

Excerpt from Vito Perrone's "A History of Teacher Education at UND"¹

The following excerpt is from a paper called "A History of Teacher Education at the University of North Dakota," written by Dean Vito Perrone in 1983 for UND's Centennial celebration. We include it here as a factual history of the revolution in North Dakota teacher education that got so much national attention—and also as an example of the energy and vivid language of the man who accomplished it.

The New School

The New School program—the community it established, the strong commitments it engendered, the educational activities it fostered—was unique in myriad ways, deserving of a careful historical review. Within the context of this Centennial review, such a history would be inappropriate; however, I will attempt to provide sufficient substance to give the New School some significant meaning without turning it into a quasi-memoir.² It needs to be acknowledged that this discussion contains considerably more detail in relation to academic and clinical studies than has been the case in the history outlined thus far; in large measure, this is related to my intimacy with it and also because it is a history that is critical to an understanding of the Center for Teaching and Learning, the current entity responsible for teacher education.

When the University of North Dakota made the decision in the fall of 1967 to go forward with the New School, there existed only a limited sense of how to proceed.³ There was a conception of an exchange program—master's interns replacing less-than-degree teachers who would join other specially selected undergraduates at the University—and an alternative program for doctoral students. There also developed during the February-June 1968 period a conception of advocacy around more informal approaches to education,

individualization, greater intensity in learning practices within the schools, and interdisciplinary educational formulations at the teacher training level.⁴

A small staff was organized in January 1968 to engage in some preliminary organizational tasks. Ron Barnes (Vice President for Student Affairs), Clara Pederson (on temporary assignment from the College of Education), Kirkwood Yarman (who had worked on the Statewide Study), and Minard McCrea (former Superintendent of Schools, Valley City) carried the early burdens of explaining the relationship of the New School to the Statewide Study and describing some of the educational directions the New School hoped to establish. One of their more difficult tasks was facing their incredulous colleagues, who doubted that a program with such large goals and a commitment to advocacy could actually be implemented. There were many anxious times. Would school districts enter into cooperative relationships? Would teachers and prospective teachers risk an "untested," loosely defined program? One of the early questions asked by prospective students, which persisted and was actively encouraged by critics for some two years, was: "Will our degree be recognized as valid?" Were there sufficient faculty from traditional academic disciplines at the University of North Dakota willing to enter the world of teacher preparation? The early months were often discouraging but never lacking in some hopeful signs. By June, there were enough school districts and students to make a modest beginning.

I made the decision to accept the Deanship of the New School in early February of 1968 (effective June 15, 1968), and from that time on made frequent trips to North Dakota to assist in the planning efforts.⁵ The New School represented an opportunity for some fresh beginnings—in a number of ways, reaffirmations of many turn-of-the-century orientations—in teacher education. I brought to the New School a number of assumptions—many the product of my personal experience with schools and learning, others more intuitive reactions to some fairly standard beliefs expressed by many college of education people with whom I had interacted over the years. These assumptions became integral to the discourse within the New School. As a matter of context, some of these assumptions follow:

-
- Liberal arts faculty are interested in teacher education and schools.
 - Universities and schools can develop meaningful relationships in which each can influence the other's directions.
 - Liberal and professional education can be integrated, with each being enriched in the process.
 - More open-endedness in learning opportunities for students leads to greater intensity in learning.
 - Students are capable of giving much greater direction to their own learning.
 - Colleges, universities, and schools have not drawn sufficiently on the life experience of nonprofessionals.
 - Broad participation in educational decision-making need not lead to inefficiency or confusion.
 - Schools, where children and young people live out much of their lives, are not immune to significant change.⁶

A number of faculty appointments were made during that first spring and summer, the majority of them in areas outside education; for example, poetry, philosophy, religious studies, theatre, art, music, psychology, anthropology, sociology. Persons with backgrounds in teacher preparation came later. It was a diverse faculty in terms of academic preparation and personal experiential background.⁷

