

FOUR AVENUES
STATE ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL
CHRISTCHURCH

THE TEACHERS' VIEWPOINTS

by

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FOUR ACADEMIES COORDINATORS TERM 3 1975. -

- Alistair Patterson. -

1. INTRODUCTION

In May, 1975 New Zealand's first state secondary alternative school was opened in a rented house in Christchurch. The student roll was seventy-two, and there were seven full-time staff comprising the Director, Secretary, and five Co-ordinators. In the following year one of the co-ordinators who left was replaced by two part-time specialist teachers. In addition to these staff members whose salaries were paid by the Department of Education, there have been a number of unpaid tutors and Teachers College students who have been members of the Four Avenues staff.

Because of its uniqueness in the education system in New Zealand, Four Avenues has attracted a great deal of publicity through the media and in educational circles and stimulated considerable discussion. An extensive evaluation is now being undertaken by the Education Department of the University of Canterbury, who are gathering information on pupils' attainment and parents' attitudes. This project forms a third part of that evaluation and examines the teachers' points of view.

Aims:

- 1) To clarify the peculiar issues involved in being a teacher at Four Avenues.
- 2) To determine whether the role differs from that of a teacher at a conventional school.

- 3) To identify the main areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.
- 4) To see whether Four Avenues teachers believe that the school requires a teacher with particular attitudes, qualities, and skills.

Methodology

A questionnaire comprising twenty mainly open-ended questions was distributed to four groups of past and present teachers at the beginning of the second term of 1977. The groups comprised:

- i) All full-time staff members who had been at Four Avenues from its inception until August, 1977 (13 in number),
- ii) All paid part-time teachers (5),
- iii) Three unpaid tutors,
- iv) Three Teachers' College students who had been on section there.

Three questionnaires were sent overseas, and six were sent to New Zealand centres beyond Christchurch. The six unpaid tutors and Teachers' College students represent only a few of those in those two categories who have participated in the school, and their responses are shown separately wherever appropriate.

The questionnaire was devised simply as a guide and to ensure that important points were covered. Teachers were

asked to answer as fully or as briefly as they wished, and to feel free to omit any questions that did not apply directly to them. This accounts for the differences in sample totals shown in the tables. Names were not to be mentioned in the report.

Response Rate

Of the census on thirteen full-time teachers, seven sent formal written replies, three gave recorded interviews, two contributed through informal discussion, and only one did not reply. The census of paid part-time teachers was completed in full and together with the sample of unpaid tutors and Teachers College students gave a total response rate of 95.8%.

It is hoped that this report will be of value not only to the University of Canterbury, but to the staff of Four Avenues and to the Department of Education in planning for the future development of Four Avenues.

2. TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PHILOSOPHY AND STRUCTURE OF FOUR AVENUES ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

In this survey the attitudes of teachers to the basic philosophies and methodology of Four Avenues before they came to the school and after they had taught in it for a period of time will be discussed. An attempt will then be made to identify and account for any attitudinal changes that took place.

Teachers were sent a duplicated copy of the main points in the original prospectus published before the opening of the school in May, 1975 (see Appendix 1).

Summary of the main philosophies:

1. Learning is most effective when it takes place within the community - the "School Without Walls" concept. The community also stands to gain.
2. Students are motivated to learn when their studies relate to their interests.
3. Students will grow in independence and maturity through taking responsibility for their own education.
4. Through working together in groups and helping to run the school, they will achieve tolerance, understanding and concern for others and respect for themselves and their own ideas.

Implementation of philosophies:

1. There was to be an initial roll of 72.
2. Students were not to be selected. If applications exceeded 72, a ballot for places was to be held.

3. The city was to become the school. Students were to select studies from what Christchurch had to offer, not only in trade skills and professional and academic pursuits, but also in art and craft, sport and social welfare.
4. There were to be no form levels. Students of any age would study together what interested them.
5. The Home Group (of about 12 students) with its co-ordinator was to be the centre of school activities. Each was to find its own base. Compulsory group meetings were to be held. Meetings would be for planning individual timetables, evaluation, the discussion of problems, and the teaching of basic skills.
6. Work groups based on topics of interest would be held in the city under the instruction of tutors.
7. Regular examinations were to be given no place in the school but students would be helped to gain School Certificate and University Entrance if the students needed these as pre-requisites.
8. Parents were to be involved in the school in every possible way: to tutor, take part in group activities, help plan their child's educational programme, evaluate progress, and take part in the government of the school.

