the same day and time every week.

No one knew quite what function the Town Meeting should serve. Part of the meeting was devoted to announcements while the rest was for substantial discussions on policy questions. Town Meetings did provide an opportunity for substantial student participation in policy making for the Alternative School. (Town Meetings were also chaired by students, although staff members usually directed the course of discussion.) During the course of the year a large number of students participated and many important questions were voted upon, but there were definite problems. Exactly what policy questions were to be discussed was never clear. When major questions were raised, the discussion was often run poorly and thus arguments became lengthy and confused. Staff members were very uncertain about their roles. They tended to dominate most discussions because of their vocalness, articulateness and the force of their personalities. As in the past, some staff members were constantly demanding out loud that students participate more. Also as in the past, this backfired as most discussions

about student participation were dominated by staff members.

While most staff members wanted to have Town Meetings be a place where staff and students could discuss and set school policy together, it was very difficult to get major policy questions before the Town Meeting and then to have them discussed effectively. Such questions were infrequently raised in the course of discussion, but when ideas were submitted in the form of written proposals the proposals seemed so complete that they were rarely, if ever, challenged.

At the end of the year a system was instituted whereby every budget expenditure was brought to the Town Meeting. While guaranteeing student voting on financial matters, it was a long and tedious process. Moreover, it did not accomplish the aim of having students involved in budget policy, but only allowed them to vote on specific budget requests.

How one gets important policy questions before students is still unresolved. Staff members were learning how to take leadership without dominating the session. However, they have yet to be able to lead discussions into substantial areas. Part of this may be due to the fact that staff members seem incapable of discussing in staff meetings what they say should be discussed in Town Meetings. If teachers in alternative schools really want student participation in formal decision making, then teachers will have to learn to make certain decisions on their own. If the staff can make effective, open decisions, then they can present those decisions to students for their input. Also, if staffs can start thinking ahead, instead of dealing on a day to day basis, students will have more time and opportunity to participate.

Support Groups

Each advisor¹ and all of his/her advisees were intended to function as a support group. They were to help people deal with themselves and with the environment of the Alternative School. In the beginning of the year they proved incapable of helping a significant number of students through the first eight days of school. Most staff members tried to have their groups function effectively, but for a variety of reasons most staff members gave up within a few months. Some had sporadic meetings at night, while others started dealing with advisees on an individual basis only.

Staff members were overwhelmed in terms of their time and responsibility and consequently had little left to run a support group. In addition, staff members either did not know what to do with their support group or were incapable of achieving the ideas they had. Several staff members wanted to use human relations experiences in their groups, but they did not have any training.

Community Meals

In the early fall a group of students and staff members decided to foster a greater sense of community by cooking a meal for the school one Friday. During the week they collected money from anyone who wanted to come, and then they prepared the food. Over 30 people came and the meal was such a success that other groups of students and staff decided to cook communal meals for the school in the following weeks.

¹The Directors, the six teachers, and one graduate intern functioned as advisors.

Eight meals were given in all. Every one except the first was centered on some national food,¹ often the national food of the students and staff members involved. Several parents and one grandparent participated in the preparation of these meals.

In several cases the concept of the meal was expanded to become a week full of events centered around one nationality. The most notable of these weeks was China Week which had over 10 different trips, films, guest lectures, and demonstrations scheduled. The week was organized by an intern and five students who were studying about China with him.

The meals died out for the year because all the people who had done one were not ready to start another. The meals had contributed significantly to the quality of life in the school and gave groups of staff and students the opportunity to work together on a project. At the same time they gave the school some communal and educational experiences.

The Physical Environment

Several attempts to create a brighter and more comfortable environment were made during the year. The largest scale effort was aborted due to the wrath of the Worcester Director and the opposition of several people at central administration. The Alternative School building was old, smoke-stained and virtually abandoned. The school system did not want to spend any time or money on the building and yet as far as they were concerned only the proper personnel could touch

¹The meals were Chinese, Jewish, Greek, Scandanavian, Italian, Irish, African and American Indian.

school buildings. When it was discovered that work was being done on the school the word was quickly passed along that all work should immediately cease and never begin again.¹

A month and a half later the Alternative School was given permission to do a limited amount of painting, but few people were interested. There was never a large and sustained interest in the project. Most staff members acted as though they thought it was a wonderful idea, but were unwilling to do much themselves. Moreover, several staff members hinted loudly from time to time that they would like to look for a new facility. Thus there was little leadership or support for students who were interested in doing something.

The Curriculum

After starting the year on a confused note, the curriculum remained relatively fragmented and uncoordinated for most of the year. There were an extraordinary number of options available to students, but there was no rationale or central thrust running through the whole curriculum.

Fragmentation

In addition to the learning experiences offered within the Alternative School itself (approximately 100), students could choose from any course in a public school, night classes, college courses and

¹Indicative of some administrators' reactions to the Alternative School was a comment made by the Director of Special Programs. In reference to an outside door which had been painted white he stated, "That's the greatest disgrace I've seen in my whole life."

internships. Most staff members were also willing to set up independent studies for those students who requested them. The effect of so many offerings was to diffuse staff energy and to fragment the curriculum. The more offerings the smaller the number of students involved in each. While interns added to the number and the variety of curriculum offerings they tended to fragment the situation even more.

The purpose of having all of these options available to students was to permit them to set up cohesive individual programs that would be in line with their own needs, interests and abilities in terms of both the style and the content of the learning. However, in trying to respond to all of these individual needs and interests, the staff, individually and collectively, diffused its energy.

Some students did create highly personal, highly cohesive programs that took full advantage of the freedom and flexibility of the Alternative School. However, most students put together programs that were a hodge-podge of learning experiences. There was a wide variety in the quality of these programs. Some were due to the eclectic interests of a student, but others were obviously the result of students who did not know where they were going and who had little idea as to how to conduct an intelligent search.

Some Examples

While many of the courses offered inside the Alternative School were fairly traditional, there were some attempts at innovation. Two examples:

- mass media: a learning experience designed to acquaint students with the effects of mass media on themselves and their society through use of videotape.
- survival: a learning experience designed to acquaint students with the concept of survival in any situation, wilderness or urban.

Two examples of internships and how they were used are indicative of their potential as part of a student's program.

- In place of English one student, who is thinking of becoming a reporter, worked at the Catholic Free Press. She accompanied other reporters, helped edit articles and wrote a couple of articles herself. Later in the year she had an internship with the company newspaper of Norton Co. which provided an entirely different newspaper experience.
- A student who is interested in broadcast journalism spent half his week with a local radio station and was allowed to go on the air toward the end of his internship.

Efforts to Reduce Fragmentation

Over the course of the year two different but related efforts were made to reduce the fragmentation and the lack of coordination in the curriculum area. In January the staff was divided into three teams--Arts/Communications, Environmental Studies and Technological Studies. Each team was given the mandate to bring some coordination to its area. One effect that this reorganization had was to give interns more support than they had had. However, for the most part the teams were still struggling at the end of the year. It looked too difficult to try to turn the curriculum around that year and most staff members were not ready to try.

Several staff members tried to offer some cohesion in the curriculum by creating team taught interdisciplinary courses. The first one, called "Wholeness One" was designed to study ecological

systems, both natural and human. It touched upon aspects of sociology, political science and psychology as well as the natural sciences. It was not a complete success but it did attract a substantial number of students. It also spurred the creation of an English/Arts interdisciplinary course later in the year.

Special Events

It had been hoped that frequent field trips and special events could be a significant part of the curriculum. Large periods of time had been left as "unscheduled" for them to occur. While there were a large number of trips in the early fall, both staff and students lost the interest and the energy to go on more than a few trips during the rest of the year.

Several speakers were scheduled in the beginning of the year. One woman (the mother of a student) spoke on Women's Liberation. For weeks thereafter that was the main topic of discussion in school. However, other speakers did not do as well and thus few other people were invited.

One result of this was that "unscheduled" time was either filled with regular classes, internships, etc. or students simply used it as free time. Whatever the merit of the concept of unscheduled time, neither staff members nor students had the energy or inclination to make it work.

Cycles and Weeks of Planning and Evaluation

The school year was divided up into five cycles with a week of planning and evaluation in between. The idea of planning tended to be

lost, but evaluation became a very significant process.

Students and staff members usually sat down for twenty minutes or half an hour each time and discussed what they had done in the previous cycle. At the end of their discussion, both usually summarized their thoughts in a written evaluation. For many students and staff members this was the first time that they had consciously evaluated educational experiences. Students received detailed feedback about their work and were able to discuss it with the staff member. Staff members were able to get feedback from students as to how their efforts had helped or hindered students' learning.

Relations With Central Administration And With Other Schools

During the year relations between the Alternative School and the rest of the school system improved significantly. In spring, 1972 the Alternative School had been trying to create relationships within the school system that were not only new but different from all previous relationships in the system. As these became established and operational communications fell into familiar patterns, there was much less conflict. By January the principals and guidance counselors had stopped their harassment and were willing to let the Alternative School exist. Central office administrators stopped trying to defend their own territory. The Director of Special Programs wanted the program under more and more control, but he exerted less pressure on the school.

Two facts were instrumental in changing people's attitudes toward the Alternative School. The first concerned the fact that the

Superintendent had taken a part-time leave of absence to join the Yale Mid-Career Program. As the year progressed he had to give several presentations on aspects of the Worcester school system. The aspect that he chose the most often and that his fellow students at Yale were most interested in was the Alternative School. Each time he made a presentation, several people in the central office would scurry about preparing material for him. As these presentations began to focus more and more on the Alternative School, both the Superintendent's and the other administrator's attitudes towards the school became more positive.

The other fact was that the School Committee voted unanimously to accept a budget for the Alternative School which was sufficient to fund it completely for a year without the financial assistance of N. A. S. P. This was at a time when the School Committee was either cutting or discontinuing all new and experimental programs. As soon as the Alternative School was funded fully, skeptical principals and administrators had to accept the fact that the Alternative School was going to continue to exist for at least another eighteen months.¹

In addition, the School Committee accepted the evaluation model for the Alternative School a few weeks later saying that it was the best one they had seen in the system.²

¹Worcester was forced to adopt an eighteen month budget in order to change the start of its fiscal year.

²While the School Committee was very interested in the evaluation of the Alternative School, the ambivalence of the central administration on this issue can be seen from an incident which happened a few months later. When the results of a test of students and staff perceptions of the Alternative School and its environment came back, they were routinely given to several people in the central administration. A few days later the Directors of the Alternative School were called to a meeting and told that the results must be kept top secret. They were to be discussed with no one inside or outside the school under any circumstances and were to be kept under lock and key.

The Future

Several things which happened toward the end of the 1972-73 school year are perhaps indicative of future trends in the Alternative School. In June a 2-day whole school retreat was held, though not all students attended. Staff and students were able to interact with each other for a continuous period of time and in a more personal and relaxed manner than they ever had before. What pulled the school together, however, was a drinking incident one night. The Worcester Director decided not to handle the situation by himself, but instead threw the matter before a whole school meeting the next day. Faced with a potentially disastrous crisis, the students realized the responsibilities they had to assume individually and collectively for the school to continue and pulled together to resolve the issue. Staff members made comments, but restrained themselves for the most part and did not lecture students about their responsibilities. The result of the retreat was that staff and students were much closer personally and also had a much more cohesive and collective sense of responsibility for the future of the Alternative School.

To help new students acclimate themselves to the Alternative School, the intake process was significantly strengthened. After students were selected in April (by the same lottery procedure), they and their parents were asked to come in and speak to a staff member. The new students were acquainted with the operation of the Alternative School and their responsibilities, so that they could make a decision as to whether they really wanted to come or not.

The Alternative School began to think more and more about facing outward, as it became more stable within. Relationships with other schools and alternative programs were established or strengthened. In May the Alternative School coordinated a curriculum "Marathon" for all of the alternative programs in the city. The majority of presentations were made by staff members or students in the Alternative School, but people from the Art Museum, the Science Center, four other alternative programs, and one traditional high school made presentations as well. There were over fifty different presentations and over 250 people attended.

The increasing stabilization of the Alternative School has had a number of effects. Most of the staff has been through everything once. The co-directorship ended in name as well as in fact. The staff members with the most divergent opinions have left. With fewer new items on the horizon and a stabler situation, the Worcester Director has been able to relax much more. Staff tension has markedly decreased.

In addition, the dynamics of staff has changed considerably. At a two day staff retreat in June 1973, staff members chose different areas, such as budget, community relations, evaluation, etc. for which they would be responsible. Lines of authority and areas of decision making were made clearer and power was effectively delegated. The decision making process at staff meetings was clarified and in the future one staff member will function as a process observer in each staff meeting. Much of this was possible because staff members, particularly the Worcester Director, did not feel under life and death pressure about the school.

Stabilization has meant that the staff could think about organizing the curriculum and about creating some innovative new programs. Some attention was given to the problem of staff renewal and staff growth.

However, stabilization has also meant an increased bureaucratization of the school. There is a continuing effort to get everything pinned down and under control, often at the cost of flexibility. Procedures are being sanctified and administrative concerns are beginning to assume greater weight vis-a-vis educational concerns.

A modular credit point system¹ which was intended to provide greater flexibility in validating credit in the school is beginning to dominate education rather than serve it. A committee system which was to be a second credit option open to students (in place of the point system) has been allowed in the central administration and forgotten at the Alternative School.

The Alternative School has been successfully established. Whether it will continue to grow as a mature organization is in question. There are forces pulling toward growth as well as toward senility. At the moment, they seem in balance.

¹The point system and the committee system were approved by the school and central administration in April. See appendix for the complete proposal.

PART II

To answer the question of whether an alternative school can be a significant vehicle for change, Part II will delineate some of the innovations implemented by the school and some of its effects on the school system, the students and the staff members.

Delineating the effects of the Alternative School is difficult due to several factors. The program tended to attract people who were interested in changing themselves and as a new program there must have been a large "Hawthorne effect." There were also problems due to the shortness of the time involved and the tendency of the participants to see change as a new norm. However, whatever the extraordinary factors, the fact that the school was established and the innovations were implemented should stand as its most significant measure of success.

CHAPTER I

In Chapter I I shall attempt to describe the differences between Worcester Alternative School and the traditional schools in the city. I hope to give the reader an idea of the nature and the magnitude of the innovations implemented in the Alternative School.

The chapter will be divided into six sections: curriculum, governance, finance, student roles, staff roles, and miscellaneous. On the left hand side of the page there will be a description of an aspect of the Alternative School. On the opposite side of the page there will be a description of the corresponding aspect in the traditional schools in Worcester.

The Alternative School

Traditional Worcester Schools

Curriculum

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|---|---|
| 1. learning experiences for credit can take place--
any time of day
any day of the week
any week of the year | 1. limited primarily to school hours--8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
--no classes on weekends
--no credit for summer work (other than makeup) |
| 2. choice of learning experiences
a) any class in any public school
b) internships
c) night classes
--basic adult education
--enrichment
d) learning experiences at the Alternative School
e) colleges courses where possible and if student is capable
f) individual contract by negotiation | 2. choices limited primarily to classes at each student's home high school; no credit for night classes; internships for a small number of special juniors and seniors in one of the four high schools; some college courses for extraordinary students |

- | | |
|---|---|
| 3. emphasis on affective as well as cognitive growth | 3. emphasis primarily on cognitive growth |
| 4. learning experiences in the school (or internships) can be any length of time over the year and can be any number of days per week and can last as long or short a period of time as desired | 4. primary mode of classes--- 50 minutes, 5 days per week all year long |
| 5. wide choice of program, as to style and content, by student under supervision of advisor (students, however, must fulfill state & city legal requirements) | 5. limited choice |
| 6. curriculum "Marathon" to help students decide their program of learning experiences. | 6. course booklet |
| 7. learning experiences in the Alternative School created on demand of staff and students | 7. classes developed by traditional course approval mechanism by school administration, usually a year in advance and changed very little |
| 8. formal emphasis on learning how to learn (learning how to think systematically, to explore, to ask questions, to set up a program of study, etc.) | 8. indirect only |
| 9. students can leave a learning experience in the school at any time with the permission of the staff member | 9. limited withdrawal |
| 10. large numbers of field trips and special events; open participation to all students; possible credit for single experience | 10. few trips or special events; most limited to within a traditional course |
| 11. joint evaluation of learning experiences by staff and students | 11. evaluation primarily by teachers |
| 12. student and staff mutual agreement on methods of evaluation | 12. evaluation methods decided by school and by the teacher |

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|---|---|
| <p>13. several choices of method of evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) written evaluation b) A-B-C-D-F c) pass/fail d) credit/no credit e) 0-100 f) any other system or combination of systems devised by staff and/or students | <p>13. standardized choices</p> |
| <p>14. student evaluation tied to student planning</p> | <p>14. little connection</p> |
| <p>15. use of support staff (secretary, custodian) for instruction</p> | <p>15. standard use of support staff</p> |
| <p>16. grouping according to interest and ability, no grade levels</p> | <p>16. grouping by grade level</p> |
| <p>17. emphasis on participation in the school community as a learning experience</p> | <p>17. passive membership in the school</p> |
| <p>18. alternative credit systems (see appendix)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) point system-300 points to graduate; (15 points=1 Carnegie unit) b) committee system-graduation based on the vote of an approved committee | <p>18. graduation on accumulation of 20 Carnegie units (limited use of partial credits)</p> |
| <p>19. attempt to measure non-formal as well as formal achievement</p> | <p>19. emphasis on achievement in individual courses, little continuation from year to year</p> |

Governance

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|--|---|
| <p>1. Worcester Director as legal head</p> | <p>1. principal as legal head</p> |
| <p>2. major educational policy making delegated to staff meeting</p> | <p>2. principal and department heads make most educational policy decisions</p> |

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|---|---|
| 3. delegations of some administrative roles to staff members (as of June, 1973) (budget, school building, etc.) | 3. most delegation to assistant principals |
| 4. delegation of broad policy decision making powers to the Town Meeting of staff and students; decision by vote (the Worcester Director reserves the right to make any decision he feels necessary, based on his legal responsibilities) | 4. students not involved in the decision making system |
| 5. some parental involvement through "Open House" meetings; no policy making power yet | 5. some parental involvement through advisory councils, some recommendation power |

Finances

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| 1. the Alternative School has control over its own budgets in the special areas (art, music, physical ed., etc.) | 1. special budgets controlled by the directors and coordinators of the special areas located in the central administration |
| 2. significant transportation fund per pupil | 2. limited transportation fund per pupil |
| 3. special fund for consultants, adjunct faculty, etc. | 3. very limited special support funds |
| 4. budget items voted upon by staff and students | 4. budget decided primarily by the principals and department heads |

Student Roles

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|--|---|
| 1. choice to be a student in the Alternative School | 1. little choice; students go to schools in their geographic area |
| 2. participation in decision making through Town Meeting | 2. some participation for a limited number of students through student councils; most students have little chance to participate in decision making |
| 3. help create courses and shorter learning experiences | 3. little influence on curriculum |

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|---|---|
| 4. can participate in instruction | 4. none |
| 5. voting members on staff selection committee | 5. not allowed |
| 6. participation in support groups | 6. no equivalent in traditional schools |
| 7. 4 grades (9-12) mixed, undifferentiated by grade | 7. high schools are grades 10-12; high degree of segregation by grade level |
| 8. can attend and speak at staff meetings | 8. closed staff meetings |

Staff Roles

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. voluntary participation in the school | 1. some choice, but usually assigned |
| 2. first name basis with students | 2. last name only |
| 3. staff members can teach any subject where they feel competent | 3. staff limited by areas of certification and decision of department heads and administration |
| 4. staff members can teach in a variety of formats and styles | 4. limited primarily to traditional course structure |
| 5. able to change schedules during the year | 5. limited possibility for change |
| 6. schedule defined by each staff member | 6. schedule defined primarily by department head and principal |
| 7. advisor to a number of students | 7. teachers have no similar function on a formal basis; part of the advisor role assumed by guidance counselors but they have much less |
| 8. support group leader | 8. no similar function |
| 9. staff meetings make most educational policy decisions | 9. most teachers have little say in educational policy; usually limited to school administration |

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>10. in service training on site through the University of Massachusetts Teacher Improvement Clinic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --videotaping --feedback sessions with other staff, students and/or University person --use of written instrument to provide student feedback on teaching methods | <p>10. no similar in service training; limited primarily to events on release time days (some in service courses available)</p> |
|---|---|

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>11. voting membership on staff selection committee</p> | <p>11. no participation in staff selection</p> |
|---|--|

Interns

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>12. can teach courses of their own design</p> | <p>12. limited primarily to the courses taught by their supervising teacher</p> |
| <p>13. can give credit</p> | <p>13. credit given by supervising teacher</p> |
| <p>14. participate in staff meetings in making educational policy</p> | <p>14. little opportunity to be involved in educational policy</p> |
| <p>15. participate in Town Meetings; voting on school policy</p> | <p>15. no equivalents</p> |

Miscellaneous

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. initial operation as a planning school to allow for maximum planning and experimentation while in operation</p> | <p>1. most planning done before school opens initially</p> |
| <p>2. evaluation of school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --ongoing --cognitive and affective --open to all students and staff | <p>2. most school evaluation are done every few years; less connection with life of the school</p> |
| <p>3. staff selection by students, staff and parents</p> | <p>3. staff selection in most cases by the principal</p> |

CHAPTER II

The relationship between the Alternative School and the rest of the school district was a very symbiotic one. Trends and forces in the school district helped to create and to define the Alternative School. In turn the Alternative School accelerated several of those trends and introduced some new ideas.

Chapter II will describe several of the effects of the Alternative School on the school district.

