



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

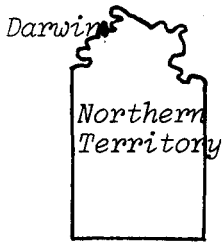
This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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TEACHER AIDES*



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Rarely has an educational decade seen such dramatic reactions as in the proposal, acceptance and subsequent expansion of the involvement of aides in education. Many different terms are used - usually interchangeably - such as paraprofessionals, auxiliary staff, teacher assistants, etc.

The basic rationale was that the aide could free the teacher from the trivial, mundane administrative matters and thus release him for the more 'professional' areas of curriculum, programming and implementation. In many schools it is considered essential to distinguish between the professional and the non-professional; and this generally means between the instructional, and the non-instructional. Some leading educators are forcing a reappraisal of this thinking for they feel that the aide can provide significant assistance in the instructional field. And, as time progresses the extent of involvement in the instructional programme will probably increase.

Analysis of the argument for and against the employment of aides generally indicates that the employment is validated on educational grounds, whereas it is criticised on personal or administrative grounds. Whilst appreciating that education is concerned at present with the interaction of people with people, it is essential to establish the correct priorities: are teachers more important than the pupils they teach? Is the teacher who has an unfounded reservation because of possible side effects more important than the pupil who can learn more effectively because of the presence of an aide? Obviously the pupil is the prime consideration, because the task is the important thing! However most critics appear to show that the child is not the important factor.

As with any programme in any business, planning in depth is essential; and the planning stage should include comprehensive exercises to ensure that both teachers and aides are fully aware of the role to be filled by the aide. It is also essential that the aide

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is conversant with the philosophy and programme of the school organization with which he/she will be working.

Many critics of aide involvement are obsessed with the imagined possibility of a lowering of the teachers' image, and of the use of aides as an economy measure. These critics are not recognising the implications of the dramatic rise in educational spending which is not being complemented by an equivalent decrease in class size. Obviously a different type of programme is needed - and the use of teacher aides is leading to a reduction in the size of groups in a face to face teaching situation.

It is envisaged by some that the change from auxiliary to integral in the educational instructional program will occur quite soon, and quite dramatically. Such a development has the same basic requirement as has any aide program; the right educational climate, and the right aide.

But what is the right aide? Some schools have used senior pupils with junior; some use college students with primary children; community volunteers are commonly involved, and of course there is the paid assistant.

When potential employment is being considered it is imperative that the decision be made using valid criteria - aides should be selected not because they conform to the accepted norms but because they want to work and are able to contribute to the continuing development of the school programme.

The current literature contains many articles lauding aide programmes. Total criticism is notably absent. This is partly due to lack of any tangible field evidence proving or disproving the effectiveness; but it is basically because aides are an accepted and valuable innovation.

Aides are here to stay..

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See Annotated Bibliography, next page.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

TEACHER AIDES

Von Haden, H.I. and King J.M.: *Innovations in Education: their pros and cons*. Wadsworth Publ., Belmont (Calif), 1971.

In this concise but broad book the authors collate the basic aspects of thirty innovations or revivals. Those included are all seen to be exerting a significant influence on change in education today.

Each section contains specific information about the innovation: definition; background; significant components; proposed advantages; likely criticisms; assessment of current situation; list of leaders in the field; brief bibliography.

This book is essential first reading if any of the included innovations is being considered.

Shank, Paul C. and McElroy Wayne: *The Paraprofessionals or Teacher Aides - selection, preparation and assignment*. Pendell Publ. Midland (Mich.), 1970.

The book sets out to assist professional staff gain an insight into the wide variety of tasks within the capabilities of teachers' aides, and provides information designed to assist in the utilisation of these capabilities in providing the best instruction for pupils. Emphasis is placed on the practical nature of many of the tasks and a very detailed preparation programme is included.

Sunderlin, Syliva: Aides to teachers and children. *The Association for Childhood Education International, Bulletin 24-A*. A.C.E.I., Washington, 1968.

This is a book of selected readings and so the basic premise of each reading will be listed:

1. Hymes, J.L. (Jr.): Every teacher needs an aide and both children and teacher will benefit greatly.

FINDING AND SCREENING AIDES

2. Hayden, Fredrick V.: Few aide programmes fail; many fall short because of the person/s chosen. Nonrestrictive selection means that potential for new direction and emphasis is being added.'The

teacher aide should reflect the social and economic characteristics of the school being served.' (p.11)

FINDING AND USING AIDES

3. Self, Frank: His involvement in the Headstart program is evident in this paper. He provides valid arguments against the use of aides but this is outweighed by the clarity of the case he makes for the multitude of ways they can help.

PARENTS TO THE RESCUE.

4. Muellen, Lois: A brief account of a programme in which parents gave freely of their time to assist in the creation of aids and in the running of the school.

6th GRADE AIDES FOR THE KINDERGARTEN

5. Lutz, J.M. and Stuart, A.: Outline of a programme in which sixth grade children acted as aides for some Kindergarten classes. The mutual gain was considered to be immense, as were the gains made by the teachers concerned for they had the opportunity to observe and work with two quite different aged groups.