Reasons why teachers came to Four Avenues

Teachers were then asked the following questions:

1. Why did you come to Four Avenues?
2. To what extent did you identify with the basic philosophies of the school as outlined in the excerpts from the original prospectus?
3. Were you aware of any other aims which were not stated in the original prospectus.
4. Has your attitude to the basic philosophies of the school changed since you have worked there?

Twenty-one staff members answered, and their responses are set out in Table 1 on page 3. An analysis of the responses showed that there were two main types of reasons for coming to Four Avenues. First, a positive attraction to the

TABLE 1

Reasons why Teachers came to Four Avenues

Reason	Number of Responses
1. Positive attraction to most of the basic philosophies of the school.	21
Wanted to teach in a school where students would be treated as people	3
Believed in the education of the whole person	3
In favour of 'guided choices'	2
In favour of 'discovery learning'	1
Wanted to develop self-worth in students	1
Wanted to give students training in democracy	1
2. Negative reaction to what the conventional school offered	
Wanted to move out because of	
i) restrictions on students	8)
ii) restrictions on staff	11
3)	
3. Specific additional reasons given:	
i) by paid staff and Teacher's College students: (3)	
Attracted to the school as an innovation in education	3
needed a teaching job	3
Had come from a similar school and enjoyed it	3
invited to apply	2
enjoyed teaching non-syllabus subjects	1
ii) by unpaid tutors: (3)	
needed teaching practice	3
had a genuine desire to help out	3
wanted to experience the alternative school system	1
wanted to help train future university students to study on their own	1
liked the 'open-ness' of it all	1

NOTE: Some teachers gave more than one response and these appear in more than one category.

basic philosophies of the school. Second, a negative reaction to what the traditional school offered. These reasons are, of course, not mutually exclusive. They are now discussed in detail.

Attraction to the School: Responses indicate that all teachers in the sample were attracted to the school because of some or all of its educational philosophy. One, at least, was in full agreement, and wrote, "I came because I felt it was right for me for the school".

Others emphasised various aspects which appealed to them most, e.g. "School Without Walls" concept or a "wholehearted belief in the need for students to understand the relevance of their work and studies". The latter had worked with inner city children in New York who had similar needs and programmes.

Some were attracted because of their "belief in the basic freedom of students to control their own lives" and two saw the school as working towards the development of the whole child as expressed in the P.P.T.A. booklet, "Education in Change" in which basic educational aims were for a student:

To develop the urge to enquire
To develop a concern for others
To develop a desire for self-respect.

Two were in favour of "guided choices in education," a concept basic to the programme of Four Avenues. "Students there learn by 'doing' the essential lesson that we are ultimately responsible for the consequences of our own choices. For many people in our society, the lesson is learned too late".

Scanners Note: There is no page 5 in the essay from which this copy was digitized.

Degree of Identification with the Basic Philosophies of the School on Entry

Responses to Questions 2 to 4 (see page 7) are set out in Table 2. Fourteen of the twenty-one teachers identified completely with the basic philosophies as stated in the first prospectus. One applied while still overseas and, although he had not seen a copy of the prospectus at that time, had read a description of the school on the front of the Gazette and was very excited by what he read later in the prospectus.

The aspect most often emphasised by staff was the provision for students to take responsibility for their own education in an atmosphere where there were good staff-student relationships.

Five full-time staff had some reservations on entry to the school, and these, when mentioned, are listed below:

Reservations: Two did not believe that "Learning is most effective when it takes place within the community". They claimed that 'some' learning may be, but that a great many skills are best taught by trained instructors within a school which may, itself, be considered 'part of the community'.

They also had doubts about the statement that 'the community stands to gain', and thought it may be too idealistic.