The New School set out, when 55 master's level candidates registered on June 17, 1968, to become a community of learners, a setting in which programs would be planned with, and not apart from, students. Such a direction could obviously become considered more easily in a setting where numbers were not large and where students and faculty were exploring many new vehicles for learning.⁸ A constant flow of philosophical and pragmatic questions about teaching, learning, and schools increased the intensity of discussions among students and faculty over the entire four years. It was clear very early that there were differences in views and that many persons in the New School were having difficulty reconciling the differences. Some of the following questions were debated—not just during the first year, but throughout the four years—generally at increasingly higher levels. What are the limits of freedom? What is the meaning of authority? What is important to know? What are the boundaries of legitimate inquiry about

teaching, learning, and schools? What are appropriate modes of evaluation? What is the role of the liberal arts in teacher preparation? What kinds of student-faculty relationships are most productive of social, psychological, and intellectual growth? What is an appropriate means of governance? Is advocacy a legitimate role for a university? How can the New School lend support to educational reform? What are the most appropriate mechanisms for involving parents in teacher education? How can the New School organize to support the interests of North Dakota Indian communities?⁹ What are the limits of diversity among students and faculty?¹⁰ How can a community of learners be firmly established? What are the best ways to support teachers who are actively attempting to change their classrooms and their approaches to children and parents? What are the most appropriate ways to extend children's learning? What are the critical characteristics of informal education? There were many more. Meetings seemed endless. Participatory systems that seek consensus tend to work this way. Experience with many of these issues was lacking; however, it may not, in retrospect, have been helpful. While it was difficult to reach any long term resolution to many of these issues, New School faculty and students were confronting serious educational concerns, asking, I believe, the right kinds of questions.

The program became fully operational in the Fall of 1968; in addition to 55 master's level interns preparing to serve nine-month teaching internships in North Dakota schools, there were 130 junior and senior undergraduates (of whom 60 were former less-than-degree teachers who were part of the teacher exchange program¹¹—and averaged 45 years of age), and 15 doctoral students. For the subsequent three years, there was an average of 85 master's level interns, 200 juniors and seniors, and 15 doctoral students—essentially 300 students per year.¹² Beginning with the second year, applications exceeded available spaces in the program at a ratio of two or three to one. This permitted a selection process that is typically not available to teacher education programs in state universities.¹³

In relation to the elementary classroom, the New School fostered an informal or more open classroom environment, a reaffirmation of many long-standing educational traditions. A guiding assumption was that children's learning is enhanced if it gives principal attention to a child's own experiences, needs, and interests and provides

opportunities for children to participate in the direction of their education, giving back what Jerome Bruner has described as “initiative and a sense of potency ... the desire to learn.”¹⁴

Structurally, the New School operated out of the belief that teacher education tends to suffer when institutional, epistemological, or curriculum structures necessitate that liberal and professional education be carried out in isolation from one another. This, it was posited, limited not only the alternatives for action but, more importantly, the ways individuals think about education.¹⁵ Because of its unique structural organization, developed around an interdisciplinary faculty, the New School was able to offer its participants all components of a teacher preparation program without the liabilities of traditional liberal and professional education distinctions. Students did not have to remove themselves from their focus on teaching to participate in such areas as creative writing, literature, math, science, art, and music.

The structural organization of the New School made it difficult for faculty and students to fall back on the traditional dichotomy between liberal and professional education by establishing a setting where a variety of educational perspectives, interests, and modes of inquiry could intersect. Such intersection caused considerable frustration, but it also stimulated a great deal of joint planning and cooperative teaching across academic areas. “Developing Mathematics Concepts” was organized by a mathematician and developmental psychologist. “A Study in Sound” combined the efforts of faculty in poetry, music, and physical science. “The Creative Arts Classroom” brought together faculty in children’s literature, language arts, mathematics, science, and philosophy. The examples of integrated activity are just too numerous to list. The unitary structure also made it as reasonable for a faculty member in Religious Studies or Poetry to work with third and fourth grade children in a cooperating elementary school classroom as it was to conduct an on-campus seminar in civil religion or creative writing.