The Alternative School Itself

One of the major effects of the Alternative School was simply its existence as a functioning part of the school system. It offered a choice of a significantly different kind of education for 165 students and 7 teachers in the system, choice that did not exist previously.

By its existence the Alternative School also offered a place where new ideas could be tested out and refined: different roles for staff members, different methods of teaching, different methods of evaluating student learning, different methods of evaluating programs, etc. A few of these ideas have had some effect on practice in the traditional schools.

A good example of this concerned one aspect of program evaluation. The Alternative School decided to use a questionnaire developed by the Educational Testing Service called Q. U. E. S. T. A. as part of its evaluation model. The questionnaire was used to test students', teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the environment of the school.

Q. U. E. S. T. A. had been under consideration by two central office administrators for several years, but at the time the Alternative School proposed to use the test, there was no similar type of evaluation instrument in use by the school system. Within two months of the return of the test data from the Alternative School, the school system decided to test 240 students, teachers and administrators on the high school level.

Thus the Alternative School was not the first group in the city to think of using a test such as Q. U. E. S. T. A., but the school's action set a precedent which prompted others into action.

Setting Precedents

Whether or not ideas from the Alternative School are implemented in other schools, each idea which became practice in the school set precedents for other teachers, administrators or schools. Precedents are extremely important to establish in a bureaucracy such as a public school system. The energy needed to establish a new idea is far less if it can utilize an already existing precedent. Thus each precedent established by the Alternative School makes it easier for others to change later.

Two precedents established by the Dynamy Program were particularly important in the founding of the Alternative School. Dynamy had given a year's worth of education to a small number of high school seniors solely through internships in the community. At the end of the year, if a student had performed satisfactorily, an entry was made in his/her grade card at the home high school reading "Dynamy Program--5 credits."

Dynamy thus established the validity of learning through internships and the recording of undifferentiated credit/no credit entries on grade cards.

Following this latter precedent the Alternative School requested that home schools list "Alternative School-5 credits" on students' grade cards. The legal responsibility with home schools was thus satisfied and the Alternative School was then able to set up its own internal credit system.

In a similar way the precedents established by the Alternative School may facilitate the establishment of other innovations in the school system.

The Establishment of Other Alternative Programs

The Alternative School has accelerated the trend toward alternatives in the school system. In February, 1972, there was one alternative program, Dynamy, with 20 students involved. As of June, 1973, there were five major alternative programs with over 450 students involved. Moreover, there are several other alternative programs now under consideration for the near future.

One of these programs is a direct result of the effects of Dynamy and the Alternative School. The alternative is a small student run internship program located in the high school which had the largest number of applicants to both existing alternatives. It was started in the spring, 1972, primarily by students who had been rejected by either Dynamy or the Alternative School.

The fact that the high school principal supported it must be seen in part as an effort by the principal to keep his "good" students, many of whom were opting for alternatives. There were obviously other factors involved but it is doubtful that he would have established such a program on his own.

The idea of alternatives has affected plans for a new high school in the city. One of the possibilities now being considered is setting up the school as 3-5 alternatives rather than as one monolithic program.

Effects on Other Teachers and Students

The Director of Special Programs once complimented the Alternative School this way:

The most important effect is making those teachers in the regular schools teach alternative ways in their own classrooms. While this is one goal of the Alternative School, one would have to say that most new behaviors in the traditional schools are the result of already existing trends than of the effects of the Alternative School.

Certainly the Alternative School has made many teachers and students think of different ideas. Most of this effect has come through students from the Alternative School taking classes in the traditional schools or talking to their old teachers. Many of those teachers have been surprised at the enthusiasm and the awareness of the students they come in contact with. It is particularly surprising to teachers who knew the students before. (The effect of the Alternative School is magnified here by the fact that traditional teachers

tend to come into contact with students who have changed rather than students who are having trouble.)

Students from the Alternative School come to traditional classes for specific purposes and frequently negotiate with teachers about their learning. This often makes both the teacher and the other students in the class think more about what they are doing. It has also established the fact that it is possible to effect changes within the existing structures.

Summary

The Alternative School has had a number of demonstrable effects on the school system. It has created precedents, accelerated a trend toward alternatives and introduced new ideas and practices. People are talking about creating options and about alternative methods of teaching and learning. Whether these trends will continue and whether the effects are long lasting can not be answered at this time. What the experience of the Alternative School does prove, however, is that an alternative school can be a significant vehicle for several kinds of change in a school district.

C H A P T E R I I I

In Chapter III I will try to give the reader several perspectives on the effects of the Alternative School on its students. (The reader is referred to Chapter I for differences in student roles.) It is difficult to ascribe any changes in students to the Alternative School experience in a scientifically valid manner. There was no control group (for that matter it would have been impossible to create a valid control group) and there was relatively little testing.

What I offer to the reader instead is information from a number of perspectives designed to give the reader impressions of the student body and the changes individual students went through. The first section will be general impressions and observations of my own, combined with relevant comments from students. To highlight my observations I will describe brief case studies of five students. The final section will contain some comments by parents.

Personal Impressions and Observations

The effects of the Alternative School on its students were as diverse as the student body. There were students who had been academically successful in the traditional schools and who had liked the education and their life there. There were students who had coped or even been relatively successful in the traditional schools, but who had become psychologically turned off and alienated. Lastly, there were students who had dropped out or were about to drop out.

My general impression is that the Alternative School had a

very positive net effect¹ on about 30% of the student population, slightly more on the successful and turned off students, slightly less on the drop outs. The school had a smaller positive net effect on another 30% of the student body. The net effect on the remaining 40% was either neutral or slightly negative.

Perhaps the most important effect of the school was on self-concept. As one student said in the film made of the school:

I feel like a person here, in the regular schools, I didn't.

What is particularly interesting about that statement is that it was made by a student who had been very successful in the traditional schools--high grades and a leader of her class.

Many students felt much better about themselves. Their self-concepts became more positive. This was not true of all students, but it was true of most and it had several other related effects.

The more positive students were about themselves, the better and more efficiently they tended to learn. Since the Alternative School was one cause of this improved self-concept, students tended to like school more. Some students who had hated going to school every day started to like going again. Attendance improved for many students.

Many students became more interested in, or, in some cases, less antagonistic toward learning. This meant that they learned and retained

¹These impressions are based on my own observations. I include academic achievement as well as self-concept, motivation, maturity, responsibility and attitude toward life and learning. At various times I talked with student teachers, staff members, college professors, supervising student teachers, and with college students who were doing papers on the school. They and the data from several questionnaires tended to confirm my observations.

more in shorter periods of time than they would have prior to that point.

The responsibility and maturity of some students increased greatly. There was little vandalism or theft in the school. The fact that there was so little vandalism was particularly surprising in view of the age and condition of the building.

In school there were many students who took responsibility for helping run special events or various aspects of the school. On field trips students were noticeably more responsible than groups of students from other schools visiting the same places.

There were some students that the school did not seem to be able to help. Some students dropped out, though virtually all of these would probably have done so anyway had they remained in the traditional schools. Others came to school, but did little. Instead of automatically going from class to class as they would have in a traditional school, they often wandered around not knowing what to do.

Staff members tried to work closely and personally with both kinds of students, but sometimes all of this attention did not achieve any visible results. This happened most often when students cared very little about themselves. If students did not care about themselves, it was very difficult for teachers to do the caring for them.

There are several reasons for the positive effects on students. In many ways the most important factor was the small, close personal atmosphere of the school. At least one staff member was in close

contact with most aspects of a student's life. Usually several other teachers and interns were in almost daily contact with the same student.

Most everyone in the school knew each other. There was a much more homelike and personal atmosphere in the school. Teachers were real people to students. The informality of the school tended to blur personal and academic interaction between staff and students. Personal life and school life intermingled to a far greater degree than in traditional schools.

The relationship between students and staff members was one of the strongest factors in the success of the school. As students came to see teachers as individual human beings, rather than simply as teachers, they began to respect them more. Many teachers are afraid that personal friendship and the use of first names between teachers and students undermines respect and breeds contempt. The opposite turned out to be the case in the Alternative School. (Use of first names is not the key to this question, but merely one strategy to announce and to accelerate the creation of new relationships.) The respect between staff and students made it possible for staff to be far more effective in their personal and academic contacts with students. Staff member's efforts were seen as those of friends, rather than as those of enemies.

A great deal of responsibility was expected of students. They received large amounts of staff help and guidance but they were expected to set up their own schedules and carry them out. They were expected to take responsibility for their own decisions and to help in the running of the school. Some students could not handle this

responsibility and they returned to the regular schools. For most of those who remained, it had a positive and maturing effect.

The flexibility of the school permitted staff members to respond to each student's academic and personal needs individually. They could set up learning experiences geared specifically to that student's individual needs and interests. If a student's personal problems were too great, they could respond to those needs first.

A statement by one student indicates the kind of effect the school could have:

I think the school has been perfect for me, my needs. The personal attention is fantastic, so is the variety of courses and internships. Lack of grades has improved my work. The atmosphere is conducive to learning. I have become more responsible and intelligent.

This kind of strong feeling created a passionate belief in the school which revealed itself several times.

In January, 1973, a test from the Educational Testing Service, Q. U. E. S. T. A., was used to survey student, and staff attitudes toward the school. A brief description of the results will give the reader an idea of student feelings.

I have chosen four key questions and the results of one section to compare the perceptions of students in the Alternative School of their environment to perceptions of students in traditional schools of their environment.

1) In general, your own experience in this school has been a good one.

	<u>Alternative School</u>	<u>Traditional</u>
no response	0	1
strongly disagree	2	4
disagree	7	13
agree	35	61
strongly agree	58	11
no opinion	4	9

2) Do you think your school has influenced your progress in improving your sense of responsibility?

	<u>Alternative School</u>	<u>Traditional</u>
no response	18	17
hindered my progress	2	5
not influenced me anyway	16	27
helped my progress a little	26	36
helped my progress a great deal	39	15

3) Do you think your school has influenced your progress in increasing your desire to learn?

	<u>Alternative School</u>	<u>Traditional</u>
no response	18	17
hindered my progress	4	10
not influenced me any way	9	26
helped my progress a little	32	32
helped my progress a great deal	39	15

4) Students have a reasonable opportunity to influence change in the school.

	<u>Alternative School</u>	<u>Traditional</u>
no response	0	1
strongly disagree	2	14
disagree	4	26
agree	33	42
strongly agree	58	9
nc opinion	4	8

Each of these sets of responses show a very pronounced shift toward the very positive side. Many students were emphatic in their

belief that the school was doing a good job for them and was responding to their needs.

One series of questions tested differences between what goals participants wanted emphasized and their perceptions of what goals were actually emphasized. While there was a considerable gap for traditional school students, there was almost complete congruence for students in the Alternative School.

Case Studies

The five students I have selected to profile show some of the different types of students and the effect of the Alternative School on them. While they are a diverse group, they should not be taken as indicative of the whole student body.

R. J.

R. J. joined the school in April, 1972 as a junior. His two main interests in life were auto mechanics and mechanical drawing. A very quiet and mature young man, he had done reasonably well in school (B average) but had not found school particularly interesting.

A large part of his academic work while he was a student at the Alternative School consisted of an independent study in auto mechanics under the tutelage of his father who owned a service station. In addition, R. J. took courses at night from several automobile companies--Volkswagon, Porsche, General Motors, Ford.

At the same time R. J. negotiated a special arrangement with his mechanical drawing teacher at his home high school: R. J. could

come in any five hours a week he wanted to and would simply ask for help when he needed it.

During his senior year, R. J. and his advisor felt that he needed a new challenge. To get some experience in practical mechanical drawing, R. J. negotiated an internship with a construction company in Worcester. For 8 weeks he worked in their drafting department under the tutelage of professional draftsmen.

On the basis of this experience and a growing interest in mechanical drawing he decided to apply for admission to a technical institute in Boston. A man from the admissions department was so impressed with R. J.'s initiative and maturity that he accepted him for admission on the spot.

To prepare himself for the institute R. J. started a crash course in basic physics with an intern from Worcester Polytechnical Institute.

Though R. J. did very little work inside the Alternative School itself, the school was able to facilitate his learning by allowing him to pursue his interests in a way that was more efficient and more suitable for him.

B. A.

B. A. joined the Alternative School in September, 1972. He had skipped one day out of every three the year before and had failed all five of his courses.

At the Alternative School, B. A. and his advisor set up several schedules during the course of the year trying to respond to

B. A.'s interests. Each time B. A. promised to work hard and each time he stopped coming to school within a few weeks. He could not take much responsibility for himself or for his learning.

Outside of school B. A. took several jobs during the year. He either quit or was fired from each one.

At the year's end B. A. had neither learned much academically, nor had he learned much about himself. B. A. does not seem to care very much about anything at the moment. He has very little interest in life and seems to care only about being able to be with a group of friends who are several years older.

C. P.

C. P. came to the school in September, 1972 with one abiding interest in life--animals. Up through grade 9 he had become more and more withdrawn personally and more and more alienated from his teachers and classmates. (His marks were C's and D's.) Since his parents often expressed many of the same concerns as his teachers, C. P. often withdrew from them as well.

C. P. spent 2 days a week at the Worcester Science Center learning about animals and animal care from the experts there. During the first part of the year the rest of his week was spent wandering around the Alternative School avoiding teachers, particularly the math teacher.

In November, C. P. started spending a lot of time in the art room or in the company of the art teacher. Through her efforts and the openness of several interns, C. P. began to feel much better

about himself and he began to trust others more. By April he was participating with several staff members on projects for the school. C. P. will be teaching a course on animals in the school starting in September, 1973.

C. P. was never able to do much math or English. His skills in these areas are well below average. For most of the year he became extremely alienated whenever people mentioned work in these areas. By June he was less alienated, but he had still done little work on his math and verbal skills.

B. N.

B. N. is a very active, interested student. His marks in Grade 9 were primarily B's. His main interest in life is films, particularly comedies of the 1920's and 1930's.

B. N. committed himself to a very full and very independent schedule of learning experiences. Many of his on site experiences were independent studies. For the first five months many of these independent studies did not work too well. He worked hard, but his reading had little consistency and he tended to jump from topic to topic. He did not seem to have a good understanding of what he was reading.

As the year went along he learned how to learn and the quality of his work improved substantially. He started writing a history of Laurel and Hardy with an analysis of the development of their humor. In his U. S. History independent study he read T. Harry Williams' biography, Huey Long, for its historical content and also for Williams'

biographical style.

B. N.'s other work in the School included a course on mass media. During the year, B. N. and several other students wrote scripts and filmed their work.

To gain more knowledge of films and media, B. N. started an internship at a local television station. To share some of his interest with the rest of the school he started a weekly film series at the Alternative School.

C. R.

C. R. came to the Alternative School in April, 1972 with an overwhelming desire to be an air traffic controller. Accordingly, she set up a schedule of learning experiences that would prepare her for this goal. She was already involved in the Civil Air Patrol and she set up an internship at the Worcester airport, which continued through January, 1973. While she realized that she was weak in math and physics she decided to leave those for the 1972-73 school year.

By November, 1972 she had changed her mind and no longer wanted to pursue a career in air traffic control. For the rest of the year she bounced from one idea to another. Some possibilities she explored systematically, while others were interests which lasted only a couple of days.

C. R. started looking for instant solutions to her problems. She was engaged to be married twice and after that tried to join the armed services. This search took so much of her time that C. R. began to neglect her academic work and by the year's end was able to receive

only 75% of a year's worth of credit.

In June, 1973, she decided to return to the traditional schools. Her personal life has become such a problem that she found that she was unable to concentrate on taking any responsibility for her own academic work.

Parent Perceptions

Many parents were initially very skeptical of the Alternative School. Some remained that way, but others became very favorable to the school as they learned more about what it was trying to do. The most important factor in changing parent attitudes were changes in their children.

A parent questionnaire was sent out in May, 1973 to ask for parent's feelings toward the school and their perceptions of the children's progress in the Alternative School. One negative response is typical of the feeling of some parents:

(He) is basically lazy. While this has not changed, the Alternative School has given my child the opportunity to be lazy and get away with it.

Another response was extremely positive:

My child almost always has 'made it' in the traditional school system, but he was rarely 'turned on' and often bored and disgusted with the time he was wasting when he wasn't learning. He is a true student in the sense that he is only happy when he is learning and is not interested in competing for the sake of a mark. He's not bored any more (if he is, he can do something about it). He seems to have more confidence in himself as an individual, an interest in things in which he does not excel (sports, crafts)—he's not afraid to do things poorly. Most of all I think he has matured emotionally—he has a greater sense of responsibility—to himself and to others and a greater understanding of other people's feelings. He's more tolerant. I can't really be sure that it is the school that has done this—it might just be a natural growing process—

but I really do think that his personality could only mature under a free, learn-by-your-mistakes atmosphere that the Alternative School has and the traditional school doesn't have—and that his parents are not always about to provide.

The best aspect [of the school] is that you treat the kids with RESPECT . . . [also] the sense of security that I get from the feeling that my child is given personal attention to his particular needs—both educationally and emotionally; that he is given the freedom to be himself and to expand and grow under an affectionate and patient eye at an age which is so frustrating and frightening to someone as emotionally involved as a parent . . .

While the feelings of that parent are far more enthusiastic than most, the maturing, the increased responsibility, the chance to grow and the close personal contact with staff members were mentioned by many other parents.

Thus the perceptions of student progress by myself, by parents and by students themselves tend to coincide. If the Alternative School has actually had this kind of effect on its students, then it can be said that the program was truly successful.

CHAPTER IV

For most staff members, the Alternative School was unlike any previous experience they had had in education. It was confusing, frustrating, exhausting and even frightening at times. The reason for this was that most staff members were undergoing significant changes both as people and as educators. These changes were often painful and the way to the new attitudes and behaviors was usually full of zigzags.

What Changed

One of the greatest changes was in staff members' interest in coming to school and in being a teacher. Despite the problems of the school and the conflict on the staff, staff members said that they usually looked forward to school each day:

It gave me a place and something to look forward to, rather than just being a teacher.

I have never enjoyed teaching that much . . . [this year] I looked forward to going to school . . .

These feelings had a significant effect on both the development of the school and the changes in staff members. Because they were doing something they wanted to, staff members brought a great deal more energy and interest to their work. They were not just doing a job, but were doing everything they could to make the school work.

When people are doing something they want to, the time and energy they have to devote to the task seems to increase dramatically (often without subtracting from the time and energy they have devoted to other things.) This happens most notably in times of war, but it

also happened in the Alternative School and it helped drive the school forward.

Since staff members were interested in coming to school, the changes they underwent there came sooner than they would have otherwise. People will suffer a great deal more pain and confusion voluntarily than they will involuntarily.

Many staff members felt that the Alternative School helped them change as people. Some of the personal changes described by two interns are among the most moving:

My relationship with the school has made me an optimistic person. I've never been one before in my life. I think it's a great way to live.

It helped me to learn about and to better understand myself and others. The school, the staff and the students have brought me a little closer to becoming a feeling and loving human being. What more can one ask of a project.

Since staff members felt better about themselves they were able to help students more.

Many of these personal changes were linked to changes in staff members' educational attitudes and behaviors. Their perceptions of what a school was and of possible methods and styles of teaching and learning expanded significantly. This was perhaps most evident in the statements of the two more conservative staff members. As already mentioned in Part I--Chapter IV the Worcester Director said that some of the things he had not thought possible turned out to be some of the most significant contributions to the school. The statement of another teacher reflects many of the same feelings:

I learned that the Worcester Alternative School was not a point in place and time--in fact it seemed to be moving tangentially at twice the speed of light-- . . . I see some problems with the school . . . but I've undergone a drastic metamorphosis. I thought a lot of things shouldn't be in schools and now I find that that they work, at least some do anyway.

Staff members learned that there were many different ways of teaching. They began to find the styles that were the most comfortable for themselves. At the same time they learned to appreciate staff members utilizing other styles. For instance, despite their other differences, the Worcester Director and the former English teacher admired each other's teaching abilities. The Worcester Director is a straight stand-up lecturer who does most of the talking. He keeps his classes going in one direction and is very task oriented, although his manner often resembles that of a vaudeville entertainer. The former English teacher was extremely Socratic in her methods. While she supervised students very closely, she often let them wander far and wide, trying to let them find themselves and what they were interested in. She saw herself both as a resource to students and as a guide to other people and resources in the school system or in the community.

The Worcester Director and the former English teacher learned from each other. While they did not change their own styles, they learned the viability of the other's way and how to make use of that for their students.

Staff members found that they needed to spend a large percentage of their time counseling students. This turned out to be more productive for students than using that time in class. They found that it

was not necessary to meet in class five times a week and that many high school students were quite capable of studying independently.

As the 1972-73 school year progressed, the staff also became more sophisticated in seeing what kind of learning experiences were best suited to achieve particular goals. They realized that internships and classes achieve different results and that an imaginative combination of the two can give total results greater than the sum of the parts. As this realization is put into practice, teachers will be able to utilize their own skills more effectively and will be able to steer students toward the most appropriate learning experiences for their particular needs and interests.

One of the most interesting changes in staff members was that they began to accept the responsibility for student failures. Instead of blaming the students, their parents, the environment or the school system, staff members started blaming themselves. In some instances this became detrimental to the school when staff members became depressed by their repeated failure with a particular student. However, what it usually did was to make teachers try every idea they could think of to help a student.

Why Did These Changes Happen

Some of these changes were accomplished voluntarily. All of the staff members had volunteered for the school, creating a commitment to the school as well as an expectation that there would be change.

Some staff members were committed to trying new ideas and they felt that the Alternative School offered both the opportunity and the

support for that process.

I wanted to make mistakes and to feel what it was like to make mistakes. I just kept trying things. It felt good. I told kids to do those same things. I understand a lot more . . . [about teaching] now Because of the process [of experimentation] I'll do a much better job than I would have done otherwise. I needed support to make mistakes and I felt I got it. I felt I could just go ahead and do what I wanted to.

