

Teaching teams, no grades urged by school commission

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—Ungraded classrooms and team teaching to provide quasi-individual instruction were among key recommendations made today by a Citizens' Commission on Public School Personnel Policies in Ohio.

The commission's report, presented to Gov. John Gilligan, recommends eliminating rigid-age-grade classifications and the use of teacher teams to provide more flexible staffing for individual student needs.

Financed by foundation grants, the commission has contacted educators across the state in its study.

The report notes numerous schools in the state which have already had success with programs using team teaching, ungraded classes and flexible building space.

It said, "The state is dotted with small fires that need to be fanned."

Commission members said the traditional approach of one teacher to classroom of students, "has resulted in treating children as if all with a birthday in the same year have the same interests, abilities, motivations, and personal styles of learning."

They refused to recommend a model program, but said team teaching has proven to be a flexible arrangement for providing each child with the specific help he or she needs at any time.

Team teaching can also benefit teachers, who can learn observing their colleagues and obtain support in areas in which they may be weak, the report said.

Team teaching also helps new teachers by not isolating them in a classroom on the assumption they can take up full teaching responsibilities immediately.

Children may be stuck with a bad teacher a whole year or find themselves with a teacher with a clashing personality under the old system, the report said.

With team teaching, teachers share the responsibility of assessing each student and prescribing his needs. A child might find himself with

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a group of younger students one period if he is having trouble with reading, then assigned to an older group for another subject.

Team teaching also permits each teacher to specialize in "instructional materials" and bring the use of tape recorders, overhead projectors and video tape to children who would not benefit from these aids if their lone teacher were not trained in their use.

The report also advocates training more teacher aides to allow teachers to devote attention to the professional and problem areas where their training is most needed.

In addition, it notes that teacher promotions "lead away from the classroom," and suggests provision should be made for promoting good teachers without channeling them into administration and away from teaching.

Commission members also advocate rewarding good teachers by giving them greater responsibilities, like leading a teaching team, and paying them more.

Members noted, "The public strongly resents paying 'poor' teachers as much as 'good' teachers."

Adequate state funding would be needed to get innovative programs off the ground, the report said, but added, "Continuing costs have proven to be little or more than those of traditional plans."

Federal seed money is often not enough to get a school through initial planning, reorganization and teacher preparation for a new program, the report said.

Funds are also limited to new and experimental programs and cannot be granted to schools adopting an already proven program from another school.

The commission said innovative programs have proven feasible in Ohio for urban schools, rural schools, poor schools and rich schools.

"Parents seem to question change in schools largely out of fear that children may learn less of the 3 R's and that discipline might suffer," the report said.

But it added, "Most of the new plans of student-teacher relationships aim at teaching selfdiscipline. The result may be more apparent confusion in the primary grades, but fewer later problems in high school."