All three parts of the New School program—undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral—were interrelated, each contributing to the strength of the other. Most doctoral students, for example, gained their clinical experience by working in the undergraduate program and by joining the master’s interns in the field to work directly with children. The research carried on by the doctoral students was closely tied to

activities of these other two groups of students. In turn, the undergraduates and the master's level students drew on the doctoral candidates as resource persons. The master's level students contributed to the undergraduate program by opening their classrooms for undergraduate field experiences. Similarly, the undergraduates, by actively participating in intern classrooms, contributed to the interns' efforts to change the nature of elementary school instruction. As a consequence of these interrelationships, each level of the program made a significant contribution to the education of teachers and to the education of teacher educators.¹⁶

In addition to the undergraduate and graduate programs described above, the New School also carried out a program to prepare Indian men and women to become teachers and sponsored several Follow Through projects. Both programs continued for another decade in the Center for Teaching and Learning.

The Future Indian Teacher (FIT) Program, initially supported through the Trainers of Teacher Trainers Program (USOE) and later supported principally by the Career Opportunities Program (USOE), enrolled Indian men and women from North Dakota's four Indian reservations in a work-study effort. The students spent part of their time working as teacher aides (generally under Title I) in their home-community schools and the rest of their time at the University for intensive academic study. In 1971-72 there were 75 students enrolled in the program at the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior levels.¹⁷

The Follow Through program was related to USOE's effort to continue work with "less advantaged" children who had been enrolled in Head Start programs. The New School (and now the Center) was among 20 sponsors enlisted by USOE and was selected to implement a program of informal education by school districts at Fort Yates, North Dakota; Zuni, New Mexico; Great Falls, Montana; and Burlington-Edison, Ferndale, and Sedro Woolley, Washington. The New School provided assistance to the sites, including on-campus and inservice training for teachers, aides, and parents.

It should be pointed out the Follow Through and the FIT programs did not operate in isolation from the "regular" teacher preparation program. The programs overlapped in many ways both on and off campus. For example, at Fort Yates several master's degree

candidates served internships in Follow Through classrooms and had FIT students as teacher aides. And faculty and doctoral students conducted workshops and classes for participants in all the programs.

In closing this discussion on the New School, its role as an important national catalyst for re-examining teacher education and giving impetus for school reform should be acknowledged. During the four years of its existence, close to 2,000 individuals—parents, school board members, legislators, teachers, school administrators, and college faculty—came from 42 states, nine Canadian provinces, and 13 other countries to North Dakota to participate in New School programs. They remained anywhere from a day to several months. In addition to the many visitors, the New School received and responded to close to 2,500 requests each year for information. While much of this level of interest receded with the formation of the Center for Teaching and Learning and the generally more conservative educational climate in the United States, the Center has maintained in many respects this important demonstration/dissemination role, continuing to provide considerable local, regional, and national leadership to teacher education. In this centennial year, the torch of teacher education is being carried by the Center for Teaching and Learning. A recapitulation of the route might be helpful:

- 1883 Establishment of the Normal Department
- 1900 Establishment of the Normal College
- 1905 Establishment of Teachers College (and authorization to offer the Bachelor's degree)
- 1912 Name change—Teachers College to School of Education
- 1926 Master's and Doctoral programs in education authorized
- 1953 Name change—School of Education to College of Education
- 1968 Establishment of the New School as an experimental college centered on teacher education
- 1972 The College of Education and the New School were replaced by the Center for Teaching and Learning
- 1998 Center for Teaching and Learning is replaced by the College of Education and Human Development

Endnotes

- ¹ Copies of the full history can be obtained from Beverly Solseng at the Bureau of Educational Services and Applied Research, University of North Dakota, PO Box 7189, Grand Forks, ND 58202. Shipping and handling are \$5.00.