Two thought the philosophies were ideals well-suited to the mature adolescent and would therefore have qualified all four statements with 'given the willingness or readiness of the person', since not all adolescents would be accustomed to such freedom. One thought it 'quite a frightening prospect'.

TABLE 2

Degree of Identification with the Basic Philosophies

Question	Full-time staff	Part-time teachers or tutors	Teachers College students on section
<u>Question 2:</u> Degree of identification with basic philosophies on entry to Four Avenues:			
Complete identification	5	6	3
Had some reservations	5	0	0
Had not seen the prospectus before applying	1	0	0
<u>Question 3:</u> Awareness of aims not stated in the prospectus			
	4	0	0
<u>Question 4:</u> Modification of attitude after a period of teaching at the school:			
Complete rejection	0	0	0
Some change	11	4	0
No change	0	2	3
Numbers in sample	11	6	3

Another wrote, in March, 1975:

"The co-ordinator may have to face the negative effects of unaccustomed freedom on pupils, which may manifest itself in such behaviours as absenteeism, shop-lifting, vandalism, spurious dabbling in superficial interests, and the manifestation of anxiety symptoms". (see Appendix 2)

Most reservations, however, related to the working out of the philosophies in practice; one had doubts relating to the 'hazy stance taken on the subject of examinations'. One was 'less than enthusiastic about the possibility of basic skills being taught in the Home Group', having specialised in only one "non-basic" subject throughout her teaching career.

The same co-ordinator saw a major difficulty in the proposed method of organisation at the time,

"That Home Groups should find their own 'base'. This would place the co-ordinator in a position of professional isolation, undermining the effectiveness of the staff team and making casual and immediate consultation very difficult. It could also create a feeling of isolation in students". (see Appendix 2).

Awareness of Aims not stated in the prospectus:

Four teachers were aware of aims not stated in the original prescription (see Table 2). Two had taken part in drawing up the Statement of Aims of the Advisory Committee of Four Avenues before the school opened (see Appendix 3).

TABLE 3

Modification of Teacher Attitudes Towards the Basic
Philosophies after a Period of Teaching at Four Avenues

Attitude	Number of Times Attitudes Expressed
1. Began to see the 'School without Walls' concept as inadequate to meet the needs of all pupils. Gradual shift of emphasis to the 'Extended Family' idea as central to the school's philosophy	6
2. Felt that the complete freedom of choice implied in the philosophies should be 'freedom within bounds' with some order, structure and rules necessary	6
3. Began to see that the type of school envisaged was for mature, self-directed people whereas the students who came were mainly the unhappy, the deprived, or the failing. They needed the small, 'therapeutic community', not the vast complex community of the city.	4
4. Thought that the aims, while laudable, could not be achieved by adolescents in the short time they had in the school	3
Total number of teachers who responded:	15

Modification of attitude to basic philosophies after a period of teaching at Four Avenues

No-one indicated complete rejection of all four of the philosophies as given on page 10. All of the full-time staff and four of the six part-time teachers or tutors indicated some change, whilst none of the Teacher's College students on section recorded any change (Table 2, Question 4).

Those who indicated some change still maintained that these statements were ideals but that in the words of one of them, they "came to see the practical limitations to what the prospectus indicated", given the stage of development reached by each individual student who came into the school. Certainly a majority of the first intake seemed not to be ready for "A School Without Walls", it was therefore the statement, "learning is most effective when it takes place within the community" which staff challenged most (see Table 3).

The problem which occurred, was expressed as follows by one of the original staff members:

"My attitude to the basic philosophies has changed in some respects. I believe now that we expected too much of the students, that whereas most of what was outlined in the original prospectus could be made to apply to the few well-motivated, well-disciplined independent thinking students. We had, of course, few such students.

The basic belief that children would be keen to spend their time out in the community has been shown to be only partly right. Most could bring themselves to spend only a limited part of a week "out there". They needed the support of their peers. Again we expected too much of the children.

Also I think that education in the community was not especially well carried out in the academic areas. In addition suitable resources were not always available. It was unrealistic to expect adequate work in say, middle school science being carried out in a commercial laboratory which will not have the desired or correct

apparatus for the necessary experiments, i.e. it will have some apparatus but probably unsuitable, perhaps too complex, too sophisticated.