TEEN-AGE AIDES

6. Mays, Billy: Review of a programme involving teenage aides working with very young children. The experience has a pronounced effect upon the aide, not just the child.

CURRICULUM RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY

7. Reed, B.J.: Aides can be people who are in the local community and who have been able to act as a teaching resource - Minneapolis has a scheme in which such a service is funded and coordinated by a special office.

The remaining five papers are all concerned with the education and training of aides. It is stressed that every potential aide has a role to fill, and this could mean a changing emphasis in the curriculum.

Snow, Lawrence: *Using Teacher Aides*. Drier educational systems Inc., Highland Park (N.J.), 1970.

This could be classed as a handbook for potential employers of aides. Lucidly it outlines the basic rationale of the need for assistance. This is followed by information on hiring (firing is not mentioned), organizing the basic program, and classroom work. Many useful hints are given, even samples of writing styles to help the aide improve penmanship. Detailed information is provided on

possible work in the fields of Art, Music, P.E., tutoring, using audio-visual equipment, assisting in the library, in the office and in the playground.

Useful appendixes include:

'Guidelines for teacher aides workshop

Tentative routines for Primary aides...'

to list but a couple.

A very useful book!!

Reynolds, J.C. Jr.: University based teacher aides. *Educational Leadership*, 30, No.5, Feb., 1973. p.423.

The basic details of the teacher aide programme at the university of Georgia are given. The programme sought to provide a solid philosophical and theoretical basis for the place of aides in educational progress. Comments by a number of the participants provide proof of the quality and effectiveness of the programme.

Mori, George: Paraprofessionals. *Education Canada*, V.12, No.1, June, 1972. p.10.

As a research officer with the Ottawa Board of Education Mr. Mori is concerned at the tangible evidence - or lack thereof - to support the need for paraprofessional staff. He finds little or no conclusive proof of learning improvement with pupils; however there is no proven disadvantage. There is however an effect upon staff. Some see threats to the 'professional' image of the teacher, others see an opportunity to have more 'free' time. He sees that the paraprofessional is here to stay and gradually a valid place is being found or created to utilise the potentially valuable member of staff.

Bloom, J.H.: The potential of teacher aides in instruction. *The Educational Forum*. Vol.XXXVII, No.2, p.195.

He contends that aides have emerged as a valued resource to schools. He is concerned at the future. Increases in expenditure on education have not led to the decreases in class sizes that are considered essential. This means that some method of expanding the potential of the annual budget must be found. He feels that the time will soon arrive when the teacher aide is expected - because of the qualities currently displayed - to fulfil an instructive role. As Director of Administrative Services to Charles County Public Schools in La Plata, Maryland, he has had ample opportunity to assess the situation, both present and (potentially) future, and his assessment would appear quite reasonable.

Clark, D.C. and Clark, S.N.: An effective instructional aide program: Training for both teachers and aides. *Journal of Secondary Education*. Vol.45, No.6, Oct. 1970. p.250.

He is a Director of Curriculum and she is the Assistant Professor of Business Education, California State College of Los Angeles.

They consider that the most promising way to increase teacher effectiveness is to employ aides. However, it is essential that:

- the teachers are trained in the use of aides;
- the aides are trained using a program relevant to the school district.

The teacher must be made aware of the extent of assistance that an aide can provide and this must be undertaken prior to the 'receipt' of an aide. Similarly the aide must be aware of the expected tasks and this must be attempted during a training programme. A suggested training programme is included in the article.

The following articles are all from the November 1973 issue of *Instructor*, Vol. LXXXIII, No.3.

Shanker, A.: Paraprofessionals are often the best P.R. people teachers have.

Mr. Shanker is the President of the New York City United Federation of Teachers.

The article is an interview in which Mr. Shanker stresses the important part played, and to be played, by the paraprofessional. He rejects as untenable the concept of teaching being a profession along the 'technology' lines of medicine; but he does state unequivocally that paraprofessionals have had a profound positive influence on education.

Plulchak, Mary: Who cleans the gerbil cage?

Park School, Kaukauna (Wisc.) is noted for its attempts at individualised instruction. An integral part of the programme is the use of aides. This article is a discussion by one aide of her experiences in the fields of reading and drama.

Included also in this issue of the magazine are five short statements by teachers or aides about tasks undertaken, pitfalls, problems.

The importance of communication between authority, teacher and aide, and clear direction of activities is stressed and re-stressed. The article provides an interesting and informative cross-section of possible activities.

Erb, Jane: Use of paraprofessionals. *Educational Leadership*, 29, No.4, Jan. 1972, p.323.

This article examines the programme in the school district of Springfield, Missouri. The aides are all volunteers and assist as directed by the Principal. A wide range of tasks is readily undertaken, and workers elect their period of employment. The clarity of discussion and the depth of assessment of the program make it rather unfortunate that the article has been produced in an educational journal: it would have been much more valuable as a Public Relations exercise in a more 'popular' magazine.

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