- ² As noted earlier, there is a great deal of material available on the New School in the Special Collections Section, Chester Fritz Library. There was considerable attention to the New School in the popular press, journals, and television. A partial listing, without titles for the most part, follows: *Pace Magazine* (July 1969), 31-37; *Newsletter* of the American Anthropological Association (November 1969), 3-4; *Minneapolis Tribune* (April 30, 1969), (February 21, 1971), (September 6, 1971); *Atlantic Monthly* (June 1970), 82-96; *Reader's Digest* (July 1970); *New York Times* (October 11, 1970) and (January 11, 1971); *Wall Street Journal* (December 1, 1970); *Time* (November 2, 1970); *Newsweek* (October 26, 1970); *Saturday Review* (October 17, 1970), (April 17, 1971), (March 4, 1972); *Life* (October 1971); *Scholastic Teacher* (September 1971); *Merrill Palmer News* (June 1972); *Ford Foundation Newsletter* (September 1, 1971); *Minot Daily News* (March 13, 15, 17, 1971); *School and University Review*, University of Colorado (Spring 1971). Charles Silberman (*Crisis in the Classroom*, Random House, 1970) gave unusual attention to the New School. See also: *The College of Education Record*, Volume 65, Number 7 (April 1970) and Volume 65, Number 8 (May 1970) which were devoted to the New School; Warren Strandberg, "Structural Change in Teacher Education," *Illinois Schools Journal*, Volume 50, Number 1 (Spring 1970); Vito Perrone and Warren Strandberg, "The New School," *Elementary School Journal*, Volume 71, Number 8 (May 1971); Vito Perrone and Warren Strandberg, "A Perspective on Accountability," *Teachers College Record*, Volume 73, Number 3 (February 1972); Michael Patton, *The New School: A Case Study in the Structure and Diffusion of Innovation*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972; Faith Dunne, "The New School: A Case Study," in Paul Nachtigal, *Education in Rural America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982). The foregoing represent only a

small sample of the available literature: The following listings from a “Series of Final Reports on the Trainers of Teacher Trainers Program” are also illuminating: *A Report to the National Advisory Council on Educational Professions* (May 1973); *The Fargo-Madison School Program: A Cooperative School Effort* (April 1974); *Selections from Insights* (May 1974); *From the New School to the Center for Teaching and Learning* (May 1974); *Grading and Evaluation in the New School* (June 1974); *A Follow-up Study of the Master’s Degree Graduates (1968-72) from the New School* (March 1974); and *Structural Dimensions of Open Education and Parental Reaction to Open Classrooms in North Dakota: A Sociological View of the Diffusion of Open Education as an Innovation in Organizational Structure and Process* (Spring 1973). The *Informal Series* booklets prepared by Clara Pederson in relation to the New School’s Follow Through program should also be seen as part of the history of the New School. Several television documentaries were also developed: The most extensive of these were “What’s New at School” (CBS) and “What Did You Do at School Today” (NET).

- 3 A document entitled the “New School of Behavioral Studies in Education: A Pilot Personnel Development and Educational Research Activity Program for North Dakota Schools,” prepared in the fall of 1967, existed but was, from my point of view, inadequate as a basis for serious development.
- 4 The argument was posited that teacher education had become too separated from the intellectual roots of liberal arts content and practice. In this regard, this particular formulation was counter to the directions which had long been established within colleges of education.
- 5 I had previous experience with experimental, interdisciplinary programs at the school and university level. While serving at Northern Michigan University as a Professor of History and Dean, Undergraduate Studies in Common Learning, as well as Dean, Graduate Studies, I maintained an interest in teacher education, directing two NDEA summer institutes in American History and an American

Historical Association related institute in "Approaches to the Study of History in the Schools." In addition, I taught a special methods course in the teaching of history and the social studies. These activities related in many ways to some previous experience as a junior-senior high school teacher of history and as a teacher-director of summer educational programs for children, ages 4-12. My view then, publicly stated, was that colleges of education tended to be too narrow in terms of their human resources, too technical, non-intellective, in their orientations toward learning, too accepting of the schools as they were, too conservative in relation to the social/political contexts in which schools functioned, so scattered in purpose that much of their work seemed unimportant.

- ⁶ These assumptions, with more elaboration, are taken from an opening presentation to New School faculty and students by Vito Perrone on June 18, 1968.
- ⁷ Warren Strandberg, whose background was in Philosophy, was recruited as Program Coordinator. I had worked closely with Warren at Northern Michigan University and had considerable confidence in his capacity to formulate curriculum issues thoughtfully and to work well in an interdisciplinary environment. Warren arrived in Grand Forks in late August 1968 in time to provide tentative titles of courses to appear in the Fall 1968 registration timetable. There was no firm curriculum until later in the Fall, though those early, quickly conceived formulations of a relatively simple, flexible five-course area curriculum (Modes of Communication, Creative Expressions, Human Responses to Environment, Nature and Conditions of Learning, and Quantitative Reasoning) served as the base.
- ⁸ It was also easier at a time when the registration procedures were not tied so closely to computerized programs—when the system was more flexible, amenable to the many changes that became necessary to respond constructively to fresh circumstances. I make this notation to call attention in 1983 to the fact that the latest technologies have been instituted at an important cost.