This support came from students as well as staff members:

When one of my students approaches me and says, 'I don't think you really want to be here,' she is expressing an understanding, based on her feelings of my situation in the school. This helps me to recognize and deal with the tension and frustration I sometimes feel while at the school.

Due to the open structure of the school, the opportunity for staff members to change their schedules frequently during the year and the availability of real feedback, staff members were able to try new ideas and then to refine them until they were satisfactory or to drop them if they were unsuccessful. Staff members felt that they would not be penalized if something did not work. Thus remaining the same and trying new roles and methods were put on an equal footing.

Some of the changes in staff members were actually coerced. This came about through several different factors. Since the Alternative School removed many of the excuses teachers traditionally used as to why they were unable to change, staff members in the school often felt they had to do the things they said they had always wanted to, but could not.

Staff members were also forced to change in light of the realities of the situation. If something was not working, it was often painfully obvious. While there may not have been agreement on what to do next, staff members at least had to discard their old ideas.

The Alternative School had the effect of making all staff members face tough questions. Problems were not left to the administration alone. Questions such as governance, credit and evaluation had to be faced by everyone, whether they wanted to face them or not. This had a profound effect on many staff members and caused them to think about education in a more total way.

There was also a tremendous amount of pressure from students and other staff members to change. In a school committed to change, this pressure was hard to resist. Pressure could come from students leaving classes they did not like, through discussions in staff meetings or through discussions in Town Meetings.

Some staff members jumped on the bandwagon while others had to be pushed. For instance, it was evident that during the spring, 1972, the Worcester Director was often being forced to change against his will. He resisted many new ideas, such as the advisor system—as it was instituted—and only went along with them in the face of overwhelming opposition to his position on the part of the other staff members and the student body.

Change can create its own momentum. This was an important factor in the spring, 1972. Consolidation is usually needed to permanently institutionalize changes, but consolidation can often open the door to those who would like to retrench. There is a fine line between too much change and allowing too much consolidation. The rapid expansion of the school in the fall, 1972 greatly unsettled the school, but it did keep up the momentum for change. In June, 1973, the school was consolidating and it began to retreat from some new ideas

and to retrench. Whether it will move forward again is in doubt, because the momentum for change has been greatly reduced.

The Alternative School As A Training Program

With its opportunities for exploration and change and its educational and personal support (or encouragement) for those activities the Alternative School offers an excellent training program.

Staff members could introduce new curriculum ideas or new methods of teaching and have an opportunity to explore and refine them. They were able to make contact with universities and other schools that had people or resources that might help them. In addition, through the Clinic to Improve University Teaching at the University of Massachusetts, they were able to receive detailed feedback on their teaching activities. Thus the Alternative School itself became an inservice program.

The supervisors of student teachers (interns) from two local colleges said that the Alternative School was the best experience that any of their student teachers had had. They emphasized the importance of the opportunity that the student teachers had to explore different teaching styles. They said that the interns had been able to see that a much wider variety of teaching methods was possible and that their conception of possible learning experiences had been greatly expanded.

The supervisors pointed out that the Alternative School had given the interns far greater responsibilities than they would have had in a traditional school. Besides setting up and evaluating their

own classes, interns participated in staff meetings and Town Meetings. In this way they helped set educational policy and helped govern the school.

The Alternative School was perhaps most important as a training ground for the two Directors. The Worcester Director went from being a high school math teacher to one of the most innovative administrators in the school district in little over a year. In May, 1973, he was interviewed for the principalship of the new high school. The position will not be filled for at least another year, but the Assistant to the Superintendent said that he was the only person of the thirty people interviewed who had a good grasp of the possibility (and problems) of innovative programs. Thus not only had he been trained as an administrator, but he had also had experience in implementing major innovations.

For the writer, it was also a very successful experience. It was an opportunity to learn about administration, change and virtually all aspects of a school. Since it was done in conjunction with a doctoral program, the experiences in the field and the experiences at the University of Massachusetts served to reinforce and to deepen each other.

A word of caution, however. Alternative schools are very different from traditional schools. The pressures and possibilities in them are different than those in traditional schools. For this reason, they should not function as the sole training experience for teachers. Student teachers should see what it is like to teach in a

traditional school as well as in an alternative school. They should learn how to operate within a traditional structure and how it affects students and teachers as well as learning about an alternative environment. Student teachers who had only taught in the Alternative School tended to have very little sympathy for teachers and administrators in the traditional schools.

PART III

The function of Part III is to review and analyze several key factors in the development of the Alternative School. To gain additional perspective on these factors I will present three case studies of change and then compare the recommendations derived from these studies with the Alternative School data.

Where pertinent I have tried to utilize the theoretical constructs of several change theorists, both to help analyze the data from the school and to test those theories against the realities of the situation.

In the last chapter I have attempted to bring together some thoughts on the nature of change.

CHAPTER I

Chapter I will focus on three case studies of change—one in higher education, one in elementary education and one in creation of a center for the mentally retarded. In depth, case studies of change are rare but useful. One is able to see the process of change from an overall perspective.

The three case studies of change are presented for comparison with the development of the Worcester Alternative School. What is interesting to note is the similarity of all three cases and the congruence of the observers' recommendations.

Warren Bennis—The Leaning Ivory Tower¹

Warren Bennis joined the State University of New York at Buffalo as Provost of the Social Science Faculty at a time when a new president was undertaking a massive change effort. Bennis' book, The Leaning Ivory Tower, is an attempt to see that change from the inside. He tries to point out the genesis and development of certain problems and the interplay of people, positions, ideas, the institution, and its environment. It is a personal history in both its very personal descriptions of the people involved and Bennis' very personal perspective. At the end of the book he summarizes what they tried to do and what went wrong. He then gives eleven guidelines that he feels promoters of rapid or massive change would do well to follow.

¹Warren Bennis, The Leaning Ivory Tower (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973).

What They Tried to Do

In the late 1960's the President of the State University of New York at Buffalo, Martin Meyerson decided to create an academic utopia. Meyerson had come to Buffalo after a successful career as the first director of the Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies, the Dean of the College of Environmental Design at Berkeley and then as the acting chancellor at Berkeley (pg. 117).

When Bennis was first approached by an assistant to Meyerson, the assistant delineated the outlines of the new utopia—"an academic New Jerusalem of 'unlimited money, a \$650,000,000 new campus, bold and new organizational ideas, President Meyerson, the number of new faculty members and administrators to be added, the romance of taking a mediocre up-state university and creating--well--the Berkeley of the East'" (p. 112).

Meyerson's plan as he outlined it to Bennis had three thrusts:

- The restructuring of the ninety existing departments into seven new faculties, each with its own provost. This was intended to encourage interdisciplinary programs. (In addition each provost would have the resources and the flexibility to implement new academic programs.)
- The creation of thirty new colleges to serve the residential, social and educational functions for 400-600 students. This was to 'offset the apathy and anomie characteristic of an enormous campus' and to 'counteract the strange hold that traditional departments have on a university.'
- The creation of University-wide action-research centers devoted to such issues as international studies, urban studies, etc. (pp. 117-118).

The following year these ideas were put into practice but the results were not what had been expected. Initially change was pervasive, but as Bennis said, "Camelot lasted barely a thousand days." (pg. 128).

Results

Four years later, Buffalo was not the "Berkeley of the East."

It had become a disaster for Meyerson and his dreams:

- President Meyerson had resigned
- his chancellor had resigned
- two of the three provosts had resigned
- "the six colleges were struggling for their existence; the initial energies and ideas behind them dissipated"
- "the directors of the three special centers had resigned . . . only one . . . was still in operation."
- the building plans had been delayed and cut back
- "practically every appointment made by Meyerson and by the other 'Meyerson men'" had resigned
- the "old guard" at the University had regained control
- several "superstars" on the faculty had left
- the mood on campus was one of diminished expectations (pp. 130-131).

Reasons for Failure

Bennis says that he doubts what they were trying to do was possible, but he points to several specific reasons for their failure.

- the administration consistently ignored the warning signals of weakness that would ultimately prove fatal
- the administration paid little attention to "valuable, objective intelligence" they received from the outside
- reorganization was visible, dramatic and massive, but without the necessary impact on individual faculty members ("it permitted people to live in both worlds, that of superficially exciting change and that of actually comfortable academic conventionality")
- many conservative faculty remained in informal positions of influence
- reorganization had complicated "the university's already baroque structure" (pp. 133-134).

Guidelines for Future Innovators

Bennis offers eleven guidelines for other administrators who would attempt the same kind of massive change and some rationales:

1) Recruit with scrupulous honesty. ". . . consciously or not, I sweetened the package even when I was trying to be balanced and fair . . . We were naive. The recruiting pitch at Buffalo depended on the future. We made little of the past and tended to deemphasize the present . . . We had raised expectations as high as any in modern educational history. When our program met only a part of these expectations, the disillusionment that followed was predictable and widespread. The disparity between vision and reality became intolerable." (pp. 136-137)

2) Guard against the Crazyies. "Innovation is seductive. It attracts interesting people. It also attracts people who will take your ideas and distort them into something monstrous." (p. 138)

3) Build support among like-minded people, whether or not you recruited them. "Change-oriented administrators are particularly prone to act as though the organization came into being the day they arrived . . . Institutions are more amenable to change when they preserve the esteem of all members." (p. 138)

4) Plan for how to change as well as what to change. "Buffalo had a plan for change, but we lacked a clear concept of how change should proceed. A statement of goals is not a program . . . Change depended on three things: participation by the persons involved, trust in the persons who advocated the change and clarity about the change

itself. None of these conditions was fully present . . . and, as a result, the change was imperfectly realized . . . The administration relied on the model of successive limited comparisons, popularly known as 'muddling through'" (p. 140).

5) Don't settle for rhetorical change. "We allowed ourselves to be swept along by our rhetoric" and neglected other tasks. (p. 141)

6) Don't allow those who are opposed to change to appropriate such basic issues as academic standards. "We allowed the least change oriented faculty members to make the issue of standards their own." (p. 141)

7) Know the territory. "We never mastered the politics of local chauvinism." (p. 142)

8) Appreciate environmental factors. "We neglected to protect new programs from external forces." (pp. 142-143)

9) Avoid future shock. "Buffalo aspired to be the University of the Year 2000 . . . We put so much stock in the vision of future greatness that our disillusionment was inevitable." (p. 143)

10) Allow time to consolidate gains. "The campus had . . . undergone major surgery and did not have sufficient time to heal before a series of altogether different demands . . . were made on it." (p. 144)

11) Remember that change is most successful when those who are affected are involved in the planning. "Nothing makes persons as resistant to new ideas or approaches as the feeling that change is being imposed on them . . . A clumsier, slower, but more egalitarian approach to changing the university would have resulted in more permanent reform." (p. 144)

Gross, Giacquinta, and Bernstein--Implementing
Organizational Innovations¹

In reviewing the literature on educational change Gross, Giacquinta and Bernstein came to the conclusion there was very little information or analysis of the problems of implementing an innovation. They said that most social scientists had usually accounted for the success or failure of an innovation on the basis of failure to overcome initial resistance to change. They maintained that there are many innovations where people are initially favorable to the change but later develop a negative orientation to the innovation. As a result they eventually become unwilling to implement it fully.

For this reason Gross et al. picked a situation in which all of the factors were initially favorable to change. Externally, the school administration officials and the parents expressed a strong interest in educational improvements. The director of the program was a known innovator. He had autonomy, extra resources and a staff he had been able to select for the program. Teachers received an additional 15% supplement to their salaries and they were seemingly very receptive to new ideas (pp. 88-89).

The Innovation and the Results

The innovation to be implemented was a new definition of the teacher's role called the catalytic role model. The innovation was designed to help motivate lower class children and to improve their academic achievement. Some of the expectations of this new role were:

¹ Neal Gross, Joseph Giacquinta and Marilyn Bernstein, Implementing Organizational Innovations (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

- the teacher is expected to assist children to learn according to their interests
- the teacher is "expected to emphasize the process, not the content, of learning"
- "the teacher is expected to flood the classroom with a variety of educational materials"
- "the teacher does not impart a set body of knowledge and skills to all pupils in the class simultaneously" (pp. 12-13).

While the teachers were excited about this teacher model, several months later (May) their role performance was still fundamentally traditional in nature and the time they did devote to the new model was not in line with the original conception (p. 84).

Most of the teachers used these periods essentially as 'free play' sessions, periods when children were free to do as they wished, short of harming each other; they did little more than see to it that their pupils did not get hurt and when activity time ended, they resumed their traditional schedules. Teachers, in short, tended to behave as guards rather than as guides. They failed to use this time to enrich a child's educational experience in ways that would encourage him to learn in accord with his own individual style and interests. Therefore, we conclude that the quality, as well as the quantity of the innovative efforts of teachers in May was minimal. (p. 119)

Why Did This Happen

Gross et al. point to five different conditions which hindered and eventually negated the thrust of the innovation. The five conditions are reprinted with some of their analysis of each.

1) Lack of clarity about the innovation--Staff members were never clear about what kinds of role performance were necessary to carry out the innovation. This was due to several factors: the administration ignored the need to clarify the concept and performance of the new teaching role; the teachers failed to communicate their lack of understanding; several administrators assumed "that creative

teachers, if given maximum freedom, would 'figure it out' for themselves;" and the fact that one administrator was ambivalent about the innovation in the first place (pp. 158-159).

2) The staff's lack of capability to perform the new role--

Since the teachers did not have clear idea of their new roles, they were unable to know what capabilities they would need. There was no retraining effort and most teachers received relatively little help from either the administration or the curriculum specialists who were available (pp. 163-165). Moreover, since "the innovation was based on a set of assumptions . . . different from those held by most teachers, they not only needed to obtain new skills but also a set of new educational attitudes and values and a new way of viewing the phenomenon of schooling." (p. 167)

3) The unavailability of instructional materials--The

teachers felt that they did not have the kinds of materials they needed. Some of this was due to the fact that the teachers were unable to use the materials they had because they did not understand the role they were supposed to perform. However, there were materials they wanted and needed to perform the new role but could not get. The director "had to order them through the purchasing office of the school system which . . . permitted only the purchase of equipment and materials specified on an 'approved' list. This list did not include 'innovative' materials of the kinds necessary for use by teachers trying to implement the catalytic role model." (p. 168)

4) Failure to adjust organizational arrangements--Three practices in the school which were incongruent with the new role model helped frustrate its successful implementation--"the rigid scheduling of school time, the assignment of pupils to classrooms according to age and the use of subject--oriented report cards." (p. 139). The reason changes were not made was due to "a failure to recognize the importance of these conditions, to a failure of communications or to an unwillingness to make changes by an administrator not fully committed to the implementation of the innovation" (p. 171).

5) The decline in staff motivation to implement the innovation--At the start of the year almost all of the teachers were in favor of the innovation whether they thought it would work or not. By May, they were very negative. Most teachers were suffering from the strain and fatigue of role overload. They were resentful of the administration and bitter about the lack of help they had received. Interpersonal relations were tense and strained. Staff members felt used and had lost all interest in the innovation (pp. 171-190).

The Role of the Administration

Gross, Giacquinta and Bernstein suggest a common root for all of these problems:

The failure of the administration to recognize or to resolve problems to which it exposed teachers when it requested them to implement the innovation (pp. 190-191).

They suggest that one reason for this failure is the conception of the process of promoting successful change held by most educational administrators. They say that administrators tend to think that if

an innovation is initiated properly--"getting the right idea, securing the required funds and overcoming resistance to change"--that it will be implemented successfully (p. 208).

Gross, Giacquinta and Bernstein propose a different concept for the administration of innovations. They say that administrators must oversee the process of implementation from beginning to end and they make several suggestions to those administrators.

1) "to recognize that most innovations require considerable alteration in the usual patterns of teacher behavior" (p. 209).

2) teachers may "become immobilized in their efforts to implement the innovation because the pathways to the very changes they were being requested to make were never opened to them . . . Although likely to appear to teachers as setbacks, such periods may actually constitute required forward steps . . . If administrators anticipate these periods and recognize that they probably are largely functional in 'unfreezing' old patterns of behavior, then they will be prepared to provide, at the right times, the types of support and help teachers require if they are to benefit from these experiences" (p. 209).

3) "The pupils, just like their teachers, needed to learn in a new way" (p. 210).

4) Mechanisms need to be created to isolate and deal effectively with problems (p. 210).

5) Teachers will not necessarily figure out things by themselves (p. 212).

6) Administrators should resolve questions about outside assistance, how not to overburden the staff and how to reduce inter-personal conflict (p. 213).

7) Lastly, to ensure that proper arrangements have been made in each of the following five areas:

- a) "making the innovation clear to the staff members involved in implementation"
- b) providing the necessary training experiences
- c) "ensuring that the staff is willing to make the appropriate innovative efforts"
- d) making available the necessary materials and equipment
- e) rearranging existing organizational arrangements so that they are compatible with the innovation (p. 214).

Sarason, Zitnay and Grossman--The Creation
of a Community Setting¹

Although this study concerns the creation of a setting outside the field of education, as Sarason, Zitnay and Grossman indicate, the problem of creating a new setting is a generic one. However, it is one to which little attention has been paid. As they state:

. . . scouring the literature did not produce a single description of the creation of a setting that would meet those minimal criteria of description enabling one to feel secure that the complexity of thinking, actions and problems involved in such an undertaking had been communicated (p. 1).

¹Seymour Sarason, George Zitnay and Frances Grossman, The Creation of a Community Setting (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971).

Moreover, they did not find their own personal experience much more useful or encouraging. Their observations are repeated in full due to their relevance to the creation of some alternative schools:

What we were able to witness—in fact, what was almost impossible to avoid seeing—was the haphazard, unreflective way in which people generally engaged in the creation of their settings. It was not only that the process seemed so frequently to be a self-defeating one, but that early awareness of problems tended to be explained away by placing blame on external factors, e.g. the 'system', the stubbornness and perversity of individuals and the weight of tradition (p. 2).

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the problem of creating a new setting, they observed the creation of the Southbury Training School. This school is a residential institution for the care of the mentally retarded. Besides the fact that it was a new facility, the training school intended to utilize several innovations. It was to be an educational setting, rather than a hospital or the typical custodial institution. It was also going to be housed in as homelike a setting as possible (pp. 13-14).

In observing the process by which this setting was created, the authors noticed several tendencies which are very applicable to the creation of educational settings:

- "the failure or inability to list and examine the alternative ways one can think and act" (p. 59).
- the tendency for persons with responsibility to become overwhelmed by two strong related feelings: "that the problem was far more difficult than they imagined and that they had no explicit guidelines for determining what they would do, the sequence in which it might be done, (and) how to anticipate problems" (pp. 71-72).
- the inability to confront the necessity of being involved "with a variety of existing settings which may have different purposes and traditions" (p. 72).

- the tendency for every decision or action to have immediate consequences for the group (p. 72).
- the tendency to simplify problems as a defensive tactic against the complexity of the issues (p. 73).
- the expectation "that there will be a time in history when there will be fewer problems" (p. 72).
- "the tendency to avoid recognizing and confronting problems, mistakes and outright failures" (p. 74).
- "the tendency to present to 'outsiders' a picture of undiluted success and step-by-step progress" (p. 74).
- the tendency for hope to obliterate "any realistic assessment about the strength and content of the traditions of the system in which the innovation is supposed to grow" (p. 10).
- the tendency for staff to adopt a "precious attitude toward one's field" (p. 37).

Yet for Sarason, Zitnay and Grossman as for Bennis and Gross et al. the most important factor was the role of the administration, in this case, the director. While the previously mentioned tendencies affect the process of the creation of a setting, it is the director who has the most impact on the direction of the program. It is the director who is responsible for thinking, planning, implementing.

Sarason states that he interviewed a number of directors of different organizations over the period of a decade and that there were several common factors in all of their thinking. Sarason points out that all of the directors spoke of the importance of knowing the pre-history of a project before one acted, even though they themselves did not gain an adequate knowledge of the prehistory of their situation. What Sarason focuses most closely upon, however, is the perception of the role of the director by others and by himself/herself. Sarason says that many people seize upon the personality of the director as the defining characteristic of a structure. As a result, conflict is explained in interpersonal or personality terms. Sarason says this

is wrong and that such conflict reflects much more on the nature of the system (p. 64).

At the same time, however, Sarason maintains in somewhat of a contradiction that directors tend to view the program as theirs, as if they psychologically owned it. He says that this can foster growth and innovation by creating protective boundaries and walls, but that it can also screen out the outside world to the point of catastrophe. The most important effect of this psychological possession is its curtailment of the alternatives open to the program:

To the extent that the director's universe of alternatives for action is defined primarily by (the) psychology of the individual to the exclusion of considerations of structure and system, he is dealing with a restricted universe in which virtues tend to be made of necessities, i.e. things are done because they have to be done and there are no alternatives.

(p. 65)

In other words if a program becomes the sole possession of a single person, the program will be limited by that person's ideas and subject to his/her own personal desires and needs.

Recommendations

Sarason, Zitnay and Grossman make a number of recommendations for those who would create a setting:

- 1) do not ignore history and tradition (p. 89)
- 2) do not think or plan as though you will have adequate personnel to accomplish all of your goals (p. 90)
- 3) utilize local talent (this is hindered by two factors: "the tendency of those in the setting to view it as 'mine' or 'ours';" and the formally trained professional tends to view all aspects of his

work, conceptual and technical, as being within the capabilities only of those possessing such formal preparation") (p. 90).

4) settings must not exist only to serve someone else or the staff's morale, performance and growth soon decline (p. 91).

5) have an external critic (p. 91).

