

A BRAVE NEW WORLD FOR RESEARCHERS?

The Florida State University Laboratory School
as an R & D Center

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In a public school setting, it is often difficult to find a situation where an educational researcher can efficiently and effectively carry out research activities. Variables extraneous to the research often appear which unnecessarily confound the research variables and outcomes; e.g., a school assembly on the fourth day of a ten-day study or a conflict between a teacher's instructional plans and the researcher's treatment sessions. These problems are understandable since the public schools' primary function of educating students may at times be at odds with the temporary needs or demands of the researcher.

When one looks at the instructional aspects of research organization, with the exceptions of a few emerging research departments within the public school system, the federally-funded R & D Center and a few privately-funded foundations, Universities and Colleges traditionally have been and are the centers for a large percent of educational research, both basic and applied. Because of this, they often need to seek on-going school situations to examine their theories or develop curricular programs. Many university researchers do indeed utilize the public schools for their work with success; but when they run into problems with the public school situation in obtaining student samples of manipulating the necessary variables, especially in "high risk" research, where can they carry out their study? In the State of Florida, university laboratory schools are becoming a possible answer.

Florida State University (FSU) has a laboratory school, the Developmental Research School (DRS), that provides greater freedom for research than exists in most public school systems. The Developmental Research School is a department within the College of Education of FSU, but functions as a research facility for the total university, the counties immediately surrounding the school, and the State of Florida. The DRS and the four other university laboratory schools in the State (P.K. Yonge, University of Florida; Henderson School, Florida Atlantic University; Lucy Moten School, Florida A & M; and the R & D Center at the University of West Florida) were assigned an R & D role by the 1969 legislature. DRS has, since that time, moved in the direction of obtaining a student sample that is representative of the state's student population with respect to sex and racial balance as well as ability and socio-economic class. When DRS students are selected and enrolled, their parents accept the R & D mission of the school and agree that their children will participate in research activities that are approved by the school's administration. An agreement of this type is a luxury that public schools are not able to offer the university researcher.

With this brief introduction of the need for university laboratory R & D centers that approximate a public school setting, a discussion of the Developmental Research School, its operation, overall R & D activities, and relationship to Florida State University follows.

Description and Model of Operation

The Developmental Research School (DRS), Florida State University, has 889 students, K through 12th grade, 55 faculty members and 9 staff members. Traditionally it has served as an active partner in the teacher-education process by providing opportunities for observation, participation, and internship for Florida State University students. As previously noted, by a 1969 legislative and Board of Regents directive, DRS has become a center for research and experimentation. It is a laboratory facility for the researcher seeking answers to educational problems.

The school endeavors to provide a sound base of instructional activities so that students are provided with an excellent education and the concomitant school activities as a "real-life" laboratory setting for research activities. The DRS is presently funded to conduct an adequate instructional program, while at the same time it must both facilitate and conduct meaningful educational research and development activities.

In 1969, when the DRS mission was changed to one of research and development, as opposed to teacher training, it was assumed that the school would become a research facility which could be used by the faculty and students of the College of Education as well as other faculty members from throughout the University. Since the FSU faculty have a wide range of research interests, there has been a diversity of projects conducted within the Laboratory School. These vary from masters and doctoral short-term studies to long-term, large-scale, curriculum development projects. All of these activities are viewed as legitimate within the context of the mission of the school.

Reflected in the R & D activities of DRS are the school's stated purposes of (1) improvement of current educational practices, (2) development and testing of well-defined teaching systems, (3) research, experimentation and inquiry into the phenomena of education, and (4) functioning as a service unit for other departments in the University. In putting these goals into operation, the DRS faculty is expected to initiate and develop research projects as well as function in their instructional capacities.