-
- ⁹ Before I even arrived in North Dakota on a permanent basis I received a letter from tribal officials at Turtle Mountain asking that the New School find a way to improve educational conditions there. Interactions with representatives from that community began early in the Fall of 1968, assisted enormously by a freshman Turtle Mountain student, Twila Martin, who provided a series of seminars for New School faculty.
- ¹⁰ The diversity among faculty has been alluded to by outlining some of the academic areas represented. But the diversity went far beyond academic background to lifestyle and social-political beliefs. The diversity among students was remarkable. The mix of the young 19- to 25-year-olds with the older veteran North Dakota rural teachers, some of whom were in their late 50s and early 60s, was always a source of complexity as well as great joy. From the second year through the fourth year, of the 200 undergraduate and fifth year interns who were not returning North Dakota teachers, approximately 25% were former Peace Corps interns. In the third year, there were 19 National Merit scholars among this student population. There was likely not another teacher education program in the United States with that many National Merit scholars. There were a number of students seeking certification who already had terminal degrees in other fields—a Ph.D. in Mathematics, MFAs in Photography, Dance, Music, Visual Arts. The New School had, during its four years, the makings of a professional concert-level wind and brass ensemble. It was an unusual population and a unique time.
- ¹¹ The exchange program was a central feature of the New School's involvement with school districts during the four years of its existence, a primary vehicle for encouraging local school districts to re-examine their educational efforts by placing alternative patterns of thought and action into juxtaposition with their more established patterns. It also helped re-establish significant ties to communities as well as provide a supportive setting for the University to engage in a field centered program. By entering into cooperative agreements, local school districts agreed to assist New School interns in

creating more individualized and personalized modes of instruction in their classrooms. In return, the New School pledged its institutional resources in support of interns' efforts in classrooms.

- 12 During the third and fourth years, post-doctoral students, all from Liberal Arts disciplines, were recruited for the program. Over the life of the program, a total of 338 interns served in 53 different school districts and 80 different elementary schools, public and parochial. These school districts contained roughly half of the state's entire elementary school population.
- 13 Admission Committees tended to be partial to individuals who had unusual skills and experience. "What can they contribute?" was a common question.
- 14 I hesitate to develop any further here the theoretical, philosophical, or operational aspects of the advocacy which was central to the New School's efforts. All of this, however, has been described quite fully in the following, among other sources: Vito Perrone, "Open Education: Promise and Problems," *Phi Delta Kappa*, 1972; Clara Pederson, "New Day in North Dakota," *Childhood Education* (February 1971); Vito Perrone, "Open Education: Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going," *Insights* (November 1974); Clara Pederson (ed.), the *Informal Series*, of which there are twelve volumes.
- 15 Paul Nash, in *Authority and Freedom in Education* (John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1966), a book that was discussed intensively by New School faculty, wrote in relation to the liberal-professional education issue: Rather than follow the traditional pattern, which often consists of tacking "liberal arts" courses upon professional courses in the hope that some alchemy within the individual will transform the ingredients into a liberating education, we should experiment with the use of the individual's professional interest as a focus from which he can move out in a liberating exploration of its wider human implications (p. 41).

-
- ¹⁶ Along with these degree programs, the New School conducted a wide range of workshops for teachers and parents throughout the state. Its parent programs were particularly well attended.
- ¹⁷ The first students to enroll in this program in the summer session 1969, thirteen in number, were almost all individuals who had completed general examinations for their high school equivalency status. The average age of these thirteen students was 40 and among them they had 94 children. To consider engaging in a university program was courageous. Of these thirteen, eleven completed baccalaureate degrees; four went on to complete master's degrees; and one completed in 1980 a doctorate.