6) make a systematic effort to understand the universe of thought and action relevant to any decision (pp. 91-92).

7) it is more productive to have a group confront a problem, "especially if there is agreement that the task of each member of the group is not to come up only with alternatives compatible with his biases" (p. 69).

CHAPTER II

In Chapter II I will attempt to provide some insight into the process of development of the Worcester Alternative School. I have chosen five topics which I feel are crucial to an understanding of the school: the role of the Worcester Director, the "unfreezing" process, planning, the role of the University of Massachusetts and N. A. S. P. and a comparison of the data derived from the Alternative School with the case studies summarized in Chapter I.

The Role of the Worcester Director

Any analysis of the development of the Alternative School must start with the role of the Worcester Director. As seen in Part I, his role and his personality dominated the school, but I believe that the role would have been the most crucial in the school no matter what person occupied the position. What I intend to show in this section is how the role of the Worcester Director was the focal point of a large number of conflicting pressures and how it became the source of the most critical problems and issues in the school.

The tendency of most persons in an organization is to explain that organization in terms of personalities. I feel that this kind of explanation is usually too simplistic. Many people have seen the Director's role in terms of the personality of the Worcester Director,

but I believe that the role of the Worcester Director can be shown to be the result of three factors--the position itself, the environment and the personality of the individual occupying the position.

These factors can be best seen through an analysis of the interplay and the effects of several specific pressures on the role of the Worcester Director--his preparation for the position, the problem of psychological ownership, the expectations of and the pressures from the central administration, staff expectations and pressures, student expectations and pressures, the University and the co-directorship and his personal expectations and pressures.

Many of the pressures exerted on the role of the Worcester Director are similar to those described by Seymour Sarason in his book, The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. Two chapters--"The Principal" and "The Principal and 'the System'"--were helpful to the writer in understanding the conflicting pressures and expectations exerted on a principal. For this reason, I have used several of Sarason's ideas as a focus for analyzing the role of the Worcester Director.

While the Worcester Director did not have the formal title of principal, there are several reasons for considering him in this light. First, the co-directorship was never formally approved. It

was rejected by the Worcester School Committee in March, 1972 before the start of the school and never raised as an issue again. The effect of this action was to give the Worcester Director the sole legal responsibility for the Alternative School. Second, the writer was never viewed in the central administration as an equal to the Worcester Director. Third, within the Alternative School most of the staff and students saw the Worcester Director as the head person. Fourth, the Worcester Director and the writer never considered themselves as equal once the school was started. Fifth, and most importantly, the Worcester Director assumed in his own mind a role for himself that was the functional equivalent of a principal.

Previous Preparation

Sarason suggests that the first thing one must look at in order to understand a principal is the previous training he/she received. He says that the only training most individuals receive is their experience as teachers. Sarason suggests that this training may in fact be antithetical to a person becoming an educational leader and cites four reasons for this:

- the experience of a teacher as a leader of children does not prepare the teacher to be a leader of a group of adults
- for the most part teachers are 'loners' and they tend to see working alone as the normal structure of a school
- teachers who decide to become principals do so for personal reasons (challenge, money, power), but these reasons are not necessarily a good basis for deciding whether that person should be a principal
- while teachers and principals interact, most teachers do not have a realistic picture of the role of a principal (teachers tend to think of the role of a principal largely in terms of their own interaction) (pp. 112-113).

Sarason's description of the experience of a teacher prior to becoming a principal seems largely valid in terms of the Worcester Director. He had had no previous experience as an administrator. His 16 years in education had all been as a teacher. While he had worked with groups of adults on various tasks over those years, he did not have the experience of leading a group of people in an educational enterprise. He was very definitely a "loner" both as an educator and as a person, and his conception of the role of an administrator was rather superficial. Most of his expectations of a principal were defined by his previous experience as a teacher and we will see that some of these were misleading.

This preparation and experience had several effects on the Worcester Director. Since he had had no experience as an administrator, he had to learn the job. This takes time and energy even when one is merely taking over a school that is already running. The Worcester Director, however, had to learn his job at the same time he was trying to set up a completely new and different kind of educational enterprise. Someone who had had previous administrative experience would have had difficulty setting up the Alternative School, but at least that person would not have had to spend much time simply learning how to be an administrator. This meant that the Worcester Director was not only unprepared, but also had to occupy much of his time on tasks other than directing the creation of the Alternative School.

The tendency to be a "loner" complicated this learning process and also had some negative effects on the school. The Worcester

Director cut himself off from sources of potential support. Others could neither help him nor share in his frustrations. The idea of being a "loner" also reinforced his conception of a good principal. He felt that a good principal was one who left teachers alone, who let them teach whatever and however they wanted. This turned out to be detrimental to the development of the Alternative School since the staff of the Alternative School needed to talk to each other about what they were doing and to support each other in their redefinition of their roles. What the Worcester Director saw as a virtue, based on his previous experience with administrators and also on his ideas about being a principal, became a negative attribute in the Alternative School. Thus his previous training tended to cut the Worcester Director and the other staff members off from each other at a time when they were learning new jobs and needed support the most.

Sarason also focuses on the time period after a teacher has been nominated as a principal but before the school opens. He says that principals spend most of their time on housekeeping matters and that principals usually find these so overwhelming that they tend to concentrate on these items to the exclusion of educational policy. This, he says, leads principals to think that their major job is to open the school on time and in good order. Smoothness of operation tends to become an end in itself.

Furthermore, Sarason points out that principals spend most of their time during this time period with central office administrators and thus tend to define their roles in terms of the central office rather than teachers or students.

These descriptions are useful in terms of explaining several characteristics of the Worcester Director, but there are also several important differences. Housekeeping items did tend to overwhelm the Worcester Director, partly due to his inexperience and partly due to his feeling that they were a very high priority in his role. There was constant anxiety on his part as to what might go wrong and interrupt the order of the school. As time went along, this concern grew into a preoccupation with administrative details.

However, the Worcester Director also assumed from the beginning that a major part of his time would be concerned with planning and his conception of that planning differed from the typical principal. Particularly at the beginning the Worcester Director expected and desired the involvement of others in the planning of the school. This differs from Sarason's typical principal who assumes substantial policy questions to be his alone. (It must be noted, however, that when the Worcester Director first talked about his role he stated that he expected to do the long range planning after the school had gone through its initial planning phase. This reverts back to the patterns of the typical principal.)

Thus it must be said that the preparation the Worcester Director received before he assumed his position was the source of several problems for both him and the school.

The Question of Psychological Ownership

One tendency of traditional principals that the Worcester Director also shared was a source of constant conflict. This was the tendency of principals to see schools as theirs.

Sarason says that most principals feel that the school they head is theirs to do with as they please on the basis of their designated position. They talk about their schools, their students, and their teachers as if they psychologically owned them.

The Worcester Director was no exception to this feeling. Since he was to be the head of the Alternative School, his expectation was that it was his Alternative School. This was described many times in Part I and best stated by the Worcester Director himself in the film about the school, "when I came to the job, I had a sort of vision that somebody charged, or maybe it was me, that it was _____'s alternative school." Though he stated in the movie that he had been disabused of this idea, it was evident in Part I that he talked and acted this way even more as time went on.

This expectation of psychological ownership and its effect on the role conception of the Worcester Director was a source of much conflict in the school and the cause of several dilemmas for himself. Conflict came because other staff members and students in the school felt that the Worcester Director had no right to assume that the Alternative School was his. No one had given it to him. The School Committee had named him Director, but the Alternative School was to be a new kind of school with more participative governance. Moreover, the Worcester Director was continually making public pronouncements that

the staff and students would decide where the school would go. Obviously it could not be his and everyone else's at the same time. This contradiction (in words and action) led to much confusion for both the Worcester Director and other people in the school.

Conflict on this issue was particularly great in the first three months. The other staff members felt that they had valid conceptions of the Alternative School and they resented the Worcester Director talking as if the school was his. As they saw it, and as they understood from him at least part of the time, the Alternative School was going to be the joint property of all the staff and students in the school. It was theirs to create and govern. His notion of psychological ownership seemed at odds with this conception.

It should also be noted that all three of the other original staff members had a bias against the idea of psychological ownership on the part of principals. Thus the Worcester Director's assumption, based on his conception of the traditional role of a principal, provoked an immediate reaction from other staff members, based on their conception of the Worcester Director's role. It is doubtful that the Worcester Director understood his assumption or the other staff members' reaction to it, but it was a constant source of conflict.

Sarason describes one dilemma caused by this concept of psychological ownership:

The principal wants to be and to feel influential. His dilemma begins when he realizes that words and power, far from guaranteeing intended outcomes, may be ineffectual and even produce the opposite of what he desires. When he encounters hostility and resistance to his recommendations or ideas for change . . . he feels he has one of two alternative means of response: assert his authority or withdraw from the fray.

The usual consequence of either response is to widen the psychological gap and to increase the feelings of isolation of those involved.¹

This is a very accurate description of many of the actions of the Worcester Director. This dilemma was a source of both conflict and confusion in the Alternative School. To other staff members, the Worcester Director had a definite tendency to either try to tell others what to do or to stay quiet, rather than participate and share his ideas. Most staff members saw this as a personal characteristic rather as a dilemma endemic to the role.

Both his actions and the staff's perception of the problem tended to widen the gap between the Worcester Director and other staff members. Staff members did not want to be told what to do and they resented his tone. They also resented his silence when they were trying to deal with the problems of the school. They felt that he was frustrating their efforts rather than supporting them. He felt that his advice was not being accepted, and that he was being tolerant by accepting what was going on. This tolerance often brought some bitterness.

An excellent example of the results of this dynamic between the staff and the Worcester Director was the staff meeting at which the Worcester Director denounced the structure and curriculum of the school. He said that he was going to tolerate it (even though he was

¹Seymour B. Sarason, The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), p. 129.

not going to follow its guidelines himself) until the summer, but that the rest of the staff had better be prepared because he was going to attack everything at that time.

He felt that he was being a tolerant leader. Despite this, he was extremely resentful of the rest of the staff for not following his advice. However, the rest of the staff resented his not helping in creating that structure and curriculum, they resented his not sharing his concerns earlier, and they particularly resented his not following that structure.

There were several other times both before and after when his tendency to either dictate or withdraw had been a major source of conflict. Neither the Worcester Director nor the rest of the staff understood each other's actions. Conflict made communication and understanding more difficult.

Sarason points to another effect of this dilemma on principals:

. . . the principal often tolerates situations that by his values or standards are 'wrong.' Because this toleration is frequently accompanied by feelings of guilt and inadequacy, it frequently has an additional consequence: to deny that these situations exist in the school.¹

The Worcester Director was continually denying the existence of any problems in the school to people both inside and outside the school. He knew there were problems, but his reaction was to deny their existence if someone else mentioned them. He became defensive and acted as though it was a personal attack on him.

¹Ibid., p. 120.

One might speculate that his defensiveness and his tendency to dictate or flee were both linked to his conception of his role. Since he felt the school to be his and since he was concerned over the quality of education in the school--which he tended to think of in very traditional terms--he may have been too anxious either to be open about problems or to participate in staff meetings.

Further confusing the situation was the Worcester Director's tendency to link quality education with control. Thus he felt guilty about what he felt to be his tolerance of experimentation. When he did not reassert his authority and take control, he felt anxious and confused.

The Worcester Director and the System

The most important factor in understanding the Worcester Director is his relation to the school system. The school system exerted a tremendous amount of pressure on him. Some of it was real, some of it imagined, but all of it shaped his actions and it was a major source of conflict in the school.

This pressure was felt particularly strongly by the Worcester Director for several reasons. He was frequently describing what "they" had told him to do or what "they" would do to him. He was very strongly attached to the system. His whole career and life had revolved around Worcester and the Worcester schools. His status and success were defined in part by the attitudes of those in the school department. Thus when other staff members seemed to want to say "to hell with them" sometimes, this was not only impossible for him to do, but also somewhat resented as a suggestion.

Other staff members did not feel this strong allegiance to the system. They were more concerned with the Alternative School than with what the rest of the school system did or felt. They did not have as much liking or respect for traditional schools and felt less compulsion to be like them or to be successful in their terms.

One effect of this was to make the Worcester Director feel the pressures from the system even more strongly. He often felt himself to be the guardian, protector, and defender of the interests of the school system. For example, he felt compelled to defend the traditional schools when someone made a disparaging remark. This was particularly evident during the very first staff meetings in March and April, 1972. This created a gap between the Worcester Director and the rest of the staff. He was suspicious that they would want to subvert or attack the traditional. They were suspicious that he was actually in favor of traditional schools and did not want an alternative school. This mutual suspicion was one factor that helped block real discussion among staff members as to what the Alternative School should be. It led to debates and conflict.

Thus whatever pressures the Worcester Director felt from the system were magnified by his attachment to the system and by his perception of the attitudes of the rest of the staff. Conversely, the perceptions of other staff members of pressures from the system were colored by their feelings toward the system.

Many of the pressures felt by the Worcester Director were real. Some of these, as noted in Part I, were direct comments to him by several central office administrators. These people told him that

he was responsible, that he should take leadership and that he should get the program in shape. What this meant to him was to exert control and to curtail experimentation.

Complicating the Worcester Director's role was the fact that many of the direct pressures the Worcester Director received were somewhat contradictory. He received different cues from different administrators (e.g. the Director of Special Programs and the Assistant to the Superintendent). He also received different cues from the same administrators. They often seemed to say, "create this new, wonderful, experimental program, but make sure you follow the rules and regulations. Don't get too far out of line." The Worcester Director tried to steer what he considered to be a middle course and often got lost. He never seemed to be able to satisfy both sides and he felt attacked for being both too bold and too cautious.

Some of the pressures from central administration were real and were perceived as real by all staff members (whether or not they wanted to acknowledge or follow them). Other pressures perceived by the Worcester Director were not perceived by the rest of the staff. These were a source of constant conflict because people act on their conception of reality, whether that conception is correct or incorrect.

One place where there were differing perceptions of reality concerned how the Alternative School related to the central administration. Before the school started the Superintendent said that the Alternative School had a direct route to him. It did not have to go through the normal chain of command. This was the perception and understanding of the writer, but the Worcester Director felt and acted

as though he had to go through the normal chain of command. This was his perception of the way things should be as well as the way things were.

Translated into action, this difference in perception led to a situation where the Worcester Director tended to report to the traditional chain of command and to respond to their cues at the same time the writer was reporting to another chain of command and responding to their cues. The problem was that the cues were often very different and also tended to match the philosophical and value differences between the two Directors. Thus the Directors were frequently in conflict as to what the central administration did or did not want. This situation was compounded by the fact that the Superintendent was never willing to clarify either his position on certain issues or which line of command was to be followed.

The area where the differences in perception over the desires of the school was greatest and most crucial concerned the mandate of the school--what it could and could not do. This question tore apart the Alternative School staff during the first three months of the school and was still actively in dispute in June, 1973.

The Worcester Director felt that the central administration and the school system had certain expectations about what the Alternative School could and would do. Other staff members felt that his perceptions were incorrect and that his concerns were derived from his own feelings and not from the central administration.

There is some evidence to support their claim. The personal feelings of the Worcester Director had become confused and combined with his perceptions of the desires of the central administration. He did not understand this, however. The feeling of psychological ownership made these feelings about the school even more vehement. His perceptions became necessities.

Other staff members could not accept either his perceptions or his demands that they be followed. During the spring the Worcester Director and the other staff members were at a stalemate over the question of mandate. While there was a great deal of conflict, neither side was able to make its view the basis for school policy. However, starting in September, 1972, the perception of the Worcester Director became dominant, although conflict over the question of mandate continued.

Linked to his perception of the mandate of the Alternative School was the Worcester Director's perception of his role vis-a-vis the rules of the system. Other staff would say "go ahead, do it," "don't worry about them" or "they won't care," but these feelings ran directly counter to the Worcester Director's perception of his role. His role was to create an alternative school, but it was also to ensure that the school followed the rules of the system. Given his suspicions of the motives of the rest of the staff, the Worcester Director was especially vigilant in this area.

Sarason found this concern for the rules to be typical of most principals:

It is a major concern of most principals that they not permit a practice that may produce criticism by administrative superiors or others. The major basis for this attitude is that 'the system does not view these practices as either permissible or desirable' and most principals do not question this position.¹

This points to a major dilemma in the role of the Worcester Director. On one hand the staff and most change strategists tell him to move boldly ahead, to experiment and to protect innovations from the pressures of the system. On the other hand his perceptions of his role and his perceptions of the desires of the system tell him to move in the other direction, to use his authority to keep things under control, to prevent abuses and to keep the Alternative School in reasonable conformity with the system.

The Worcester Director tried to do both at the same time, to allow boldness and yet to be cautious. This led directly to his tendency to focus on potential sources of trouble every time a new idea was mentioned. He said that he was not trying to discourage people, but that he was just trying to make sure nothing happened. This frustrated other staff members, particularly when they felt that the Worcester Director was cautioning against practices that were tolerated elsewhere in the system (e.g. he was very concerned about extended trips, even though other groups in the city had taken them at various times.)

Sarason also describes this behavior as typical of principals:

¹Ibid., p. 135.

The tendency to anticipate trouble in relation to the system is characteristic of many principals and one of the most frequent and strong obstacles to trying what they conceive to be an atypical procedure.¹

The Worcester Director's preoccupation with sources of potential trouble brought him into constant conflict with the rest of the staff and made it very difficult for him to focus on providing new ideas and leadership on educational matters. (The Worcester Director provided a great deal of leadership in administrative areas, however.)

This tendency on his part was compounded by the particular nature of the Worcester School system. As one observer close to the system said:

No one wants to make any decisions because they are afraid of potential criticism, so they duck before anyone so much as looks at them. In the vacuum no one makes any decisions at all.

The observer ascribed much of this to the administration of the Superintendent, who, he said, has failed to create an atmosphere of support for his subordinates.

Whether or not the Worcester Director was overzealous in searching for possible areas of trouble, his perceptions of potential trouble for him were greatly reinforced by his experience over the question of the continuation of the five courses in the spring, 1972 as reported in Part I. Repeatedly he and the rest of the staff were given assurances by the Superintendent that they could go ahead and experiment. Each time the Superintendent failed to back up his promises with the necessary support. This left the Alternative School and the Worcester Director vulnerable, subject to attack from principals and other administrators in the school system. Thus the Worcester Director's

¹Ibid., p. 139.

desire to avoid other areas of potential trouble is understandable.

Whether real or imagined, the pressures from the school system did much to complicate the role of the Worcester Director. They were also the source of much conflict.

Relations to Other Staff Members

Many of the pressures from other staff members on the position of the Worcester Director have already been mentioned: the desire to experiment, the different attitudes toward the rest of the school system, the different attitudes toward traditional education and the different perceptions of the mandate from the central administration. Many of these pressures would be found in a traditional school, but certain factors greatly magnified their impact in the Alternative School.

Two of the things Warren Bennis warned in The Leaning Ivory Tower were to "recruit with scrupulous honesty"¹ and to "avoid future shock."² In other words, don't oversell the organization when you recruit and don't try to reach for utopia on the first day. Both of these are hard to avoid and in March, 1972, the Directors succumbed to both of these tendencies. The initial staff was told that the sky was the limit and that decision making would be shared among the whole staff. Even with the background of the school as bad as it had been, expectations were raised as high as possible.

¹Warren Bennis, The Leaning Ivory Tower (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), p. 136.

²Ibid., p. 143.

With expectations that high, differences of opinion, particularly ones that seemed to threaten those expectations, carried a large amount of emotion. When people believe dreams are possible, they fight hard to keep those dreams alive.

It was inevitable that there would be disillusionment at the Alternative School as there had been at Buffalo with Bennis. Much of the disillusionment was directed at the Worcester Director: he was too traditional, he was against change, he was too authoritarian, etc. Whatever truth there was in any of these charges was lost in the attack and counterattack between the Worcester Director and the other staff members. There was not enough sympathy or understanding on either side to talk these conflicts out.

To understand some of the conflicts one must look at some of the contradictory pressures on the role of the Worcester Director. On one hand there was the expectation of shared decision making and of a group problem solving effort. On the other hand there was the reality that the Worcester Director was by far the most important person in seeing that staff expectations became practice. Due to his position, he was the person who would have to be instrumental in fulfilling everyone's dreams.

Yet there were two problems with those dreams. Many of them were unrealistic and many of the dreams differed from person to person.

It would have been impossible to have fulfilled all of the dreams at the same time and yet that was what the Worcester Director was expected to do.

Disillusionment at the Alternative School was particularly great since the Worcester Director actively frustrated many of those dreams. Some of this was due to reasons described already--his previous preparation, pressures from the system, etc.--but it was also due to the fact that he was more conservative than the rest of the staff, except for one teacher who came in the second year.

Most change theories are based on the assumption that the administration is going to lead the change effort. However, in this case the administration was often resistant to change and was usually pushed to change by other staff members. The Worcester Director was trying to structure the environment so as to move the school toward more traditional education. The rest of the staff was trying to resist both the imposition of that structure and the direction he was trying to take the school.

The Co-Directorship and the Influence of the University

Besides any personal contributions of the writer and other people from N. A. S. P. and the University the main effect of the co-directorship and the involvement of the University was to pull the Alternative School away from the traditional elements in the school system. One could hardly argue that the pressures from the Worcester School system and N. A. S. P. were equal, but the University role was large enough to pull the program in a direction different from the one it would have taken alone.

The locus of this pressure was the Worcester Director and the mechanism was the co-directorship. As long as the Alternative School was a joint project, the Worcester Director had to keep the University interests in mind and as long as there were co-directors, the Worcester Director's personal feelings did not automatically become administrative policy.