Consequently the community is not the fount of all resources that we ingenuously supposed it to be, though I still subscribe to the belief that it is still a rich resource largely untapped by most schools".

The dilemma facing the school in its formative months was again expressed by one of the first staff members, who wrote that whereas her belief in the educational philosophies of the school remain unchanged, there were problems in the implementation of them, given the students who came as a result of the first ballot.

"We did not attract a whole school of ideal students and so the basic philosophies as written down were simplistic in their approach. It should be noted here, though, that part of our philosophy was that the school should contain a mixture of students, providing a learning situation by the very nature of this. We did not realise the extent of the social problems that would be unleashed by "freeing" students and just how consuming this would be of the staff's time".

Table 4 sets out the findings of the Inspectors' Visit in March 1976, concerning the types of students who came to the school. Of the original intake in May, 1975, 69.6% were said to be "depressed or unstable, truant, delinquent, underachieving, lacking in confidence or had been expelled from their previous school". This made the attempt to establish the new school during the winter term of 1975 incredibly difficult and taxed the strength and patience of the staff to the limit. Teachers said that it was often only the enthusiasm and loyalty of the minority of mature students which kept up staff morale.

TABLE 4

Findings from March, 1976 Inspectors Visit¹

Pupil Characteristics	1975 Intake %	1976 incoming pupils %
Normal or stable	22.2	57.8
Ex-private primary alternative school (personal characteristics not indicated)	4.1	5.3
Slow learner	4.1	15.8
Despressed-unstable	24.0	10.5
History of truancy	6.9	-
Delinquency	8.3	5.3
Underachiever	9.7	-
Lacking in confidence	16.6	5.3
Expelled from previous school	4.1	-

¹After Cross, Stephen, "Public Alternative Schooling: The Attitudes of Parents", 1977, thesis.

TABLE 5

The Kind of Student Best Suited to Four Avenues

Students	Number of Staff Responses
1. All kinds; a cross section; any type; a fair range.	7
2. Those with some degree of self- discipline, motivation, independence, self reliance, and social adaptability	5
3. Those who are not succeeding at the conventional school	4
4. Unsure	1
Total number of staff who responded:	17

Attitudes Towards Selection of Students

In spite of these difficulties, however, seven staff still claimed that the school should be available for 'every kind' of student, "since people are of every kind". Five (three of whom were original staff members) thought that students should be self-regulating to some degree, and four thought that Four Avenues would best suit those who are not succeeding in the conventional school (see Table 5, which shows the responses to the question, What kind of student is best suited to Four Avenues?).

With the realisation that the "School Without Walls" concept had its limitations, the co-ordinators during the first two terms of the school's existence spent many hours debating the question of the ballot. Should the ballot be abandoned in favour of selecting students suited to a "School Without Walls"? Or should the ballotted students be allowed to shape the school best suited to their needs? This debate continued throughout the following year. The decision was emphatically 'no selection'. The ballot remains sacrosanct.

"Self selection" was established as the policy of entry to the school. This meant that if students applied to come, they may be said to have "selected themselves in" for whatever reason. At the end of 1976 a decision was made that successful applicants were to be interviewed by staff members before accepting the vacancies offered. The reason for this was,

"to make sure that prospective students and parents understand the school, its aims and methods of working and more particularly the demands it makes on its students. Students who need continual oversight or pressure to make them work should think twice before coming. Self-discipline, initiative, a sense of responsibility, the ability to make decisions and keep to them, these are some of the qualities needed. Education at Four Avenues is more demanding than in the main-stream schools, not less. Time is more easily wasted - but can be better used".¹

Also a comprehensive statement on 'self discipline' was written into the new Prospectus for 1977.

The "School Without Walls" had already been dropped as the sub-title for the Prospectus. It was no longer the 'raison d'être' for the school's existence but was still available for those who wanted it. Now the school offers numerous alternatives to meet the needs of a variety of students. One of the original Co-ordinators who was instrumental in the founding of the school, said that,

"Four Avenues as conceived worked well for about 20% of a kid's education. We have evolved new approaches for the other 80% which do not go back to traditional methods. We now have a whole gamut of alternatives - the prime one being a closely-knit school community".