During the 1972-73 school year, a total of 122 research or curriculum projects were in a planning, operational or completion stage. Approximately 72 of these projects were initiated by University faculty or graduate students and 50 were initiated by the Developmental Research School faculty. During the 1973-74 school year, a total of 78 studies were initiated both from outside the DRS (primarily from the College of Education, FSU) and from within the DRS faculty. The major portion of the 34 on-going DRS studies from the 1973-74 school year were conceived or initiated prior to July, 1972, and are included in the 1972-73 figures. There was also a total of 78 studies

conducted at the Developmental Research School during the 1974-75 school year. These 78 studies represent projects initiated by both University, College of Education, and Developmental Research School personnel.

The mission of research, experimentation, and inquiry into the phenomena of education has been made operational through projects and studies that could be categorized as follows:

1. Internally initiated - internally funded by DRS funds.
2. Internally initiated - externally funded by State or other funding sources.
3. Externally initiated - externally funded either by the researcher, as in the case of a professorial study, or as a part of a larger project such as the NSF-funded Individualized Science Instructional Systems (ISIS) or the newer Project for the Mathematical Development of Children (also NSF-funded).

All of these "inside" and "outside" research activities are accommodated within the school day. Hence, DRS students and teachers have become accustomed to the coming and going of new faces on campus, slight schedule changes to facilitate research, and, for the teachers, conferring with the University professors during their planning periods. The requests for research participation involve many students and many types of studies. A sample of areas of interest and investigation during the past school year includes research related to (1) reading, (2) perceptual motor tasks, (3) concrete operational thought, (4) self-concept, (5) over-learning, (6) disruptive classroom behavior, (7) effects of presentation and control on learning and transfer, (8) effects of creative dramatics, (9) analysis of leisure-time pursuits, (10) instrument development in several content areas, and (11) field-testing of curricular material in science or the Religion and Social Studies project. These and other studies encompass relevant public school problems as well as basic research. As further evidence of the participation in a broad range of applied and immediately relevant research as well as more basic kinds of studies, Table I indicates the number of studies conducted at DRS for the last three years within specific areas or categories of educational problems.

Table I
 Number of R & D Activities
 by Educational Area for Three Years

Developmental Research School

<u>Educational Area</u>	<u>1972-73</u>	<u>1973-74</u>	<u>1974-75</u>
Curriculum Development	28	15	11
Instructional Methods and Strategies	39	17	19
Non-Cognitive Aspects of Instruction or Counselor Education	16	8	15
Theoretically Based Learning Studies	24	22	17
Teacher Education	5	5	3
Instrument Development	10	8	5
Surveys		3	5
Other			3
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	122**	78*	78*

*Does not include on-going, previously initiated projects.

**Includes over thirty English Units by total English faculty.

Relevancy of Studies

The school's (DRS) faculty research efforts often are directed to R & D in the areas of the teachers' interests and needs. Although these projects seem to be the most time-consuming, they are also among the most valuable because they help teachers address and attempt to solve the problems that they, as teachers, face everyday in the classroom. In these efforts, DRS faculty often consult with university professors. Sometimes studies are developed that include both the "public school" practitioners with their perspectives and the university instructors who bring to a study their particular areas of expertise. The need to solve the everyday problems of practitioners and the working together of the DRS and FSU faculty members strengthen many studies. Also, since many of these studies were developed from classroom concerns, there is transfer or generalizability from these projects to the problems and needs of the public school classroom. A sample of these projects includes curricular programs in career education and the arts in grades one through three, a drug education program dealing with values and value clarification at grades three through six, use of the

computer in mathematics for sixth grade, development of a pupil performance data collection system to be used with any grade level or any content area that uses an objective based program, application of individualized math at seventh grade, and development of a pre-service secondary teacher-education model.