The co-directorship may have steered the Alternative School in directions different than it would have under a single Director, but it also greatly complicated the role of the Worcester Director. Much of both Directors' energy went into thinking about each other. Their differing conceptions of the school and of the governance structure often cancelled each other out. This left the school leaderless at times, which tended only to increase the fears of the Worcester Director.

It must also be said that the presence of the co-director made it difficult for the Worcester Director to respond to some of the pressures he felt because the co-director either did not see or did not feel those pressures the same way. This may have protected some of the experimentation in the Alternative School, but it made the role of the Worcester Director much more difficult.

Student Pressures

Much of what was said about staff expectations also applies to student expectations. In the process of selling the Alternative School to students, the Directors succeeded in raising some very high expectations. As with staff members' expectations, many of these student

expectations were unrealistic and also very varied. It was thus inevitable that many students would be disillusioned and, as with staff members, the focus of much of their disillusionment was the Worcester Director.

In many cases the Worcester Director was the recipient of unfair criticism, but he brought much of it on himself. By making the school his personal possession and by reacting to criticism of the school as if it were criticism of himself, he greatly multiplied the criticism that hit him.

Students' relations with the Worcester Director were also shaped by their ages. As adolescents, many students were often asking for and reacting against authority at the same time. It is inevitable that adolescents will be unsatisfied with the actions of adult authority figures at least part of the time. As the father figure in the school, the Worcester Director received much of students' emotion in this area. (The Worcester Director liked and strongly encouraged the father figure image. At its best, the role created a strong base for many students. At its worst, it recreated the paternalism of traditional schools.)

Summary

The conflicting pressures on the role of the Worcester Director created or were linked directly to many of the critical problems of the Alternative School. The issues of authority, control, governance, mandate and the relation of the Alternative School to the rest of the school system were all intimately tied to the role of the Worcester Director.

On one hand the Worcester Director wanted to be a leader of change, but the pressures from his own feelings, from his previous experience and from the central administration all forced him to try to keep the school under control and control often meant within traditional confines. Trying to mediate all the pressures left him confused personally and at odds with other staff members much of the time. In addition the situation was greatly exacerbated by his administrative inexperience, by the presence of an inexperienced University co-director who felt very differently about education than he did, by an atmosphere of unrealistically high expectations, and by several of his personal characteristics. In his position it is doubtful that anyone could have avoided conflict.

The Unfreezing Process

In April, 1972, the Directors of the Alternative School put into operation a conscious strategy designed to "unfreeze" the staff and students in the school. The role of the unfreezing process and its effects are one of the most important and least understood aspects of the school.

In 1947 Kurt Lewin identified three phases in the change process: 1) unfreezing, the breaking of traditional behavior patterns, habits, attitudes, viewpoints, etc. and the creating of a need for new behaviors, etc.; 2) changing, the acceptance of new behaviors by either identification or internalization and 3) refreezing, the process by which new behaviors are integrated into the total behavior of the individual or group. According to Lewin these phases are applicable

to the change process of an individual, a group or an organization.

Thus any organization which hopes to change the behavior of its members must do so by a process, whether it is a consciously applied strategy or not, of which the first step is unfreezing. Some of the most common strategies for unfreezing were described by Edgar H. Schein¹—the physical removal of the subject from his/her accustomed patterns, the undermining or destruction of support for those patterns, demeaning or humiliating experiences vis-a-vis old patterns and the consistent linking of reward with change and punishment with unwillingness to change.

When the Directors of the Alternative School first started to plan the school in March, 1972, they felt that this new educational venture could not be built on the traditional conceptions of education or on the traditional roles of students and teachers. Before new conceptions and new roles could be created the old conceptions and old roles would have to be unfrozen.

The strategy chosen by the Directors was a rather drastic one. They took a small number of students and staff members, removed as many of the traditional parameters and guidelines of schools as possible, and then asked them to rethink education from the top. They were to create a school from scratch, designing it in terms of their own needs and interests.

¹From Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard "Planning and Implementing Change" pre-publication papers for articles appearing in the Training and Development Journal.

The idea of unfreezing seemed simple and obvious enough, but the ramifications were almost catastrophic. In the first three months many students got lost and some stopped coming to school. Twenty students left the Alternative School in September, 1972 when confronted by the prospect of becoming unfrozen. Many more were unfrozen and were lost for months. Staff members became extremely confused about their roles and in their floundering came into a great deal of conflict with each other. Staff and students were left without any grooves to fall back on.

The ultimate result of this unfreezing was a number of new and significantly different conceptions of education and role behaviors on the part of many staff members and students. The cost of the change, however, was a tremendous amount of psychological and programmatic dislocation.

There is a romantic notion that change can come without chaos or pain. That seems to have little basis in reality. Real change has to cause some pain and the stage between the old behavior and the new is confusion. Educators should accept this and should prepare individuals or organizations undergoing rapid or major change for the consequences.

The pain and chaos in the Alternative School was greater than it needed to have been for several reasons. The most important of these was the naivete of the Directors and their lack of training or experience in the process of changing organizations. Another factor was the lack of support from the central administration. This left the Alternative School open to attack at the time when the school was

undergoing the greatest change.

Educational theorists were of little help to the Directors. Some of their assumptions are faulty and their conception of the process seems out of line with educational goals.

Edgar Shein talked about different strategies for "unfreezing" people, but he talked little about how one controls the process. His assumption, like that of so many other change theorists, is that one can control the change process. Yet I would suggest that this assumption should be questioned.

Working one to one, a change agent through a continuing cycle of very careful diagnosis, application of stimulus and reward might be able to change a person from one behavior to another. More likely the process of change will go astray and the subject's behavior will be changed, but not necessarily in the way desired by the change agent.

If that is an accurate representation of the difficulty of a trained person trying to change the behavior of one person, how much more difficult is it to try to change the behavior of 60 individuals simultaneously. Since the individuals leading the group being unfrozen in the Alternative School were inexperienced, the result almost had to be confusion. However, it would have been extremely difficult for even the most skilled person to have controlled and directed the situation. The Alternative School was able to "unfreeze" its staff and students, but the unfreezing stimulus tended to provoke a large number of very different responses.

Theorists miss the fact that an unfreezing process tends to unfreeze a number of behaviors in each individual, rather than simply

the one or two behaviors that are supposed to be unfrozen. In many cases, behaviors that are needed in the new situation are unfrozen along with unwanted behaviors.

For example, at the same time staff members at the Alternative School were unfrozen of their traditional conception of teaching, they also became uncertain of their roles as adults. The unfortunate aspect of this was that this was at exactly the time when they needed to be most sure of themselves as people so that they could find new teaching roles for themselves and help students through the transition from a traditional to an alternative learning environment.

Thus educators should base their plans for change on the assumption that the process will be one that is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to control, that any change stimulus will provoke many different reactions in a group of people and that unfreezing usually affects a large number of behaviors.

Most change theorists have concentrated on strategies designed to break or undermine past behaviors. I would suggest that these strategies are inappropriate for education. They tend to confuse or even crush people unnecessarily, rather than prepare them for growth into a new behavior. Unfreezing which breaks people is more appropriate for training in the Marines than it is for education. While all unfreezing will involve pain and chaos, educators can minimize these by utilizing strategies which do not unfreeze by destroying the past, but by creating and reinforcing a new future.

Karl Deutsch's studies on assimilation provide some basis for this kind of strategy. In his book, Nationalism and Social Communication,

Deutsch talked about the process of creating a new community out of two newly joined groups of people. He says that each group will tend to experience the same social experience differently as they see that information in reference to different past experiences. Assimilation occurs as the number of joint experiences increases:

If the statistical weight of standardized experience is large and the weight of recalled information within a group is relatively small, and the statistical weight of feedback information is likewise small, then the responses of such a group would differ from the responses of other groups in the same situation by a converging series, until the remaining differences might fall below the threshold of political significance.¹

To accelerate the process of assimilation, one must increase the rate of new experiences of the group.

I would suggest that Deutsch's model of assimilation is one which could form the basis of unfreezing strategies for education. Some of the tactics employed might be the same—e.g., taking a group to a new place—but the effects might be less chaotic.

The strategy employed in the Alternative School was successful in helping create a new kind of school, but its cost to the participants was quite high.

Planning

The inadequacy of the planning for the Worcester Alternative School had several effects on the development of the school itself. In this section I shall describe the origin and the effects of the two crucial aspects of the planning which I consider to be the most

¹Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Boston: M. I. T. Press, 1953), pp. 117-118.

inadequate: the lack of clarity and the failure of key people to accept the responsibility of their roles.

The relationship between planning and successful change is a crucial one and yet it is one about which we have very little knowledge. The primary reasons for this are the length of time between planning and end result and the large number of variables involved (many of which are not even considered during the planning stages). Thus it is difficult to tell what aspect of the planning had what result.

In the Alternative School, however, there were several problems in the planning stages that created problems for the school after it started.

Lack of Clarity

Throughout the period from August, 1971 to March, 1972, the plans for the Alternative School were never clear. Goals were never defined, general outlines of the program never decided, and policy issues never faced or resolved. There was not even a clearly defined planning process. Moreover, what planning was done did as much harm as it did help.

N. A. S. P. must bear the primary responsibility for this. N. A. S. P. wanted to have a major impact on education through the creation of public alternative schools, but their ideas about alternative schools and about change were very nebulous. As seen in Part I, N. A. S. P. was never clear or consistent in what they were advocating, nor were they clear about their role in the planning process.

Their lack of clarity promoted a lack of clarity at the two retreats during the summer, 1971 and permitted an extraordinarily large number of false and unrealistic expectations to be created. These were to become a burden on the development of the school later.

These false expectations would have been difficult to avoid in any situation, but N. A. S. P. promoted them by failing to recognize or make provision for a clear and defined process by which the Alternative School could be planned. Any group of people starting an organization should define and clarify their goals at some point prior to constructing that organization. Lacking that, they should at least have some method for clarifying, discussing and resolving crucial questions: what questions have to be answered; when do they have to be answered; and by whom. N. A. S. P. and Worcester neither clarified their goals nor delineated a planning process.

There were several points at which the plans of the school might have been clarified, but clarification was blocked by the adoption of the concept of organic growth. It is doubtful that anyone involved clarified the idea or thought about what it meant in practice.

While letting people build their own institutions is an admirable goal, the idea of organic growth may be somewhat counter-productive to its attainment. When the N. A. S. P. and Worcester planners adopted the idea of organic growth, they rejected pre-planning as potentially stifling to the organic planning of the participants. In doing so, however, they rejected virtually all planning. Fear of overplanning produced confusion, which in turn precluded effective planning on the part of the participants once the school had started.

The idea of organic growth tends to blur the fact that planning is an extremely difficult task. To be effective and efficient, it must be organized and well led. The idea of organic growth in its belief that planning will occur naturally tends to frustrate that organization and leadership. It leads to poor preparation and organization beforehand so that an institution is not ready to handle the problems that arise after it is started. It also leads to an institution which is continually responding to crises rather than anticipating them. Often it is those who are most prepared for a large number of contingencies who are most able to be flexible and to move rapidly in new directions.

The idea of organic growth is directly opposite to the ideas suggested by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard. Hersey and Blanchard's Life Cycle Theory of Organizations¹ suggests that organizations grow and mature and that the appropriate leader behavior is different at different stages of the organization.

Previous theorists have tried to define a "best" style of leadership. Hersey and Blanchard argue that not only do different organizations demand different leadership styles, but that the same organization may need several different leadership styles during the course of its lifetime.

¹Information for this section was obtained from two sources: Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972); and Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership." Training and Development Journal. Vol. 23, No. 2, May 1969.

For an organization which is immature the authors suggest that the leader must provide a great deal of task oriented structure. At later stages the members in the organization are abler to structure their own experiences and thus the leader's role can be directed more to human relationships.

Every detail of an organization need not be planned, but the activities and parameters of an organization as immature as the Worcester Alternative School should be well defined.

N. A. S. P. and Worcester did not want to overplan the Alternative School before it started, but in doing so they neglected to define the school at all. They gave little thought to defining the major outlines of the program, its purposes, its relation with the rest of the school district or what support it would need. This meant that several months were wasted and the burden of actual planning dumped on the shoulders of those who followed.

The lack of clarity fostered by the idea of organic growth was compounded by the inexperience of the two Directors. When they first met in March, they realized how poor the planning had been to that point. However, they were unable to clarify the school sufficiently to put it on a firm foundation. Their administrative inexperience led them to neglect or underestimate many problems in starting and running a school. For this reason areas such as decision-making, the curriculum, and staff and student roles were left insufficiently defined.

In addition, they felt trapped by the lack of clarity up to that point. They felt that clarifying certain questions such as mandate,

support and finances with everyone concerned would increase the likelihood of the school being discontinued before it opened. Thus they deliberately opened the school, even though they knew that there were several critical areas where the lack of clarity would cause trouble for the school later.

The result of this lack of clarity was confusion--over what people were doing, goals, the purpose of the school, the mandate of the school, its general outlines and over the roles of N. A. S. P. and the city. There was confusion at the retreats, in the original proposal, in the fall and winter planning, and when the school opened in April. While the Alternative School was eventually able to define itself, I would suggest that the lack of clarity in the early planning was dysfunctional toward promoting change. Change might have come quicker and with much less pain if the planning had been clearer and more structured.

The Failure of Key People to Accept the Responsibility of Their Roles

Another fault of the early planning of the Alternative School was the consistent failure of key people to accept the responsibility of their roles. To plan, finance, support and run the Alternative School had some serious ramifications for both N. A. S. P. and Worcester. I would maintain that both parties avoided some of the responsibilities of their roles that could have facilitated the development of the school. They often seemed more concerned with esoteric ideas of organic growth, choice and alternative education than in providing a strong foundation for the school. Several examples should be sufficient

to illustrate this failure and to describe some of its effect on the school.

N. A. S. P. in a burst of enthusiasm promised over \$175,000 to a single project. They did not have enough money to spend that amount on any one project. It would have severely curtailed their plans for the second and third years of the grant.

What is particularly disturbing is the fact that this agreement violated N. A. S. P.'s own principles in terms of how much money they should put into a project in relation to the contribution of the local school district. N. A. S. P. seemed willing to cripple their own program to get the Alternative School off the ground.

N. A. S. P. was initially unwilling to face the financial consequences of their monetary commitment to the school. When the Deans discovered this irresponsibility the school was nearly stopped as a result and the budget had to be renegotiated during the spring while the Alternative School was in operation.

N. A. S. P.'s irresponsibility might have resulted in the cancellation of the project. The reason it did not was probably due to luck as much as it was to the fact that the central administration and the School Committee were very much in favor of the school by the time the new budget was voted in January, 1973.

A more serious failure to accept responsibility was on the part of the Superintendent and his assistants. The Superintendent should have done a number of things to aid and support the early growth of the Alternative School—fostered planning, let the mandate of the school be known throughout the school district, stepped in to prevent

interference, etc. In most cases he took actions which kept the program alive, but which did not put the program on a firm footing. Very often he acted only when pushed by N. A. S. P. or by the Alternative School.

The reasons for this were most probably political. He was going to risk as little as possible to start the Alternative School. The prime example of his unwillingness to expose himself politically to support the Alternative School occurred at the February meeting of the School Committee when the co-directorship was proposed. Under repeated questioning he refused to mention the terms of the renegotiation in January with the University. Mentioning the terms might have resulted in the School Committee discontinuing the school, but it also could have put the school on a firmer footing.

The result of this failure on the part of the Superintendent was that the Alternative School was often left alone to fight for its life. The school and particularly the Worcester Director were left vulnerable to attack from other people in the school system. The time spent defending the school against these attacks and the pressure to be well protected tended to curtail experimentation and real change in the Alternative School.

It is perhaps too optimistic to believe that the Superintendent would have created a strong foundation for the school during the planning stage, but his minimal efforts and his unwillingness to face and accept his responsibilities exposed the Alternative School and frequently left it unsupported. I would suggest that his strategy made more trouble for him in the long run.

Summary

Seymour Sarason's description of typical planning efforts in his book, The Creation of Community Settings, leads one to believe that the poor planning for the Alternative School is more the rule than an exception. Some theorists have suggested very elaborate and lengthy planning processes,¹ but these do not seem either realistic or more effective at preparing for problems. If anything, they tend to assume a life of their own to the point where they have little relevance to what gets planned.

To make planning as efficient and as effective as possible, educational planners must first decide what it is that they are trying to do. They must decide what questions they are trying to answer and how they intend to answer them. As Warren Bennis said after his experience at Buffalo, you must decide how you are going to change as well as what you are going to change. Planners must look at what questions must be answered before a school opens and what preparations must be made. The more questions that are left unanswered before a school opens the greater the amount of time, resources and people must be left available to answer them later.

The clearer one is able to pose questions the more likely one is to get good answers. What this means is that educational planners must learn how to structure the planning process so that members of an organization will focus directly on crucial issues. To assume that

¹For an elaborate and lengthy planning process the reader is referred to Frank Banghart and Albert Trull, Educational Planning (New York: MacMillan, 1973).

they will do so naturally is to invite confusion and probably result in those issues not being addressed efficiently or effectively.

The Role of N. A. S. P. and the University

Despite the lack of clarity of N. A. S. P., the problems of the negotiations between N. A. S. P. and Worcester and the problems of the co-directorship, it must be said that the Worcester Alternative School would not have come into being without N. A. S. P. and the University. Without the Alternative School it is doubtful that many of the changes that have occurred in Worcester would have occurred as soon as they have, if at all.

Universities have tried to be change agents in education for a long time. Most of their efforts have been relatively unsuccessful and some have even been counterproductive to change. I would suggest that several aspects of the N. A. S. P. involvement were significantly different from normal university involvements and are worthwhile examining.

The Superintendent had tried to get an alternative school twice before N. A. S. P. appeared and had been rejected both times. While the mood of the School Committee had changed somewhat the fact that N. A. S. P. was offering money, people and national recognition must be seen as instrumental in having the program accepted.

After the Alternative School started, the University was able to supply help that the Alternative School needed. While some of the ideas contributed by the writer and other University people may have

helped in creating the school, the fact that N. A. S. P. was involved operationally in the school may have been far more significant to the development of the school.

What that operational involvement meant was that the program was seen as special, that it was kept outside the normal bureaucracy much longer than it would have under normal circumstances. The tendency of any bureaucracy is to incorporate any divergent part and to bring it back into conformity with the other parts. N. A. S. P.'s operational involvement tended to negate some of the pull of the school bureaucracy.

This opened the Alternative School to innovative ideas. When these ideas were given a chance to become routine practice, they were able to resist attack by the bureaucracy at a later date. Thus the operational involvement of N. A. S. P. may have been more important to change than any new ideas contributed from the University.

In most cases Universities have tried to change schools through the power of their ideas. Their relationships have usually been on a consultant basis. What this means is that University people are always telling school people what they should do. School people resent being told what to do by people who they feel do not understand the situation and who will leave soon anyway. On their side University people resent what they see as stubbornness and ignorance on the part of school people. The usual result is mutual frustration leading to a breaking of the relationship.

Though N. A. S. P. people were greeted with some suspicion in the beginning, the joint operational involvement created a different

dynamic. N. A. S. P. was obviously willing to help carry out its own suggestions. Since the participants in the school were there voluntarily, they saw N. A. S. P. as co-workers rather than as consultants telling them what to do.

Universities who wish to act as change agents in the field would do well to examine this model of operational involvement in an alternative school. Change is carried out mutually and the only people involved from the school district are there voluntarily.

Comparison With Change Theories

In Chapter I of Part III I summarized the ideas and recommendations of several change theorists as derived from three case studies. In this first part of this section I will analyze the data from Worcester point by point with the recommendations of Warren Bennis. A rough scoring system will be used to show how well the Alternative School did in following his advice.

Other case studies and change theories will be utilized to analyze the development of the Alternative School. Based on this data, I will then suggest several conclusions about the Alternative School, the nature of change and the utilization of current change strategies.

Warren Bennis

The following is a list of recommendations made by Warren Bennis in The Leaning Ivory Tower. I have attempted to point to relevant

facts in the development of the Alternative School which bear on each recommendation. Following each paragraph is a score, between 0-100 (100 is perfect) reflecting my estimation of the success of the Alternative School on this point.

1) Recruit with scrupulous honesty.¹

The Directors raised a large number of unrealistic expectations in recruiting both staff and students. They failed to let them know how difficult things would be and what kind of problems already existed. They often attracted students who were more interested in leaving education than in creating a new school. 40

2) Guard against the crazies.

We had little trouble with either radical students or staff. The main problem was with people who were alienated from education and from themselves. 90

3) Build support among like-minded people.

The Alternative School spent most of its time and energy on internal problems. The main contact with outsiders was over areas of conflict. There were many people in the school district who were supporters or potential supporters of the school. For the most part very little was done with them until 1973. This was particularly true of relations with sympathetic teachers. 70

4) Plan for how to change as well as what to change.

The plans here were minimal and poorly conceived. This was due to the acceptance of some misleading ideas and inexperience on the part of the Directors. 40

¹Warren Bennis, The Leaning Ivory Tower (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), pp. 136-144.

5) Don't settle for rhetorical change.

Some of the time staff members were fooled by their own rhetoric. However, since there were such large disagreements between different staff members one staff member would not let the others get away with mere rhetorical change. 80

6) Don't allow those who are opposed to change to appropriate such basic issues as academic standards.

This was a problem inside the school. The Worcester Director appropriated all of these issues and often used them to oppose change. Academic standards were usually synonymous with traditional practice. 65

7) Know the territory.

The Worcester Director knew the school system inside out. However, he did not have much experience in administrative politics and was thus hurt badly in the first months of the school. (His personal friendship with School Committee members was a strong factor in their support of the school). 65-90

8) Appreciate environmental factors.