In their replies, the original staff of the school agreed that it was the pressure of the unconscious needs of the students that brought them to modify their attitudes. Needs for companionship and security brought about a shift of emphasis from "the School Without Walls" to the "Extended Family."

¹Four Avenues Newsletter to Parents, Tutors and Friends, No. 8, November, 1976.

Needs for care and emotional support turned the attention from the greater community of the city to the "Therapeutic Community" of the small school base. This shift of emphasis was acknowledged in a new set of aims for the School in October, 1977 (see Appendix 4).

A recent staff member said in May, 1977 that staff tended to come into the school "with an ideal, then went through a metamorphosis". Your goals had to be adjusted to meet the students where they are. "I am becoming more pragmatic, less idealistic", he said. He went on to refer to the short time period that young people had at the school, realising quite dramatically that this "wasn't a place in which you could produce in a short time people who were sensitive, caring and community-minded".

One of the first part-time teachers who came to Four Avenues in February, 1976 to begin the new system of teaching English and Social Studies to levels 1 and 2 said:

"The shortness of time for a student at Four Avenues coupled with the independence of the program bothered me for many of my students. Many of the FourthFormers were talented and lost. They seemed to be floating in a morass and the freedom of the school might help them in the long run cope with their responsibility to themselves, but in the short run, I had my doubts".

Six teachers expressed some desire for "freedom within bounds" and that while believing in individualism, felt that "guidelines worked out on a concensus would accelerate development, not hinder it". (As a result, a Statement of Rules and Procedures was drawn up and printed by the Senate, 3 October, 1977)(See Appendix 5).

School Size: In reply to the question, "Were there sufficient students to make the school viable?" twelve teachers said that a roll of 72 or 82 (the size of the roll for 1978) was suited to the personal, community nature of the school. Five thought that a bigger number would be desirable, however. It would "give the loners opportunity to find kids", and would allow greater pupil participation in meetings since "the ratio of convinced verbal adults seemed too high". A larger school would be more "economic in use of staff" but would probably require selection of only those students who could "function well in a free school environment". One felt that greater expansion could take place in 'units' each with its own headquarters.

DISCUSSION

That Four Avenues has a clearly defined 'philosophy' and a published 'Statement of Aims' is part of its uniqueness and it was the tenor of this 'philosophy' which was mentioned by all staff as the most important reason for coming to the school. This does not mean that the staff are a homogeneous group. On the contrary. The broad, flexible nature of Four Avenues allows for assimilation of various emphases in educational theory and methodology, as is indicated in Table 1.

Co-ordinators appear to be free to express various dimensions of learning which have personal meaning to them, viz., democratic and political ideals, emotional and therapeutic concepts, social and community functions, freedom of choice and decision-making processes, and 'discovery learning' and motivational aspects. Four Avenues gives each the opportunity to express himself or herself freely as an acceptable part of a whole. It is likely that personality differences and previous training and experience influenced the particular approach which staff members adopted.

Despite this diversity, however, the statements made by staff indicate that they hold one fundamental belief in common - the student, not the institution, is at the centre of education. Staff actions and decisions during the $2\frac{1}{2}$ years

covered by this survey demonstrate their belief that the student is the one unique person whose real developmental needs must be allowed to shape the policy of the institution. The needs of the institution are secondary to his. Consequently, the staff imply that the institution should be, and is, dynamic and flexible enough to modify its most cherished ideals if these are found to be inappropriate to some students. It is for this very reason that the "School Without Walls" has become what may be termed a "School with Alternatives" which aims to meet the requirements of every individual student.

