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Cost Analysis of Some Differential Staffing Plans

DUANE I. BUDDE*

ABSTRACT—Research on differentiated staffing, a prominent issue in Minnesota secondary education, leads the author to question the conclusion of a Citizens League Report that differentiated staffing is a money-saving arrangement. This paper also deals with teacher reaction to proposals for differentiated staffing.

A report by the Citizens League on costs of education states that, "Rising salaries, higher taxes, the need for improved education, and radical changes in the definition of a 'teacher' demand that fundamental improvements be made in our system of determining job qualifications and pay for instructional personnel in the public school." The report, titled "Stretching the School Salary Dollar," makes two recommendations:

- 1 — Establish a differentiated staffing plan for instructional staff in the public schools by which personnel are classified according to their different jobs or levels of responsibility and compensated accordingly" (page 16).
- 2 — "Adopt a twelve month salary schedule for teachers and adjust salaries for fewer months of employment" (page 20).

Cost analysis of differentiated staffing is difficult to determine due to the small number of schools involved in pilot programs using this system. In one pilot school, additional money was received from a foundation. In Florida, the Florida Federation of Teachers states:

"Differentiated staffing, properly implemented, requires substantial increases in educational funds."

In California, the Temple City Plan of differentiated staffing receives additional funds from the Charles Kettering Foundation, thus implying costs above the regular public budget.

In Minnesota, the cost at Oak Grove Junior High in Bloomington, where differentiated staffing was instituted, is equal to staffing costs at each of the other schools in the district.

Overall, three factors seem to indicate the need for additional financial outlay:

- 1 — The Temple City suggestion that one-fourth of the staff be on twelve-month contracts would lead to approximately 26 percent increase in the salaries of those in the program (i.e., a teacher working 190 days would most certainly receive proportionately more pay for a 240-day year: 50/190).
- 3 — Increase the number of Ph.D.'s, or equivalent, to 7 percent of the staff, and having those persons in class three-fifths of the time would raise total staff cost.

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- 3 — In order to utilize a differentiated staff, a school would turn to a modular or individualized scheduling system, and this would require building modifications.

In the long run, such higher costs should be reduced as the district becomes able to cut back the number of master degree teachers employed, thus accounting for economy, according to proponents of the plan. In the short run, however, this economy is not available due to the number of master degree teachers already employed.

Some teacher opposition to this plan is evident to this author:

The Mound (Minnesota) School District faculty refused almost unanimously to accept a board proposal for differentiated staffing in 1969-1970 contract negotiations.

"Teachers fear that a staffing pattern of differentiated teaching assignments will be used as a means of cutting school budgets by paying higher salaries to the few teachers who reach the top brackets and lower salaries to the vast majority of teachers. This, in turn, raises the question of whether there is validity to the claim that differentiated staffing can attract capable persons into the teaching profession, as discussed in a research report by the American Federation of Teachers."

In a reply to the Citizens League Report, Norman Moen, President of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, stated: "Higher salaries will go to those teachers with appropriate responsibilities and lower salaries will go to others." But by "responsibility" the report clearly means administrative or supervisory responsibility and not classroom responsibility. By illustration, the report refers to the Temple City, California, school system. There, the teachers receiving the lower salaries are *only* teaching the children and youth. This implies that higher-paid teachers are in administrative assignments.

In conclusion, it can be asked whether a school district can improve education by employing an educational elite of one-fourth the faculty for a twelve-month period at the expense of selecting persons of lower educational levels for the rest of the staff?

References

- "AFT Quest Report on Differentiated Staffing," Department of Research, American Federation of Teachers, Washington, D.C., P. 9.
- "Classroom Teachers Speak on Differentiated Teaching Assignments," National Education Association, Washington, D.C., P. 19.