The Alternative School was lucky here. There was a lot of knowledge of the environment, but little understanding or experience in handling it. Luckily, these were no environmental factors which were fatal to the school. 65

9) Avoid future shock.

Several staff members were continually pushing the Alternative School toward their version of utopia. The main effect of this was to continually push the school into future shock. 50

10) Allow time to consolidate gains.

The Alternative School did very poorly here. The Directors raced the school into full time operation. After a chaotic spring the school was quadrupled in size. There was no time for consolidation whatsoever.

20

11) Remember that change is most successful when those who are affected are involved in the planning.

Although the Directors did not involve everyone in all decisions and although the decision making process was often very confused, staff and students did have a real opportunity to affect school policy. It must also be remembered that everyone in the school was a volunteer so that no one was forced to change against their will. (They could also return to the traditional schools if they wished.)

90

In relation to Bennis' recommendations, one would have to say that the Alternative School did quite poorly. The school made many of the mistakes it could make, except for the voluntary and enthusiastic participation of its staff and students. In some areas the Alternative School was simply lucky that its mistakes were not fatal.

Other Case Studies

One sees the same poor record for the Alternative School when one looks at the recommendations derived from the other case studies. Neal Gross, for example, found five major reasons for the failure of an innovation he studied.¹ In four areas out of five the Alternative

¹ Neal Gross, Joseph Giacquinta, and Marilyn Bernstein, Implementing Organizational Innovations (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

School rated very poorly: lack of clarity, lack of skills and knowledge to perform the new role, the unavailability of required instructional materials and the incompatibility of organizational arrangements with the innovation.¹ The only area where the Alternative School did well was staff motivation to innovate. Gross blames the failure of the implementation effort on the administration of the school. It is doubtful that the administration of the Alternative School did a much better job.

Comparing the Alternative School to Sarason's recommendations one would find the same poor record. Yet, the failure to follow the recommendations of all three case studies were not the only problems. There were others: a frequently angry and suspicious School Committee, which was lied to by the Superintendent; a Superintendent who was only minimally supporting the school; the bitterness between the University and the city; a budget that overcommitted one party; and a staff that was a continual conflict.

The conclusion one must draw from the comparison of the Alternative School data with the recommendations of the three case studies is that failure to follow those recommendations did not necessarily mean the failure of the innovation. Certainly if the Alternative School had followed those recommendations it might have had less trouble, but they do not provide a valid basis for deciding whether a project will succeed or fail.

Both Bennis and Gross saw an innovation fail and immediately suggested that the reasons for failure in either case were general

¹Ibid., p. 122.

reasons for the failure of innovations. That is faulty logic. Failure to follow their recommendations may increase the likelihood of failure, but there is no proof as to what factor or combination of factors is crucial to the success of an innovation.

However, that does not explain why the Alternative School succeeded. I would suggest that there were three factors which helped the Alternative School succeed: 1) as an alternative school it was only an indirect threat to the traditional schools, 2) luck and 3) the faith of the participants in the Alternative School as an institution.

Even though the concept of an alternative school was not understood generally in the school system, almost everyone understood that the Worcester Alternative School was not a new model school for the whole district, but simply a choice for a small number of students and teachers. Whether it succeeded or failed, people felt that the Alternative School was going to have relatively little direct impact on the traditional schools. For this reason people in the traditional schools were not threatened by the Alternative School. If they had been directly threatened, they would have fought much harder against the school and it is doubtful that the school would have survived. The only person who could have protected the Alternative School against the political power of the traditional schools would have been the Superintendent. Based on his previous record of minimal support, it is doubtful that the Superintendent would have provided the support necessary to keep the school alive in the face of strong pressure from the system.

There is no doubt that the Alternative School was lucky. Several events could have been fatal to the Alternative School. The

meeting of the School Committee over the question of the co-directorship could have been fatal to the school had the School Committee discovered either the terms of the renegotiation or the fact that the Superintendent was not telling them the truth. The arrest of four students in the spring could have been serious, but it passed by.

The faith of the participants in the Alternative School as an institution is an important factor to consider. Several times the staff was so embroiled in conflict it seemed doubtful that they could ever work together again. Each time they did. Several times the school was in chaos, but it pulled together again. The reason was simply that people still cared about the school; they believed in it as an institution. If they had not, they would have let the school fall apart.

The fact that all of the participants were volunteers has much to do with this faith. Since they had voluntarily committed themselves to the project, staff and students had a commitment in their own minds to making their decision work. Traditional schools do not have the benefit of this commitment. People are in a traditional school because they have to be there, whether they like it or not.

The Alternative School was committed to change and to responding to the needs and interests of its staff and students. Even when the Alternative School was going in a direction different from their dreams, people still believed that they would have the opportunity and the ability to affect the direction of the school. As long as they held this belief, people kept trying.

Only a few people stopped trying. The best example of this is the former English teacher who left in February, 1973. She no longer believed that the school could fulfill her dreams, so she left.

Most people in traditional schools do not have this intense belief in their school or in their ability to change it. However, they have nowhere else to go with the result that traditional schools are filled with apathetic people.

There is a temptation to use Renesis Likerts' force field analysis in this situation, to put all the negative factors on one side and all the positive factors on the other and then to say that since the Alternative School succeeded the positive factors must have been greater than the negative factors.

This is misleading for several reasons. Force field analysis assumes that the success of a project is due to a quantitative interplay of positive and negative factors. That is, if there are more positive factors or if they have greater weight than the negative factors the project succeeds. I would suggest that the data from the Alternative School disproves that assumption. The negative forces in the development of the school were far greater than the positive forces. The negative forces caused a great number of problems resulting in conflict and confusion, but they were not fatal. However, the fact that they were not fatal does not mean that the positive forces were therefore stronger than the negative.

The tendency of people viewing or participating in a change project to see success or failure in terms of negative and positive factors may be misleading itself. We do not know what factors are positive and what factors are negative. A factor, such as participation, that may be positive in one situation, but it may have a completely different effect in another. We do not know what factor or combination of factors can be fatal. Many negative factors may simply cause problems.

The recommendations of Gross, Bennis and others may be worthwhile in describing factors which tend to help or hinder successful implementation. However, not following them will not necessarily mean failure and conversely, following them will not necessarily mean success.

I would suggest that the Alternative School succeeded because it was lucky, because the participants cared deeply about it, and because it was only a minimal threat to the traditional schools. I would be guilty of the same faulty logic, however, if I were to ascribe successful change in all situations to those factors. (There may even have been factors which I have not identified or which I mistook as negative factors which contributed to the success of the program.)

Change is a much more complex and total phenomenon than educators have been willing to accept. Each situation involves a complex interplay of a large number of factors. A body of recommendations for change strategies is beginning to build up, but common sense and flexibility may still be better guides for practitioners than current change theories.

Some Reflections on the Nature of Change

In this section I would like to make several general observations about the nature of change, based on the data from the Alternative School. Where they are relevant, the ideas of change theorists will be mentioned.

1) Many pressures on the administrator are counter productive to change. Most change theories assume that the administrator will guide and direct the change process. As described earlier in this section, it is easy to see that the pressures exerted on the role of the administrator tend to make the person assume a conservative role. Great leaders may be able to negate these pressures by personal strength, but this may be too much to expect of the average administrator.

Change strategists should think about spreading the responsibility for change over a larger number of people. The Alternative School is an example of a case where the staff and students of the school did as much to force change in the leader as he did to lead or direct them.

2) Conflict should be expected in change efforts. Basic conflict arises from the value and philosophical differences in people, not faulty communications. These differences are present all the time, but usually have little effect as people often have very low expectations of their institutions. When a change effort is commenced, expectations rise and people get into conflict over their ideas.

Conflict in the Alternative School occurred because staff members had very different ideas, wanted to see their own put into practice and believed that they could be. Better communications would not have solved their problems. (cf. J. Victor Baldridge)

3) A group undergoing change should be considered non-rational. It may be possible for a single person or a group of people to change by a rational step by step process. However, change agents should be aware of the fact that the individuals in a large group of people will have many different steps and many different rates of change.

Individuals at different steps will tend to respond differently to problems confronting the group. Thus one should not expect a group response to be rational until everyone has reached the same step.

4) Change often comes from conflict. Change theorists have focused on the ideas of problem-solving and conflict reduction as strategies for change. Change may in fact be much more likely when there is a certain level of conflict. Most of the creative ideas and personal behavior changes in the Alternative School came during times of stress. Too much stress and conflict are overwhelming, too little stress was not challenging enough.

5) Change is usually painful. Some people think that teachers and students can step easily into new roles and behaviors. This is romantic nonsense. People undergoing change will usually experience some pain and change agents must make provision for assuaging and supporting people in that process.

6) There is usually confusion or chaos in an organization undergoing rapid and/or major change. After people have been unfrozen

from their past behaviors, they are usually in a state of confusion until they are comfortable in their new behaviors. An organization with many confused people will naturally be chaotic.

7) Change is uncertain, not whimsical. While it is difficult to predict the exact direction of changes, they can be understood. Luck is often involved, but it is only one factor and rarely the most important.

8) Rapid and/or major change is easier in a small organization. Besides a reduced number of people who must be changed, a smaller organization has a closeness which is psychologically supportive of its members. The sociological fabric of a small organization is very different from that of a large organization and helps maintain members who are confused. In addition chaos is kept to a more easily controlled order of magnitude.

9) People are often victims of change. Many people become involved in situations such as the Alternative School in which they are pushed to new attitudes and behaviors. They have a choice of either jumping on the bandwagon or being forced by the other members of the organization. They may have come to situations willing to change, but unprepared to change in the ways adopted by the group.

10) Change may come more from altering political and environmental factors than from introducing new ideas. People who are interested in changing education should think more about changing the politics of a situation than in discovering new ideas. Existing situations are often the result of a balancing of existing pressures. The only new ideas which will be utilized in that situation are ones which do not

upset the balance. Other new ideas will be rejected, whether or not the people in the situation like them, because the pressures of the situation do not allow their adoption.

University people have frequently misunderstood the rejection of their ideas by classroom teachers. What they miss is the fact that the teachers may like the ideas, but cannot implement them because the pressures on them have defined their role. Many studies have been done on the nature of bureaucracies and how they inhibit change. Education is rapidly becoming one monolithic bureaucracy and thus the factors tending to inhibit change are becoming stronger.

If we can restructure education, we may find that many people are ready and willing to change. New structures must be created which change the pressures on teachers and administrators and promote rather than hinder change.

PART IV

In the introduction to the dissertation I talked about some of the problems of education today and the concept of alternative schools. My year and a half in the Worcester Alternative School was personally both frustrating and exhilarating. I learned a lot about education, about schools and about people. In Parts I, II and III of this dissertation I tried to explain the birth and growth of the Alternative School as faithfully as possible. In Part IV I would like to share some of the ideas on education that I gained from my experience.

Change and the Need to Try New Ideas

Educators are continually talking about change, yet the rate of change in education is disappointingly slow. Education is neither psychologically nor structurally prepared for change. There are few effective mechanisms for the discovery, transmission, consideration or trial of new ideas. Most incentives in education actually hinder the generation or implementation of change.

Universities are frequently so separated from the reality of schools that the ideas they develop are often useless to practitioners. Moreover, when they do develop useful ideas their channels of communication with school districts are so poor and the relationships with school personnel so frequently counter-productive that those ideas are rarely considered effectively, much less implemented.

The structure and bureaucratic norms of public school districts weigh against change. Innovators often risk their jobs and are rarely

rewarded for their efforts. What we have come to depend on is the strength and imagination of individual teachers and administrators to change education by themselves and for their own personal reasons.

These norms against change have become so strong in schools that even when people have been given the freedom and mandate to experiment they are unwilling or unable to do so. They tend to spend their time trying to figure out why they cannot change, instead of using their time and energy to discover and implement the most creative ideas available. This was certainly true of the staff members in the Worcester Alternative School. The senior staff members were almost never able to discuss what they wanted to do and then figure out how to do it. They were always arguing about what they could or could not do. I would suggest that the primary reason for this was those staff members' previous experience in schools. It had taught them to avoid change and to be wary of risking themselves for ideas that the system might not like.

Interestingly, the actions of the interns concur with this hypothesis. Interns were much more willing to consider and implement new ideas. Their focus was more on new ideas than on the old ways. They tended to define their success in terms of their dreams, while older staff members tended to define success in terms of the traditional schools.

Change theorists are always describing strategies for beating the system. Some of these may in fact be effective, but it would seem that educators' efforts should be focused more on improving the quality

of education they are trying to provide and less on how to beat the system. A large part of the creative energy in education is being wasted on totally unproductive concerns.

The only way we can change this is to restructure education so that it is not fighting against itself. We must provide incentives for the discovery and implementation of new ideas. There are some high quality people in education, but they and their brains have been used extremely poorly so far.

If educators want to increase the potential for real and effective change, then they must first give people in education the mandate, responsibility and the resources to improve the quality of education in their areas. They must then be held accountable for what they produce. People who are successful should be rewarded and people who are not should be given other responsibilities.

We must move forward in both areas at the same time. It would be unfair to hold educators accountable without first giving them responsibility for their actions. It would be wasteful to give them responsibility without holding them accountable.

There are too many excuses in education. Everyone says that they want to change, that they want to implement innovative ideas, but that they are unable to do so because someone else will not let them. This is true from teachers to superintendents. No one seems to have sufficient power or responsibility to make changes. We must change this situation completely. Instead of no one having power or responsibility, everyone should have them.

Educators have always been afraid of chaos and competition. One result of this is an insistence on sameness. Teachers, principals, materials and schools are all supposed to be the same. The tendency is toward the safety of bureaucratic mediocrity. We are wasting great amounts of creative energy. Schools are deadening educators' brains rather than stimulating them.

Education should promote rather than curtail competition between teachers, principals and schools. People should be rewarded for the quality of their efforts. If people are competing with each other, they will begin to evaluate what they are doing much more critically. They will begin to look for people and resources which could help them accomplish their objectives more efficiently and effectively. School people might begin to look to universities as sources of help rather than as people to be avoided.

Educators have always avoided comparison between education and business. They say that there can be few useful analogies between the intellectual and social growth of human beings and the production of goods and services. I would agree that there are important differences, but the methods by which business generates and implements new ideas has a great deal of relevance for education. Competition between companies forces them to look for the best ideas and resources available. They pay for other people's ideas and they spend large amounts of money for their own research and development. How many school systems have any money allotted for research and development. (Universities function as research and development areas for education, but they do for business as well. The difference is that education does not spend any money of its own.)

The ideas of business usually succeed or fail on the basis of their worth to the consumer. Businesses can get ahead by producing ideas which are more interesting or worthwhile to consumers than those of their competitors..

In education it is the producers--the teachers or the administrators--who decide whether an idea is worthwhile or not. The consumers, the students and parents have little say in what they receive and little variety to choose from.

Some educators have said that to structure school systems along more business-like lines would be to turn schools into factories. This would only happen if the people who were deciding what succeeded or failed were in favor of factories. The criteria of the evaluators will determine the nature of schools.

If the evaluators are the students and their parents, my guess would be that some would want factory-like schools, but that many others would want very different types of schools.

Educators have had it too easy for too long. They have also been wasted for too long. We must put them in a position where they can produce for students, but we must also create a system where they are held accountable to the consumers of their services.

All of education may not be ready for such a drastic change. I doubt that all teachers and administrators would be willing to accept full responsibility for their activities. I also doubt that they are ready to let students or their parents decide what schools (or classes for that matter) they would like to attend.

Alternative Schools

The usefulness of alternative schools as a change strategy is that they allow education to give a fuller mandate and fuller accountability to a number of people. This number would be small initially and would be limited solely to volunteers, but it would establish precedents and a base for the future.

Alternative schools permit rapid and/or major change within a system, even if the vast bulk of that system remains the same. It establishes a small area which threatens few people but which is free to explore new ideas. Thus for the first time school districts would have places which could test, refine and evaluate innovative ideas without creating strong and immediate opposition.

It is important that alternative schools encompass all aspects of an educational body. Many innovations in education have been frustrated by the interlock between curriculum, structure and staffing. Innovations which attempt to change one area are often defeated by factors emanating from the other areas. Alternative schools can break this interlock by addressing all three aspects at the same time and in a cohesive, integrated manner.

Alternative schools can help change other schools as well. Each time an alternative school is created within a system it offers a choice and thus it creates competition. Students, parents and teachers are not choosing between the new and the traditional, but between two alternatives. As soon as you have an alternative, the traditional immediately becomes an alternative itself.

If there is competition, there will be incentives in traditional schools as well as in alternative schools to try new ideas. This may make possible the kind of critical dialogue which will advance education far more rapidly than it has in the past.

Once the critical dialogue has started, it will be difficult to reverse the process. Only two things could stop the process of competition--if school districts were to declare across the board moratoriums on competition or if alternative schools isolated themselves from the rest of the district.

It is the isolation of private schools which has kept them from competing with public schools. Those who expect private education, including free schools, to change the face of public education are neither practical nor realistic. If the money and resources of the society continue to be poured into the public schools, there is little reason for those schools to change, no matter how successful the private schools are. Public schools are where most of the money and people are and will be. Therefore, they should be our targets for change.

Alternative schools are a change strategy which is rational in its reliance on a strategy which avoids many of the problems of change in education, but which provides for the uncertain nature of change. Alternative schools promote changes but are flexible enough to respond if specific innovations fail. Thus their success or failure is not tied to worth of specific ideas, but to their ability to maintain themselves as viable institutions.

We must expect that some alternative schools will fail or will be discontinued. The goal of the strategy is to influence education rather than to maintain the viability of any particular institution.

Dangerous Tendencies in Alternative Schools

There are dangerous tendencies in the Alternative schools movement which could hinder or negate its impact. As I stated previously, alternative schools do not imply a bias toward any one particular kind of school. There should be goals which all schools are expected to strive for, such as excellence, citizenship, knowledge of the society, etc., but there should be alternative ways of getting there.

Many alternative schools people are beginning to assume that they have the only viable way. They drop the notion of alternatives and stress the excellence of their way as opposed to the poor quality of the traditional ways.

This creates antagonism and argument between alternative and traditional schools, rather than starting dialogues. Both sides become defensive and begin to defend their ways, rather than learn from each other.

Some people in alternative schools often seem more interested in creating anti-schools than in creating viable alternatives. That is, they seem more interested in defining themselves in opposition to traditional schools, than they do in defining themselves in terms of their own goals. People start talking in terms of "us" versus "them." This leads away from understanding and real innovation.

We must demand the same standards of everyone, but we must be willing to accept the validity of and learn from ways other than the ones we are most interested in. To do less is to negate the notion of alternative schools.

Much of education is sitting still. Every few years it jumps on some new bandwagon and hails its newest changes. Some of these changes are real but many are not. Educators often go around in circles rather than moving ahead.

This need not happen. We must create incentives in education which reward the generation and implementation of new ideas. We must also ask people to produce and then hold them accountable for quality education.

APPENDIX A

XVI Implementation Plan

A. Representatives from the Worcester School community and the University of Massachusetts School of Education will jointly discuss creation, implementation, and sustaining of an alternative school to serve students in the Worcester community. (Already accomplished)

B. An "operating committee" will assume the responsibility for making arrangements and ensuring that details are taken care of until an Executive Director can be secured.

C. A search committee will be formed to locate and secure the best candidate for the position of Executive Director of the Worcester Public Alternative School.

D. The Executive Director would be on board by January, 1972.

E. The responsibility for producing and disseminating publicity for the consumption of the staff and students as well as the general public will be assigned to Charles Kolak (Public Relations - Worcester Public Schools). The Executive Director of the Alternative School will assist Mr. Kolak at this task after he is appointed.

F. The Executive Director will be directly responsible to the Superintendent.

G. Staffing for the school is a very crucial area and requires special care. Action will be taken on the question of staffing immediately following the approval of the school by the Worcester School Committee or Board. In-service training for all staff will be on-going, with the development of a "multiplier mechanism" which can open the training program to other teachers within the district, state, etc.; the purpose of the multiplier being the propagation of behaviors, skills, knowledge gained from the operation of the Alternative School. The mechanism would allow the school to have impact on participants beyond the staff of the Alternative School, as well as provide a means of feedback from new trainees.

H. Community people will be actively involved in staff selection, planning, and implementation for the Alternative School. Extensive use will be made of community paraprofessionals, community professionals and volunteers in the teaching and guidance process.

I. The Executive Director and students will jointly determine and commit to writing the procedures and structure of the school government by March 1, 1972.

J. The Executive Director and his Advisory Board will determine the extent to which community institutions and agencies will become involved in the Alternative School.

K. In the evaluation stage an independent auditor will measure the program progress in relationship to the stated objectives.

STATISTICS AND BUDGET - WORCESTER PUBLIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Second full year
9/73 - 6/73

First full year
9/72 - 6/73

First six months
2/72 - 6/72

# Students	80	160	240
# Paid Staff			
Ex. Dir.	1	1	1
Teachers	2	4	4
Aides	2	4	4
Clerical	1	1	1
<hr/>			
Space	8000	16,000	16,000
Transporta.	6000	24,000	36,000
	14,000	40,000	52,000
		Sub Total	Sub Total
Personnel	9,500	19,000	19,000
Ex. Dir.	10,000	U/Mass	U/Mass
Teachers	6,000	Outlay	Outlay
Tch. Ads.	3,500	24,000	36,000
Clerical	10,000	7,000	7,000
Consul-		10,000	10,000
tants		U/Mass in Kind	U/Mass in Kind
	39,000	60,000	82,000
		Sub Total	Sub Total
Personnel			
Teachers	1,000	40,000	60,000
Supplies/		2,000	3,000
Books			
Pup. Per. Ser.	2,000	4,000	5,000
Equip.	2,000	4,000	5,000
		<hr/>	<hr/>
	58,000	150,000	197,000
		TOTAL	TOTAL

APPENDIX B

CRITERIA FOR INVOLVEMENT OF THE WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
 AND
 THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
 IN THE NATIONAL ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Intent

1. The School of Education and Worcester Public Schools have jointly agreed that there is a need to create, implement, and sustain an Alternative Public School to serve students in the Worcester community.
2. The establishment of an alternative school must provide for freedom from traditional restraints.