This process of evolution which took place during the first few years was the result of constant experimentation. Staff spoke frequently of attempts to minimise ambiguity by putting the aims of the school into practice in every conceivable way. They mentioned constant evaluation meetings, suggestions for new strategies and changes of direction to maximise integrity and so create, by implication, a 'moral institution'. In 1975, however, there appeared to be an enormous gulf between this high-level thinking of the hand-picked staff with a minority of students, and the behaviour of many of the students whose basic affective and affiliative needs had not been met. From the outset, however, some staff had had doubts relating to the practical application of the philosophies. But most seemed to be unaware of this gulf that would develop between their own idealism, and that of the first Prospectus on the one hand, and the reality of the new school, surprised by the peculiar needs of 70% of its first intake, on the other. Most of the students had been used to

legalistic control, i.e. the passing and enforcement of rules. The founders of the school favoured moral restraints, self-regulated behaviour, and self-discipline. Staff held to the assertion that reasoning and consideration for the rights of others were to be the bases for control. In practice these methods were very successful on numerous occasions as cited by staff, but for some students it was too late to expect such a radical change in such a short time. Thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years of conditioning before the student entered the school had to be taken into account.

Table 4 shows that in 1976 the gulf was probably narrowed as a result of a higher intake of "normal or stable" students and one of the co-ordinators indicated that in 1977 this trend had continued. To a certain extent this may have been influenced by the method of interviewing students and parents before the former committed themselves to enter the school.

This survey clearly shows, therefore, that at the centre of the staff's grappling with the task of implementing the philosophies of the school were the students, who provided, unwittingly, the forces for change in the direction Four Avenues was taking.

This change in the school may be said to directly reflect the modifications of teacher attitudes after a period of teaching at Four Avenues. Table 2 (Question 4) seems to indicate that the closer the involvement with the students, the greater the modification is likely to be. It appears

that knowing the students as fully as possible and appreciating their needs is likely to influence staff attitudes to the structure of the school (see Table 3), allowing it to develop into the kind of institution that has relevance for the student.

Concerning the perception of these objectives in relation to the conventional school, one Sixth Former who had spent three years as a very successful student at a moderately-sized co-educational state secondary school spoke of the unreality of much that he had been doing and the alienation he felt from the people he was working with. The only explicit positive objectives that he was aware of there were: "Pupils must pass exams" and "pupils must conform". At Four Avenues the objectives he was aware of seemed to relate to "the development of the whole person, including the elimination of competition and reduction of a sense of failure, allowing the individual to develop his own skills and interests, developing co-operation and a sense of democracy, giving adequate experience in decision-making, developing skills in inter-personal relationships, and relating school to life". (see Appendix 6)

For him Four Avenues was functioning in a manner congruent with its stated philosophies.

3. Differences between the Roles and Functions of a Co-ordinator at Four Avenues and those of a Teacher at a Conventional School

The responses highlight some features of the Co-ordinator's roles and functions which are different from those of a conventional school teacher. These relate to having at Four Avenues:

- 1) the freedom for innovation,
- 2) a share in the decision-making process,
- 3) much more responsibility for students,
- 4) a much closer relationship with students,
- 5) more time with students and on work after hours,
- 6) a different set of goals for students,
- 7) closer relationships with staff,
- 8) more contact with parents,
- 9) more contact with the community,
- 10) more tasks relating to the care of the school buildings.

A fuller description of the responses are as follows.

1. Innovation: The first Co-ordinators recalled that they were participants in all the planning that took place just before Four Avenues opened. Then during the evolution of the school, they and later co-ordinators, always felt free to

suggest new ways of planning the total school programme and developing curricula. Apart from the limitations of necessity imposed by the School Certificate and University Entrance syllabi, staff had complete freedom to offer in the form of 'electives' or 'options' any subject or activity they wished in addition to their normal teaching load. Hundreds of 'options' have now been offered including many that were to some extent 'integrated studies' such as film making, navigation, farm visits and studies, English through history and literature, drama, and leatherwork, to mention just a few.

Table 6 sets out examples of the portfolios which co-ordinators now hold. Each ^{co-ordinator} has three main tasks: tutor/counsellor to his or her Home Group of about fifteen students spending several hours per week organising and supervising student timetables, and preparing reports (samples of student timetables and reports are given in Appendix 7. It will be noticed that reports are also provided for students' self-evaluation). In addition, he is head of department of at least one subject area which he teaches in groups throughout the school. Over and above that he provides at least two options monthly for the whole school. There are no free periods.