Faculty Involvement

The DRS plays a large role in servicing the University by providing students and facilities for research and development. All faculty members of the DRS are expected to contribute to the R & D activities. There is little released time specifically provided to teachers for planning and development of research or for dissemination efforts. All teachers carry out their usual teaching assignments and are expected to participate in research as an additional professional commitment. To facilitate their research, approximately one-half of our 55-member faculty have enrolled in a DRS in-service course related to evaluation and research design as a review or basis for initiating further research studies. They also are expected to service or accommodate research demands of other projects generated from within the DRS or from other areas of the University. In addition, they are extensively involved in committee work designed to give them a significant role in the administration of the school. With all of these roles, the atmosphere of the school is one of service, flexibility, meaningful innovation and hard work.

Dissemination

Official DRS publications describing the school's activities have been monographs on specific subject areas and the DRS-sponsored publications, Unisearch and Idealab, in which many DRS studies and activities are first publicized. Unisearch has a circulation of approximately 3,000 and is sent to all superintendents, supervisors, curriculum specialists and related educational personnel in the State. Idealab, which reports on only one study or activity in each issue, is circulated to State of Florida school personnel to whom the article reported would be pertinent. Hence, if an issue featured a mathematics project, mathematics-related personnel would receive a copy of that issue.

Reports of projects conducted by the University faculty and graduate students are collected in the DRS Research Office and are available for dissemination. These studies are also often published by the authors through professional journals, association meetings, and ERIC.

Additionally, DRS faculty have conducted workshops, made presentations and served as consultants concerning their project findings. The numbers and kinds of dissemination activities related to DRS curricular programs and research outcomes for the last few years to public school personnel are presented in Table II.

Table II

	<u>1972-73</u>	<u>1973-74</u>	<u>1974-75</u>
Workshops and Presentations	62	55	53
Professional Writings	46*	24	38
Consulting	115	117	89**

*Includes Unisearch and Idealab articles.

**This figure represents instances of consultation, responding to requests, or advising: within the 89 instances for 1974-75 there are groupings of several similar activities; e.g., one instance represents 25 visitors for ISIS and, in another, 50 visitors to the driver education program. Hence, the number of individual consultations, etc., is actually greater than previous years but those individual visits were not listed one by one.

As can be seen in Table II, the DRS faculty has made a great effort to share and diffuse their programs and research findings.

Teacher Education

Since the R & D mission of the school was established, teacher education and leadership development efforts at DRS have been primarily directed toward assisting in the preparation of principals, curriculum designers, research specialists and guidance counselors. We have also worked closely with the FSU Department of Psychology which has placed 4 school psychologists and 21 advanced undergraduates at DRS. Also, 236 lower-level psychology undergraduates gained first-hand experience with young children through observation or tutoring.

FSU Research Involvement

Following is a list of the College of Education and University programs or departments and the number of studies conducted by these programs at DRS during the 1974-75 school year. These studies have implications not only for application in teacher education, curricular development, instructional methods and strategies, but also for scholarly research.

<u>College of Education, FSU Programs Involved With DRS 1974-75</u>		<u>Florida State University Schools-Colleges Involved With DRS 1974-75</u>	
<u>Program</u>	<u>Number of Studies</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Number of Studies</u>
Psychomotor-Movement Science	9	Psychology	15
Science Education	2	Music	1
Social Studies, including Religion & Social Studies	4	Drama	3
Instructional Design	3	Home & Family Life	3
Elementary & Early Childhood	5	Communications	3
		Institute for Social Research	2
		Total:	27

College of Education, FSU
 Programs Involved With
 DRS 1974-75

Program	Number of Studies
Measurement and Evaluation	5
Career Education	1
Mathematics Education	3
Administration	3
Center for Educational Technology	4
Safety Education	1
Total:	
	40

The DRS strives to serve as a complete educational institution which provides a "real-life" laboratory for researchers. It has been accepted by both the educational community and the general public that statistically significant results are important, but socially significant ones are of greater value. Statistically significant results are only of value if they are related to relevant and educationally sound procedures. As a laboratory, DRS provides the setting for examining these educationally and socially sound procedures. Thus, with the continued involvement of the FSU faculty, DRS serves as a testing ground for many innovative, applied, and basic research studies.