Planning Group

1. Selection of Planning Group made by John Connor and Ray Ivey.
2. Elimination of in-group or higher group veto power within the limitations of necessary legalities.
3. Planning Group would be representative of students, parents, citizens, Worcester staff and School of Education staff.
4. Cost of planning phase mutually shared by the School of Education and the Worcester School System.
5. Planning Group should set February 1, 1972, as target date for actual opening of the alternative school to allow for maximum student and staff involvement in the evolution of alternative school. This opening may involve a limited number of students (50) who would operate as a planning team.

Restraints and Priorities

1. Staff Selection
 - A. Freedom from regular contractual terms - voluntary participation.
 1. Pupil-teacher ratio.
 2. Teacher hours - part-time, full-time (6 months, 10 months, 12 months, etc.).
 3. Teacher salary based on the Worcester salary schedule.
 4. Two professional teachers and one executive director.

- B. Freedom from normal criteria of hiring administrators and teachers.
 - C. Use of para-professionals, interns and other teaching staff—paid and volunteers.
 - D. Freedom from credentialism.
2. Enrollment - voluntary participation.
- A. Student population with the wide range of interests and abilities. Selected from public, non-public schools and those students who are not in attendance, but need the other minimum criteria.
 - B. Elimination of geographical boundary restraints.
 - C. Open enrollment should insure that the students and staff reflect a racial balance. To maintain a diversity in the student body, it is suggested, there will be a minimum of 10% non white (Black, Spanish speaking, Oriental and Indian), 50% white, 10% non-attendance, 10% honor students, 25% male, 25% female, 20% of each grade level.
3. Curriculum. Eliminating school system imposed and college entrance requirements.
4. Teacher Training. District would agree to release teachers for renewal training and workshop activities. This would apply to teachers within the alternative school and the district.
5. Decision-Making. The alternative school governing committee would have similar representation and autonomy to the Planning Group.
6. Evaluation.
- A. The governing committee will design its own evaluation strategy of students, staff and program.
 - B. Standardized testing will be suspended when legally possible.

APPENDIX C

SCHEDULE FOR THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

- March 8: 1. Meet with high school principals individually.
 2. Distribute information and applications to students.
 3. Distribute information and applications to staff.
 4. Set up date for directors to be available for questions.
 5. Set up procedures with high schools for receipt of applications.
- March 10,
 13, 14: Visit high schools to talk about the Alternative School with interested students and/or staff.
- March 21,
 2:00 P.M.: All applications must be in (staff and students).
 Collection that afternoon of applications from high schools (in addition to those mailed to Central Administration).
- March 22: Interview potential staff members.
- March 23: Any interviews not conducted March 22.
- March 24: Selection of students and notification as soon as possible thereafter.
- March 27,
 28, 29: Staff development and planning.
- March 30: Initial orientation meeting with staff and students.
- April 3: School starts.
- April 3-7: Initial planning period - suspension of all normal activities.
- April 15-
 23: Vacation

OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THIS PERIOD AND APPROXIMATE DATES:

- before
 March 22: Selection of C.O.P. students and any interns for Alternative School.
- March 9-18: Recruitment of additional members for planning committee.
- March 20-
 24: Meeting of planning committee.
- NOTE: This is not an all-inclusive time table nor does it include all the things which must be done.

APPENDIX D

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF WORCESTER

To: Dr. John J. Connor
 From: William Allard, Jack Bierwirth
 Subject: Selection of Students for Worcester Alternative School
 Memo No. 3 Date: March 23, 1972

The following is the process we will be using to select 50 students.

We are ensuring the following minimums for the student body:

- 10% minority
- 10% non-attenders
- 50% white
- 10% honor students
- 25% male
- 25% female
- 20% each grade level
- 15% each school

Since we wish to be fair to all and to prove that we can have a truly alternative school with a representative cross-section of the student population, we decided to do selection by lottery.

To ensure these minimums through this process of random selection, we will set up 5 pots:

1. non-attenders
2. Doherty H.S. students
3. South H.S. students
4. Burncoat H.S. students
5. North H.S. students

First five names will be selected from the pot of non-attenders. Then eight (8) names will be selected from each of the four other pots. As each name is selected we will identify all of the categories it fits. This stage of the process will produce 37 names.

All previously unselected names will be thrown together and 13 more names selected. Any category which is deficient will be drawn from directly.

There will be no wild cards or other such selection of students. All students will be randomly picked.

APPENDIX E

WORCESTER ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Worcester Public Schools

William C. Allard
John Bierwirth
Directors

To: Dr. Joseph Keefe

From: Alternative School Staff

Re: Authorization of Alternative School Credit for the
Remainder of School Year

Memo No. 17

Date: April 26, 1972

Grades up to the point of entry into the Alternative School will be averaged so as to give a mark for one full year's credit (or failure) by the home high school and recorded by the home high school.

If a student does not wish to have the grade given at that point the following two options are open:

1. If a student wishes to continue a certain course at the home high school the student will continue as if he had never left.
2. If a student wishes to continue a course from the home high school but under the auspices of an Alternative School staff member, he may do so. The grade in this case will be given by the Alternative School staff member, averaging in grades up to point of entry into the Alternative School with those given thereafter on a strict $3/4 - 1/4$ basis.

All remaining activities will be recorded and evaluated on a separate basis by the Alternative School. This is so that the school may operate both from the viewpoint of planning and implementation of alternative learning experiences. Separate year-end evaluations will be done by the Alternative School.

To graduate or be promoted a student in the Alternative School will have to complete experiences through the Alternative School staff. One aspect of the planning phase will be to test appropriate models for Alternative School evaluation. In evaluating students, we will not compromise our professional judgement.

Alternative School Staff

APPENDIX F

Proposed Plan of Operation for Worcester Alternative
School - Spring 1972

1. Grades up to the point of entry into the Alternative School will be averaged so as to give a mark for one full year's credit (or failure) by the home high school.
2. If a student does not wish to end the course at that time two options are open
 - a) a student may continue in a course at the home high school as if he had never left, being marked at the end of the year in a normal way by that teacher.
 - b) a student may continue in a similar course under the auspices of an Alternative School staff member. The final grade for the year will be the average of the work in the home high school and the work in the Alternative School on a $3/4 - 1/4$ basis.
3. The only exception is a lab science. Any credit for a lab science must be finished at the home high school or under the auspices of an Alternative School staff member.
4. To graduate or be promoted for this year a student in the Alternative School will have to successfully accumulate a total of 200 modular credits ("mods") before the end of school.
5. Records and evaluations of these "mods" will be kept in the portfolios.
6. These "mods" may be done on either a credit/no credit basis or for grades. The decision as to whether to do a mod for a grade would have to be arranged between the student and a staff member.
7. All "mods" will be done on a contract basis under the auspices of a staff member.
8. A modular credit ("mod") is designed to represent the value of one hour's classwork and of work associated with the class.

A "mod" can be applied to any learning experience that can be self-evaluated; (class, independent study, internship projects, work/study, etc.); and also be negotiated before the end of the year with a staff member.

A "mod" is a measuring device that serves, in a way as insurance; it is a way of considering time spent working; the evaluation of that time is up to each student and his chosen staff member.
9. We urge that each student choose a staff member of their choice as an advisor.

APPENDIX G

WORCESTER ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

1972 - 73

SUMMER PLANNING
1972

W O R C E S T E R A L T E R N A T I V E S C H O O L

SUMMER STUDY PROGRAM*

PARTICIPANTS

*JUNE 26-30

JULY 5-6-7

" 10-14

" 17-21

Sue Castigliano

William C. Allard

John Bierwirth

Anne R. Freeman

Patrick Delan

Louis Soto

Gary LeBeau

Theodore Sotiropoulos

Jack McGrail

Mary J. Desarro

Frank Rush

Mark Hoglund

Eugene Applebaum

Ada Rauscher

Robert Doris

This report concerns the state of the Worcester Alternative School and its proposed plan of operation for the school year 1972-1973. It will not discuss the process of development or the history of the school as these will be discussed in a separate report.

These plans are the results of the operation of a planning school for 3 months this spring and a $3\frac{1}{2}$ weeks staff summer planning session. However, these plans should not be considered final, but merely what we feel to be the best available at the moment. The concept of a planning school was that of a place where educational change and innovation would be tested out in reality. While the Alternative School will enter a new phase in September, it will always remain a planning school, constantly growing and changing.

We see education in the broadest possible sense as the development of a human being, as a process for man to reach his potential. The Worcester Alternative School is designed for students who feel that they might better fulfill their potential for intellectual, creative and social growth in a school which provides broader opportunities and greater flexibility.

The Worcester Alternative School is not a new model for all schools. Rather its intent is to offer students, parents and teachers an alternative within the public school system. All participation—students, staff, parents—in the Alternative School is voluntary.

The element of choice is reflected in more than just the decision to participate in the school. Choice is one of the most important instruments for education and it is utilized in all aspects of the school. Students should gain the ability to evaluate data and resources, see available options, understand the kinds of requirements they will meet throughout life, see education in terms of their own goals and learn how to make intelligent decisions. This will not all come in a day, but if students are to become responsible and intelligent citizens, then they will have to begin to learn these things.

Perhaps the most important educational experience is that of figuring out who you are and what you want to be. A major part of that process is gaining the ability to make distinctions or choices. To gain that ability, however, the learner must be presented optional routes. We realize that many student choices (as well as our own) will be failures, but we would like to create a place where failure will not be penalized, but will be an opportunity for learning and growth.

Rather than passively reacting to a ready-made school environment, students, parents and teachers will themselves be creating the learning climate which will continually be reaccomplished or re-enacted. The Alternative School will be a living organism, constantly growing and changing in response to the need of students, staff and parents.

We see the whole of Worcester as a wealth of learning experiences. Students will take advantage of the best possible resources to meet their

own needs. Learning experiences can take place inside or outside of the Alternative School, at other schools in Worcester or in the community - all taught by whoever is best for the purpose. We hope that students will initiate much of their learning and thus learn better how to take advantage of the world around them.

The function of the structure developed here is to facilitate the attainment of our goals. Several elements run throughout the operational framework and it is important to note them here:

1. Flexibility
2. Closeness of personal contact
3. Openess
4. Participation
5. Choice; options
6. Individual and organizational renewal
7. Community

We feel that there is no contradiction between structure and the presence of these elements, but rather that our structure will promote them.

It should be noted here that the operational framework is not all inclusive.

STAFFING

In the Alternative School teachers will be those best able to guide a specific learning experience whether they be staff, students, parents or people in the community. There will be a regular staff (Fall 1972) consisting of:

- 2 Directors
- 6 Teachers
- 2 Aides
- 1 Graduate Administrative Assistant

In addition there will be a number of student teachers and interns.

The function of the staff will go beyond those of regular teachers to include guidance and counseling. Maximum effort will be made to facilitate close and personal relationships between staff and students.

Other kinds of professional staff will be drawn from the City of Worcester as necessary.

STUDENTS

The student population of the school will number one hundred and sixty (160) from grades nine through twelve (9-12). Forty-one (41) students are remaining from this spring's planning school.

Students were selected by lottery under a formula designed to give the Alternative School a student body representative of all sections of the school age population of the city.

At this time it is not anticipated that any additional students will be selected during the 1972-1973 school year.

CYCLES

The Alternative School year will be divided into five 7-week cycles with 1 week planning and evaluation periods at the end of each cycle. These cycles coincide roughly with the time divisions of the Worcester school calendar.

While specific learning experiences may be longer or shorter than a cycle, the cyclical divisions will allow for major evaluation and planning at regular intervals. It will facilitate the introduction of new ideas and modification (if necessary) of the old.

It is anticipated that students and staff may make major changes in their own schedules during the evaluation period.

WEEKLY TIME FRAMEWORK

The weekly schedule of the Alternative School will have two different kinds of time; scheduled and unscheduled. (See next page) Scheduled time will be primarily the time during which long term or regularly scheduled classes and meetings would meet. Unscheduled time will be primarily for trips, personal meetings, conferences, etc. - shorter term or less regularly scheduled events.

The purpose of the division is to reduce time conflicts and facilitate the participation of as many individuals as possible in special events, trips, etc.

ADVISORY SYSTEM

Each student in the Worcester Alternative School will have an advisor from the regular staff of the school. The relationship will be one of mutual respect and negotiation. Advisors will be assigned at the beginning of the year and while little need to do so is foreseen, changes in advisors can be made during the year in special cases with the consent of all persons involved.

The functions of the advisor system will be as follows:

1. To be the primary basis for evaluation of the student's

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 A.M.	S C H E D U L E D	U N S C H E D U L E D	S C H E D U L E D	U N S C H E D U L E D	S C H E D U L E D
12:00		E	STAFF MEETING		SUPPORT 12-1 GROUPS - every week 1:00 Town Meeting (every two weeks)
1:00 P.M.	Un- sched- uled (pos- sible time for consul- tants to staff)	D U L E D	S C H E D U L E D	S C H E D U L E D	U N S C H E D U L E D
4:00 P.M.					

7:00
P.M.

overall program of learning experiences.

2. To provide for a close relationship with at least one staff member within the organizational framework of the school.
3. To help the student in choosing learning experiences and for setting up part of the whole of his or her program.
4. To provide a link between the student, the learning experience and the school system as a whole.
5. To place responsibility between staff and student in a personal and helping relationship rather than a structural or organizational one.
6. To provide a personal basis for the questions of promotion, graduation, and/or status in the school.
7. To provide a link between parents, the school and the student's work.
8. To provide a link between the student, a community learning experience and the school.

We feel that the student's total program must make sense and be rigorous in terms of the student's needs, interests and goals. Rather than segment the student's experiences we will attempt to bring together a number of varied experiences into a cohesive whole. This whole will be unique to each student and will change as the student's needs, interests and goals change. It will be the function of the advisor to play a strong role in guiding and overseeing this process.

GUIDANCE

While advisors will function as guidance counselors in many ways, guidance counselors will be available from the city for other specific functions such as college and career advising, etc. Other technical personnel will be available for such functions as psychological testing, etc.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Collectively the advisor and his/her advisees will function as a support group. Individual support groups will reflect a wide diversity of interests, age levels, etc. They will attempt to deal collectively with individual and group matters within the school. The Alternative School will at times be confusing, chaotic, even threatening and support groups will help both staff and students deal with that.

Besides providing personal support for its members, the support group will also function as a forum for school-wide concerns, peer group interaction, brainstorming, group problem solving, etc.

Participation in support groups will be expected of all members of the school. Support groups will meet at least once a week; either at 12:00 Noon on Fridays or at another time agreed to by the advisor and advisee.

PHASING

Students in the Alternative School will be differentiated into two levels of academic freedom and responsibility. All students entering the school will be designated PHASE I students and will remain so until such time as the advisor and the student agree that the student is capable of passing into PHASE II.

The purpose of this differentiation is to provide continuity from a structured to an unstructured environment. It is designed to recognize the student's increasing maturity and rising ability to handle his/her own development.

Three things will be required of all Phase I students:

1. Mandatory support group attendance
2. Mandatory school attendance
3. Academic diversity

Academic diversity will be defined as participation in learning experiences in each of five areas:

- A. English/Communication
- B. Arts
- C. Sciences
- D. Body Skills
- E. Social Studies/History

In PHASE II these external requirements will become more internal. However, the expectations for Phase II students will be that they demonstrate

1. activity in the school community
2. diversity in their programs
3. participation in all aspects of their school lives

While students have been differentiated into two phases, advisors will be making requirements of students in accordance with their own individual abilities. It is important to recognize this function of the advisor in setting and maintaining requirements for each student.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Curriculum in the Alternative School is those experiences which contribute to the psychological, intellectual and social growth of the student. In this context each experience must be seen as unique to each student even if experienced within a group.

Learning experiences should make sense in terms of the specific student involved and in terms of the total context of that student's curriculum. That total curriculum will be defined by the student's needs, interests and goals and fulfilled by the best and most appropriate learning experiences available.

Each experience has its own best site, duration, period of time, people involvement, etc. In other words some learning takes place best in school, some best outside, some best every day, some best once a week.

The Worcester Alternative School will attempt to respond by having a large variety of types of experiences including:

1. Internships in the community
2. Outside learning experiences
3. Mini-courses
4. Depth courses
5. Independent study
6. Courses at other schools in the city
7. Courses at night school
8. Possible courses at local colleges and universities

Students themselves will share responsibility for finding appropriate experiences and also initiating many of their own. It will be the student-advisor function to integrate diverse experiences into cohesive, integrated whole.

Students will be expected to fulfill all city and state academic requirements.

Students will choose their program (under the guidance of their advisors) with their goals in mind.

In other words we will expect students to choose learning experiences which will prepare them adequately in terms of their future careers. We will also encourage students to preserve as many of their options as possible.

LEARNING CONTRACTS

Learning experiences may be recorded and evaluated by learning contracts. These contracts will be mutually negotiated by the student and a staff member. Thus each contract might have its own unique

objectives, activities, and methods of evaluation. This system is designed to bring objectives and methods of evaluation out into the open and make them a product of mutual agreement by all individuals involved.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of learning experiences will be mutually negotiated by staff and students and these will be virtually unique in each case. Dependent on the evaluation, each learning experience will either be given credit or not.

Students will have the option of taking grades for any experience if they wish.

PORTFOLIO

The student's portfolio will represent the total record of a student's experiences. It will be largely for use within the Alternative School, but will provide a record for students wishing colleges, trade schools, etc. It will include a record of each experience and the activities he or she was engaged in and the evaluation of these activities. Each student will be responsible for maintaining his/her own portfolio.

The function of the portfolio is to provide a clear and complete record of what a student has actually done. In many ways it will be similar to the kinds of portfolios which art and architecture students now use. Another function will be to help make each student think about his/her individual learning experiences and also his or her larger program.

TOWN MEETINGS

Town meetings will be held every other Friday and will involve all members of the school community. These open meetings will serve as a school-wide forum for the discussion of ideas and proposals, airing of problems, making announcements and involving everyone in the process of the school.

Town meetings will be supplemental to the discussions in the support groups and will function as a place where the support groups can be tied together. It is hoped all members of the community will be able to know each other and this will be one way of facilitating this process.

OPEN HOUSE

Every few weeks an "Open House" will be held during the evening for all interested parents, students, staff and friends. These will be

open forums at which the progress and process of the Alternative School will be discussed. Outside speakers and relevant films may also be employed to initiate discussion of issues that the Alternative School faces.

Our intent is to get parents involved very deeply in the Alternative School. We see "open houses" as one method, very similar in nature to the bi-weekly student/staff town meetings.

OTHER PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Besides "Open Houses" we hope for several other types of parental involvement. First, we hope for parents to be involved in decisions concerning the student's choice of program. Second, we hope that some parents will offer internships or be able to help us find internships in the community. Third, we hope that some parents will be able to contribute in various capacities within the school. And last, we hope that parents through these and other means will have a hand in shaping the course of the Alternative School.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee is composed of a wide variety of individuals from the city of Worcester. They represent a large number of sub-communities, organizations, institutions and individual areas of expertise and knowledge.

Members of the Advisory committee will be called upon for advise on specific problems concerning the school as well as advise on long range policy. Long range advice will be obtained through several intensive meetings which will be held during the year. During the school year the Advisory Committee (as with many others) will be kept informed through a monthly letter.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Final authority in the Alternative School will rest in the position of the Directors, as mandated by the Worcester Public Schools and the University of Massachusetts.

The Directors will serve to maintain the interests of all the constituencies of the schools, delegating authority to other individuals and groups within the school community where appropriate - i.e. staff meetings, advisors, Town Meetings, Open Houses, etc.

BUDGET

The budget for the Worcester Alternative School (attached to this report) is for the calendar year 1973. It is based on the premise that the Alternative School will be roughly the same in September 1973 as it is in September 1972. The budget is written so as to provide the maximum flexibility within that assumption.

Additional monies will be available from the University of Massachusetts School of Education through the National Alternative Schools Program. It is hoped that other sources of money might also be tapped.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

The Worcester Alternative School is attempting to coordinate its activities with those of other alternative schools within the city; Dynamy, The Adjunct School, Worcester Academy's Urban Studies Program, and Sight Program at Doherty Memorial High School.

The Alternative School is also trying to establish close relationships with other alternative schools in New England. These will hopefully provide access to new ideas, mutual support, and help on dealing with such problems as college admissions and state requirements.

The Worcester Alternative School will also have connections with other alternative schools throughout the country through the National Alternative Schools Program.

SPACE

The home base of the Alternative School will be the second (2nd) floor of the Elizabeth Street School. Space there will be used for on-site activities - offices, meetings and on-site courses. For extra large meetings the Belmont St. Community School will be used.

THE FIRST EIGHT DAYS

For the first week and a half in September, the Alternative School will be on a special schedule. Four primary tasks will be set.

1. Working on the Physical Environment
2. Taking care of administrative procedures
3. Establishing a sense of community
4. Developing the curriculum

Many of the tasks will be taking place every day or even simultaneously.

The function of this kind of special period is to involve everyone in the process of the school and the school community as intensively as possible. Only about one third (1/3) of the school (staff and students) will have participated in the Alternative School previously and it will be important to integrate the newcomers into the whole school very quickly. This will also serve to help people focus on exactly what the Alternative School is and how it functions. (Practical functions will also be taken care of more efficiently through this period of time.)