One felt frustrated that he never had time to do any extra subject development and would have liked "to make up self-programmed teaching units for mathematics and unit practical kits for science so that pupils could work at these subjects at home and in their own time".

With reference to his multiple roles, he said:

"Four Avenues pulled hard in many directions. One spent a lot of time talking to pupils then had teach a group without adequate preparation. There wasn't the satisfaction of having given a 'good lesson' to twenty pupils with teaching aids handy. The loss of the emotional rewards of that was very hard".

2. Decision-making: Co-ordinators mentioned their complete freedom to take part in all decisions relating to the policy and administration of the school. Each is a member of the Senate which meets twice weekly during the day and once a month in the evening. This body makes decisions, normally the prerogative of the Principal of the conventional school, on such matters as reports from committees, recommendations to Council, staffing, enrolments, policy, the structure of the school, discipline, buildings and grounds etc. The staff members have equal voting power with seven students and five parents' representatives. One said that he was staff representative on the Council, the ratifying body. Though having no power to vote, he was seen by the members of Council to be an adviser, a consultant and the bearer of staff opinion (see Appendix 8, A description and Evaluation of the Decision-making process in the Secondary Alternative School with Particular Reference to Four Avenues).

TABLE 6

Some Examples of Co-ordinator Portfolios

-
- 1976 1) Director & Chairman of Senate
 Home Group Coordinator (tutor/counsellor)
 Administration
 Public Relations
 Senior English (S.C. & U.E.)
 Commerce
 Sport (excluding mountain sports)
 Library
 Options: Drama,
 Furniture repairs etc.
-
- 2) Home Group Coordinator (tutor/counsellor)
 Art (S.C. & U.E.)
 Remedial tuition
 Options timetable
 Options: Leatherwork, yoga etc.
-
- 3) Home Group Co-ordinator (tutor/counsellor)
 History (S.C.)
 Geography (S.C.)
 Community contacts
 Technical subjects
 Options: Tramping, photography, etc.
-
- 4) Home Group Co-ordinator (tutor/counsellor)
 Senior Mathematics (S.C. & U.E.)
 Senior Science (S.C.)
 Options: Science Films, Squash etc.
-
- 5) Home Group Co-ordinator (tutor/counsellor)
 Languages (U.E. French)
 Music
 English (S.C.)
 Guidance Counselling
 Options: Sewing, Personal Communications etc.
-
- 1977 6) Home Group Co-ordinator (tutor/counsellor)
 Supervision of Junior English and Social Studies
 A.V. Equipment
 Options: Sport, etc.
-
- 7) Home Group Co-ordinator (tutor/counsellor)
 Remedial reading
 Languages
 Junior Mathematics
 Options: Car, Leatherwork, etc.
-

One of the co-ordinator's functions is to take a turn at chairing the School Meeting. Of the nine co-ordinators who expressed their reactions to this task, one thoroughly enjoyed it, four did not mind it, three found it difficult or demanding, and one expressed dislike. All, however, were conscious of the value of the democratic process and "worked towards a consensus" in spite of some frustration because of "those who wouldn't take part in the discussion", "those who skipped out" or those who were disorderly, and the fact that the meetings "did not always follow reasonable rules of debate". Sometimes too, "irresponsible comment too often drowned out the more thoughtful but quieter comment". Yet all staff believed the school meeting to be very important in the structure of the school. One co-ordinator said, "we are trying to communicate, convincing the students they have a part in it and are actually part of the centre of authority. Nothing is hidden from students (or teachers) - finances, policy, day to day administration. All is very open. Democracy is really at work. After two years here kids will know more about democracy than politicians".

3. Responsibility for Students: The co-ordinator at Four Avenues has much greater responsibility for the education of the students in his Home Group than the teacher at a conventional school. He could be at any one time curriculum designer, tutor, counsellor, form teacher and friend. He is even responsible for "kids who are not actually there - and could be anywhere". One teacher pointed out that you are not only responsible for helping them draw up a programme. You are also responsible for helping them to keep to it, and to be where they are meant to be.

