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**School Renewal Teams: A Format To Implement Articulation Between Junior and Senior High Schools**

by Arnie Cooper

The need to effect a transition from junior high to senior high school indicates an "unfortunate gap" in our secondary education system (NASSP NewsLeader, 1985, p. 15). The importance of articulating programs and plans from one level to another is both a long-standing matter of concern as well as a major issue in contemporary educational practice. Gruhn (1947) not only cited articulation as one of the major historical functions of the junior high school but he also staked out in 1962 a compelling role in the articulation process: "The junior high school has the major responsibility for providing leadership among teachers at all grade levels to maintain satisfactory articulation in the total school program." (p. 5).

The NASSP Committee and Council on Middle Level Education cited the importance of articulating "instructional and school programs across the middle level-high school continuum" (p. 2) in a significant policy recommendation in 1983. This statement extolled the virtues of cooperative planning and challenged school administrators to begin "an effective local study" to improve interaction between levels of schooling.

The purposes of this paper are to review the relevant literature on articulation that addresses dialogue across facilities and staffs and to propose a format that can contribute to improved communication between the junior and senior high school.

The Practice of Articulation

Articulation refers to the "systematic coordination of course and/or program content within and between educational institutions to facilitate the continuous and efficient progress of students from grade to grade, and school to school" (Houston, 1984, p. 18). A review of the related literature on articulation reveals that there are certain practices that have a direct bearing on what is needed to enhance the connection between the staffs of different school levels. Gruhn (1947) believed that satisfactory articulation demanded that "teachers in each school unit be kept informed regarding the objectives, learning activities, and instructional methods of other school units" (p. 416). Byers (1955) noted that articulation involved not only "bringing people together to work on common problems but providing for the exchange of materials and information through records, reports, bulletins and other means" (p. 417). While Ball (1960) cited a "lack of professional interaction" (p. 419) between schools as a major factor inhibiting the success of articulation, Campanale (1961) discovered that teachers recommended practices of a "more professional nature" beyond meeting with colleagues (p. 423).

Brinkopf (1952) described a student advisement effort implemented by school counselors from different school levels that was suggested by a school superintendent, a significant source of support and encouragement. Few (1960) also found that commitment and leadership from the central district administration were needed in order that articulation across professional staffs became more than a token effort. Leiter (1981) devised a program that relied significantly upon interschool conferences between teachers while Nasca (1981) touted teacher communication to alleviate problems when gifted and talented students leave one school level for another. When Fowler (1962) examined the prerequisites for the successful transition of students with special needs, she concluded that teachers and administrators needed to share information regarding teaching strategies, behavior management and curriculum activities.

The Joint Statement of the NASSP Committee and Council on Middle Level Education (1983) called upon principals and district administrators to facilitate the solution of transition problems by defining "the kind and degree in which such articulation problems are reflected in program, methodology and adjustment of students as they matriculate to the high school" (p. 4). Hord and associates (1983) maintained that improved articulation between school levels could occur when "leadership cadres" of professional personnel met on a regular basis. These "cross-school groups" (p. 6), aided and abetted by central office personnel, generated activities that enabled participants to develop better communication.

From a number of different vantage points, practitioners of articulation believe, then, that the process consists of several key ingredients:

1. professional interactions among a wide range of personnel
2. an informational function where materials and methodologies are shared
3. visible and active support from central office personnel

The literature on articulation practices offers an integrated and consistent framework for assessing the articulation process. The centrality of interdependence between school level personnel is difficult to ignore.

School Renewal Teams: An Articulation Device

Format

One way to accomplish articulation of both purpose and programs for the junior and senior high school is to cre-
I am very much interested in seeing that we as a school district implement plans and programs effectively. One of our efforts is to bring together personnel from the junior and senior high schools. You will be an important part of this endeavor. Meetings are planned with your counterparts. In order for this process to become a meaningful one, I am requesting that you complete this form. Your comments will comprise agenda items that will be discussed in future meetings.

Superintendent's Statement

I. List at least three questions about how the articulation process will work that you would like answered:
1. 
2. 
3. 

II. List at least three areas of interest that you would like to discuss with a colleague from the junior/senior high school:
1. 
2. 
3. 

III. List at least three ways you would like to cooperate with a colleague from the junior/senior high school:
1. 
2. 
3. 

References


Brinkkopf, James W. “Transition from Sixth to Seventh Grade Made Easy at Cherry Creek.” NASSP Bulletin 45 (1962): 70–73.