A curriculum "Marathon" will run for 3 days so as to familiarize students with potential areas of learning they might wish to opt for. At the end of the Marathon, classes and other curriculum offerings plus other experiences would be scheduled. Students will be expected to have their individual schedules (for the first cycle) completed at the end of the first eight days.

A special supper will be held for all parents and friends on Wednesday, September 13, 1972. This will be our first Open House and will serve to introduce the Alternative School to itself and others.

STAFF RENEWAL

Much of the operational framework has been written with an eye toward frequent individual and group self-renewal, within the Alternative School - i.e. summer planning sessions, cycles, planning and evaluation periods, etc. We are also trying to make provision for individual and collective self-renewal of the staff. This will be done through several mechanisms.

1. Staff are being urged to participate in programs at the graduate level.
2. Staff are being urged to explore sources of new ideas, methods, etc. and places where they might be used such as other alternative schools.
3. Through use of or access to outside experts (several were used during the summer planning session—Robert Doris, Gene Applebaum, Dr. Eleanor Moosey, David Rosen, John Bloom, John Bremer). Regular periods have been set aside during the school year for staff to meet with such people.

A retreat is tentatively being planned for October to discuss this question of staff renewal and the possible involvement of another program at the University of Massachusetts in this process.

ROLE OF U-MASS

The University of Massachusetts School of Education through the

National Alternative Schools Program is a partner with the Worcester Public Schools in the creation and maintenance of the Worcester Alternative School. The role of U Mass will include:

1. providing consultant help for the school and as a source of ideas, methodologies, etc.
2. helping to develop the process of evaluation of the Alternative School.
3. providing its Director, interns and graduate assistant when and where appropriate.
4. providing additional monies to help the Alternative School get started and fully functioning.
5. possible graduate student admission for staff members.
6. linkage with other alternative schools and access to alternative schools expertise and materials.
7. possible involvement in a staff renewal program.

APPENDIX H

This little paper is to let everyone know that all this confusion is in fact very organized! It's just organized confusion. If you ever feel lost perhaps everyone else does too.

The best place to talk about this mess is your support group. Your advisor is the one who is supposed to have answers and the other people in the support group should also be some help.

For the first eight days of school there will be no classes. We are going to try to do three things:

1. Get to know each other
2. Set up classes and other experiences
3. Fix the school up and get it running.

There will be a daily schedule in the front hall. Support groups will meet every day and we plan to begin every day with a large meeting of everyone.

SUPER SUPPER - On Wednesday, September 13 (next week) we are going to have a large supper for students, parents, teachers - everyone. Tell your parents about it so they can plan ahead. We are hoping that as many people as possible will be able to attend. We are also depending on everyone in the school to help plan and run this supper.

MARATHON - Thursday, Friday and Monday we will have what we decided to call a "marathon". From 9 - 12 in the morning on each of those days teachers and anyone else interested in setting up a class, learning experience, groups of people, etc. will have a chance to meet with anyone who might be interested in working with them. The idea is that everyone will have a chance to shop around and talk to people about classes before having to make any committment. If you see something you would like to teach, or set up a group to work on get a time and place from JACK BIERWIRTH and it will be put into the schedule of events.

Everyone will get a list of all the things which are being discussed and the time and place where it will meet. You will also get a schedule of events. If you think you might be interested or would like to find out more, go and talk to the people. Going doesn't mean you want to take it. (These meetings will also be used to discuss how the experience is going to be set up so go and put your 2 cents in.) If you are unable to go when something is scheduled to meet, see the person running it later.

If you go and it turns out to be something you might take let the person know. Classes, etc. will then be scheduled Monday night. Tuesday and Wednesday you should pick out what you are interested in and try to make out a schedule for the first cycle.

During this whole period you should be talking to your advisor about what you want to do. Support groups are also good places to talk about problems you are having, ideas you'd like to try out, good (or bad) things that you've found, etc.

CLASSES AT OTHER SCHOOLS - If you are interested in taking one or more classes at another city school you should contact the following people. They will get in touch with the guidance counselors in the school and register you for the course.

SCHEDULE FOR 1ST EIGHT DAYS

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
		Sept. 6 9:00 Whole School Meeting 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Support Groups	Sept. 7 8:30 Whole School Meet- ing 9:00 - 12:00 Marathon 12:00 Support Groups	Sept. 8 8:30 Whole School Meet- ing 9:00 - 12:00 Marathon 12:00 Support Groups
Sept. 11 8:30 Whole School Meet- ing 9:00 - 12:00 Marathon 12:00 Support Groups	Sept. 12 8:30 Whole School Meet- ing SCHEDULE POSTED 12:00 Support Groups	Sept. 13 8:30 Whole School Meet- ing 12:00 Support Groups	Sept. 14 8:30 Whole School Meet- ing 12:00 Support Groups	Sept. 15 8:30 Whole School Meet- ing 12:00 Support Groups
		6:30 SUPER SUPPER		

APPENDIX I

MARATHON SEPTEMBER 1972

OFFERINGSPAT DOLAN

Theatre Workshop	Thursday	9:00 A.M.	RM. 15
Basic Skills in English	Monday	10:40	15
French & France	Monday	9:00	15
European Civilization - History, art, music, philosophy	Friday	9:00	15
Thoreau/Melville/Emerson/ Whitman/Hawthorne/Poe	Friday	10:40	15
Contemporary African Literature	Thursday	11:00	15
The Wonderful World of Worcester	Monday	11:20	15

BENNETT BERTENTHAL

Study Skills-Reading remediation, speed reading, note taking, test taking, paper writing	Friday	9:20	RM. 12
Child Development	Thursday	9:00	12
Non Violence	Thursday	10:20	12
Redesigning the Alternative School Carpentry	Thursday	11:20	12
Elementary Education (with Jack)	Thursday	9:20	16
Seminar on Greek Civilization (w/Ted)	Friday	11:00	12
Kurt Vonnegut	Monday	11:40	12

JO ANN DESARRO

Health Problems in Today's Society	Thursday	9:20	RM. 15
Body Skills & Movement Education - Tennis, sailing, etc.	Thursday	10:20	15
Survival-Wildernerr	Friday	10:20	15
Family & Child Care	Monday	11:00	15

KATHY PLANKY

Math Tutoring	Friday	10:00 A.M.	RM. 9
Math & Logic			
Puzzles	Friday	11:40	12
Crocheting &			
Knitting	Thursday	10:00	12
Classical Music	Monday	9:40	12
Geometry	Friday	9:00	16
Math Workshop	Monday	11:40	9

BARI DWORKIN

Consumer Math	Friday	9:00	9
Cooking	Monday	9:00	9
Child Care &			
Development			
(w/Bennett)	Thursday	9:00	12

JACK McGRAIL

Sociology	Thursday	9:40	9
Current American			
Affairs	Friday	9:20	9
American Government	Monday	11:00	11
Topics in U.S. History			
a. American Presidency			
b. American Revolution			
c. Civil War			
d. Survey of U.S.			
History	Friday	11:00	9

KEN LEXIER

Geometry	Friday	9:00	16
Algebra I or II	Thursday	9:00	16
Computer Science	Friday	11:40	9
Population Dynamics	Friday	9:40	9
Novels by Hesse	Monday	10:20	12
Trigonometry	Monday	9:40	12

BILL QUINN

Psychology - All Kinds	Monday	9:40	9
	Thursday	10:40	9
Interpersonal Relation-			
ships	Monday	10:00	9

BILL ALLARD

Calculus	Monday	9:00	RM. 16
Algebra	Thursday	9:00	16
Geometry	Friday	9:00	16

TED SOTIROPOLOS

General Math	Monday	10:40	12
Algebra	Thursday	9:00	16
Geometry	Friday	9:00	16
Math Lab	Monday	11:40	9
Algebra II & Trigonometry	Monday	9:40	9
Ethnic Groups & Immigrants in Worc. Seminar in Greek Civilization (w/Bennett)	Friday	9:00	12
	Friday	11:00	12

PETER HAWLEY

Chinese & Japanese History	Friday	9:40	14
Marxism	Thursday	10:20	14
American Poetry	Friday	10:40	14

CAROL KATZ

Black Literature & Culture	Friday	11:40	14
Mural	Thursday	11:40	9
Youth and Its Diffi- culties-Woman's studies, drugs, identity	Monday	9:20	14

SUE CASTIGLIANO

Alternative Ways to Learn English Lab in Alternative Learning	Thursday	11:20	RM. 13
People Study	Thursday	11:00	13
Practical Life Style Decisions	Monday	10:00	13
A.P. English	Friday	11:20	13
	Friday	9:40	13

GARY LeBEAU

Mass Media (TV) Practical Politics & Political Campaigns	Thursday	9:20	RM. 14
The Ecology of New England	Thursday	11:40	14
	Monday	10:40	14

MARK MORADIAN

Physics	Thursday	9:40	12
Chemistry	Friday	9:40	12
Political Campaigns	Thursday	11:40	14

JACK BIERWIRTH

Economics & the Stock Market A Whole Earth Catalog of Learning Resources of Worc. Teaching & Tutoring at Belmont Community School	Friday	10:20	RM. 16
Western Civilization (w/Pat)	Thursday	11:00	13
Visits to other Alter- native Schools	Thursday	9:20	16
	Friday	9:00	15
	Friday	10:40	16

JOE BERGANTINO

Radical approach to U.S. History Education	Monday	11:20	14
	Monday	10:20	14

CLYDE LEO

Asian-American Ethnic Studies	Thursday	10:40	14
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INTERNSHIPS

Bill, Pat, Jack	Thursday	10:00	16
	Friday		
	Monday		

CLASSES IN NIGHT
SCHOOL - BILL

Thursday	11:00	16
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CLASSES at Quinsigamond
Bill

Friday	11:20	16
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RICH JOHNSON & Others

Auto Mechanics	Thursday	11:20	9
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LEE CAPLAN & Others

Film Making	Thursday	11:40	15
Ping Pong	Monday	11:40	15

APPENDIX J

January 1973
COURSE OFFERINGS W.A.S.

Expressive Arts

Intermediate Conversational French (Pat)
Theatre Workshop (Pat)
Vocational English Discussion (Jo Ann)
Mass Media (Gary)
Beginning Conversational French (Pat)
Intermediate Latin (Tutoring) (Pat)
Hemingway/Oates (Pat)
Myths of Greeks & Romans (Pat & Ted)
Photography (Carol)
Role Playing Workshop (Sue)
Drawing & Painting (Jean)
Shakespeare - The Tragedies (Peter)
Study Skills Workshop (Sue)
English Discussion Group (Sue)
Writing Workshop (Pat)
High School Equivalency/College Boards (Pat)
Writings of Hesse (Ken)
Godspell (Ken)
Nutrition & Health (Frank)
Study Skills (Bill Dillon)
Open Workshop - Art (Jean & Julianne)
Modern Art Seminar - (Jean)
Clay Sculpture (art) - (Jean)

Environmental

Sociology (Jack M.)
Western Civilization (Pat-Jack B.)
Chinese History (Peter)
Child Development (Jo Ann)
Independent Study (Jo Ann) (2)
U.S. History (Jack M.)
Psychology (Larry & Dave)
Introduction to Physical Science (Mark)
Science Lab
Current Events & World Affairs (Jack B.)
College Physics (Mark)
Political Science (Gary)
Afro-American Studies (Frank)
U.S. Govt. (Jack M.)
Health & Safety (Jo Ann)
Independent Study (Jo Ann) (2)
Non-White Society (Frank)

Current American Affairs (Frank)
N.E. Ecology (Gary)
Survival (Jo Ann)
Field Trips (Jo Ann)

Independent Studies, (Mark)

Concepts in Physics
Physics of Electricity and Magnetism
Experiments in Physical Science
Study of Engines

Electronics (Dean)

Technical Studies

Algebra II & Trig. (Bill)
Algebra (Ted)
Geometry (Ted)
Geometry (Ken)
Computer Science (Ken)
General Math (Ted)
Business Math (Ted, Bill)
Logic Games (Ted)
Economics & Stockmarket (Jack B.)
Clerical Procedures (Ada)
(Filing, Receptionist, Phone)
Typing (Ada)
Business Machines (Ada)
(Ditto, Stencils, Copier, Calculators
Comptometer, Adding Machine, etc.)
General Math (Ted)

APPENDIX K

INTERNSHIPS

Edward St. Day Care Center	Jordan March Co.
Norton Co.	Fenwick Theatre (Holy Cross)
Catholic Free Press	Great Brook Valley Day Care Center
Our Lady of Mercy School	Worcester Girls' Club
W S M W - T.V. - Film	Worcester State College Library
W S M W - T.V. - News	Worcester Community School of Performing Arts
Radio Station W A A B	Clark University - Theatre
Youth Guidance Center	Elm Park Community School
Abbott Animal Hospital	Plumley Day Care Center
City Council (Mayor's Office)	Nelson Place School
Community Aftercare Program	Flagg St. School
McGovern Regional Headquarters	St. Vincent Hospital
Dr. Harvey Waxman	Belmont Community School
First National Stores	Dr. Morin (Orthodontist)
Venerini Academy	Project Hope (Marathon)
Senator Jon Conte	Worcester Public Schools (Physical Education Dept.)
Attorney William Tattan	Radio Station W I C N and W N E B
Fairfax Northeast	Massachusetts Air National Guard
Civil Air Patrol	Gage St. School
Morgan Construction Co.	Reynolds Security Co.
Main South Youth Development	Barnyard Zoo
Atamian Motors	Granite St. School
Worcester Science Center	Worcester State Hospital
Animal Rescue League	Worcester County Center for The Blind

These companies, institutions, and individuals represent places where students have been involved in learning experiences throughout the city. Some sponsors (places where students are involved) have more than one student in the experience. These sponsors were contacted and are willing to accept students in future years.

APPENDIX L

PROPOSAL FOR GRANTING CREDIT IN THE
WORCESTER ALTERNATIVE
SCHOOL

After a year of searching and experimentation, we have come up with a proposal for the granting of credit. While this method will not necessarily prove successful forever, we feel that it is the best we can find in terms of our needs and goals.

We are proposing to have two systems for granting credit - a point system and a committee system. With certain restrictions students in the Alternative School would be able to choose which of the two they wished to work under. (For the purpose of this proposal credit will be defined as a system for legitimizing certain amounts of work - whether these amounts are defined in terms of competence or in terms of time spent. This is to differentiate it from evaluation which is a system of measuring the nature and quality of that work.)

We have found that the current credit system we are working with is not suited to our educational methods or philosophy. The advisor system has become the foundation of the school and we have been able to open up almost unlimited numbers and types of learning experiences for our students. However, we have considerable difficulty in terms of translating this learning into credit without curtailing some of the advantages of our educational program. The purpose of this credit system will be to enhance and facilitate learning rather than hinder it.

We have created two credit options because we want to extend our belief that different people have different goals and needs into our own credit system. Each system is intended to be completely legitimate and to exist merely as a pair of alternatives that students might be able to choose from.

The point system will be able to legitimize learning experiences that differ widely in terms of time, in terms of work done and also in terms of type of work. All learning should be able to be credited efficiently without impinging on the nature of that learning.

The point system will allow students, parents and others outside the school to know much better how a student stands. Students will be able to work faster or slower. Graduation will become a goal to attain rather than the culmination of a series of grade levels progressed through. We hope this will be a step toward deciding exactly what a high school education should be worth.

Although we have had little trouble so far, a point system will much more easily be understood by colleges and employers. Students

going to or from the traditional schools will have an easy way to translate credit. Moreover, if we begin to have a lot of cross-enrollment between programs, we will have a way of facilitating this in terms of credit.

The committee system is designed for those students, probably few in number at first, who would like to work more independently. The system is modeled somewhat after the systems adopted by Worcester Polytech and Hampshire College. The student will have to think of his/her high school education as much more of a single comprehensive entity. We hope that it will encourage in-depth study and the attainment of complete sets of skills and/or competencies. However, we recognize this option may not be for everyone and thus it exists only as an option.

We will depend heavily on the advisor in both systems. The advisor should help students decide which credit option to take as well as with their program of study. If the advisor system breaks down, no credit system will be able to facilitate the kind of educational program we are looking for.

The strengths of the system:

- it offers two significant options to students
- it is flexible
- it can be efficient and easily explainable without impinging upon our educational goals
- it should facilitate our educational program
- it can legitimize learning experiences that are widely disparate in time, amount of work done and type of work
- it will set standards for graduation.

The danger of the point system is that it could lead to excessive concern for the accumulation of points, rather than concern for learning. However, it would seem that the cure for this lies with the advisor, rather than the credit system.

As we recognize the need for change and improvement we would appreciate all comments, thoughts or suggestions.

OPTION I - POINT SYSTEM

1. To graduate a student would need 300 points.
2. These could be accumulated in any place, anywhere so long as the student's advisor approved them as part of the student's program.
3. The average amount of work done in the average high school course would be worth 15 points per year (or 3 points per Worcester Alternative School cycle) 15 points = par value.
4. A maximum of 100 points per calendar year would be used toward graduation. (Someone could accumulate more than 100

- in one year, but only 100 would be counted toward graduation. All of them would be put on record, however.)
5. A certain number of points would have to be earned in the following areas (to satisfy state and legal requirements.)
 - (a) English - 60 points
 - (b) American History - 15 points
 - (c) Math - 30 points
 - (d) Lab Science - 5 points
 - (e) Health and Safety - 8 points
 6. In addition every student would have to accumulate at least 1 point per cycle in a physical education experience.
 7. For a point to count toward a legal requirement it would have to be negotiated as such by the student and the staff person with whom he/she was taking the learning experience prior to the experience.
 8. All other points could come from any areas, but a student's total program would have to have the approval of the advisor.
 9. Points for a given learning experience would be determined by the student and the staff person facilitating that experience prior to that experience by comparing the learning experience to the par value.
 10. All learning experiences negotiated by someone other than a full time certified staff member (interns, student teachers, volunteers, etc.) would be overseen by a full time certified staff member. That staff member will have to bear the final legal responsibility for the learning experience.
 11. Points are to be based on learning, not how or where it is learned.
 12. If a given learning experience is expanded or decreased, the number of points would be increased or decreased under mutual negotiation by staff and student. The emphasis in this system, however, should be almost wholly on negotiation before the experience.
 13. Points would be counted as earned after evaluation had taken place, whenever that was.
 14. Up to 1 point per cycle could be earned for support group activities.
 15. A student would graduate after he/she had accumulated 300 points or more and had the approval of his/her advisor. Graduation would take place at the end of the semester after that total had been reached.
 16. Students entering (or leaving) the Alternative School would translate their credits into points on the basis of the par value.
 17. Disputes over the point value of a given learning experience

- would be brought to the whole staff for a decision.
18. Under a point system, if a student from any other school took a learning experience at the Alternative School, points would give us a way of translating credits.

OPTION II -- COMMITTEE SYSTEM

1. Except in extraordinary circumstances no student would be able to choose this option before Grade 10. Selection of this option would have to be approved by the student's parents.
2. After choosing the option the student would have five months to select a committee and propose a program of study.
3. The committee would be composed of at least four persons, one of whom would be the student's advisor and one of whom would be from outside the Alternative School. All should be competent in some area of the student's interest, except in special cases.

For this reason students taking this option may wish to select another staff member as their advisor at the Alternative School other than the one appointed.

4. The function of the committee will not only be to pass approval on a student's program but also to help that student with their education in any way possible.
5. The student and his/her advisor would work very closely together throughout the course of a student's work under this option.
6. The student's program would have to specify what the student wanted to learn and how he/she intended to go about it. Emphasis should be placed on the attainment of certain skills, knowledge and/or competencies, whether they be in auto mechanics science or history. The program would be less specific on how a student was going to learn certain things, than on where the student wanted to go, what his/her objectives were.
7. A student's program could concentrate on more than one area, but whatever the case the committee would have to feel that the program made sense.
8. Within five months of selecting this option the student would have to appear before his/her committee to formally explain his/her program. (The student should talk to the committee members extensively prior to a formal meeting, both to ask advice and to gain their approval.) After, the committee would vote as to whether they felt the program was acceptable. For the student to continue the vote would have to be unanimous.
9. A student could appear before the committee twice within the five months, but if refused twice the student would have to go back to the point system.

10. Students should meet with their committee 2 - 3 times a year as a group and stay in touch with all members informally. Each time the committee would have to give their unanimous approval of the student's program.
11. If there was a negative vote, the student would have to appear before the committee again within a month and secure a unanimous positive vote.
12. Were that second vote to be negative also, the student would have to go back to the point system.
13. When the advisor and the student feel he/she is ready, the student can call the committee for a meeting to determine whether he/she should graduate. At that time in either written or verbal form (or some other method) the student must demonstrate why he/she should graduate. The student should present his/her portfolio for examination to the committee and be prepared to demonstrate skills, knowledge and/or competence in his/her area(s) of study.
14. The student will have to show also how he/she satisfied the state and city requirements in English, U.S. History, Health and Safety, Math, Science and Physical Education.
15. Once again, the student will need a unanimous vote to graduate. The student has one year after calling the first meeting for graduation to get a unanimous vote from his/her committee.
16. Committee members may be changed, but a specific member may not be changed if they voted negatively at the last meeting held.
17. If at any time a student should quit this option or be told to stop by two consecutive negative votes of his/her committee, he/she would return to the point system. For work already accomplished the student would receive points. These would be given by the staff person with whom the student worked on a specific learning experience or by the advisor if there were no particular staff member facilitating the experience.
18. A student working under a committee system would have access to all the same learning experiences that someone working on a point system would. The difference would be in terms of credit and graduation.

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