4. Closer relationship with students: Almost without exception co-ordinators emphasised that the closeness of their relationships with students gave them their greatest satisfaction and placed upon them the most demands. The relationship was far closer than that of a Form Teacher in the conventional school. At Four Avenues people called each other by their first names, a phenomenon commented on by an older Teachers College student in October, 1975:

"Use of teachers' first name by all pupils, once I had got used to it, seemed to promote much better relationships, and in fact I felt much more respected than if I had been called Sir". (see Appendix 8)

One described this aspect of Four Avenues as "a fairly radical kind of experiment". The distinctions between 'pupils' and 'teachers' virtually disappeared. People related to each other as people. In a sense Four Avenues is a family community, or, in the words of one co-ordinator,

"an encounter with reality from which there is no escape. Because of this a teacher needs to know his reasons for coming. Four Avenues does not offer an escape from people. Being here makes school not just a part of life. This is life: a dynamic process in which every type of personality interacts at every level, where there is very little difference between learning English for School Certificate, learning to cope with aggression, or learning to cope with relationships".

Every teacher spoke with enthusiasm about the rewards of this kind of relationship, "being able to relate to kids as people", "gaining insight" and seeing some students "develop from apathy to taking an active part in the education of the school". It was especially rewarding, said one, "to watch the amazing social development of some children and to have the opportunity to demonstrate and receive real warmth and affection to and from the kids". Many became real friends for life with whom one could discuss anything.

Teachers got to know the students and their families very well in a personal way. One even found himself "counselling parents in areas normally confined to marriage guidance counsellors", an experience echoed by several others.

On the question of whether students saw their co-ordinators as parent substitutes, all but one felt that this was not an issue except in the case of a very few students. Three married women teachers had been called "mum" and had not been concerned about this. One thought it may be "a compliment", another was happy about it, as "she regarded herself as a "mum" in relation to the learning situation anyway".

Only one felt he was very much a parent substitute especially to those from a solo parent background. This to him "is an important function of the school". Certainly research indicates that about 26% of students at Four Avenues belong to one-parent families (about 3-4 times the national average).¹ Several co-ordinators referred to this phenomenon and felt that to these students they performed an important function as parent 'complement' rather than as substitute, and were certainly "more 'in loco parentis' than the average teacher". One felt that within bounds this was a good thing and "if any student becomes too dependent, usually the social atmosphere at Four Avenues will help to eventually counter this".

Younger co-ordinators, tutors, part-time teachers, and Teachers College students felt they were probably 'older brother or sister' figures, or friends, a relationship "very effective in regulating and changing behaviour patterns", pleasing if it enabled the teacher "to further help, excite or direct the child", anguishing if a student were so emotionally troubled as a result of years of painful home life that one seemed powerless to help him in the short time one had.

'Being close to students' was mentioned by six out of nine co-ordinators as the greatest emotional demand they experienced at the school.

"Seeing students 'in the round' meant that one was aware of all their needs including emotional.... The emotional involvement of caring which is inherent in the whole concept of Four Avenues, is a demanding and exhausting one that has virtually no limits".

¹Cross, Stephen, Public Alternative Schooling, 1977.

This was written by a co-ordinator who spent the first two turbulent terms at Four Avenues in 1975, then resigned at the end of the year feeling some "doubts about being big enough for the job". Staff who joined the school later were not exposed to such intense pressures and found that the satisfactions far outweighed the demands. The emotional strain of working closely with students was not in itself a factor which made working at Four Avenues very different from working at any other school, however, One teacher summarised it as follows:

"Any teaching job, taken fully, is emotionally draining. As I grew to know the students as individuals I became involved with them as people. This involvement is the heart of teaching and one of its greatest joys. But it is draining".

The quality of sincerity in the close relationships between staff and pupils was seen by one co-ordinator to be unique to Four Avenues.

"Students did appreciate that the staff were there to help them and offered respect accordingly - a vast difference from the cynicism of many teacher-pupil relationships in conventional schools where pupils often occupy themselves in plays to foil a teacher's efforts and teachers themselves get involved in the counters of this game".

5. Time with Students and Time after Hours: Teachers at Four Avenues spend much more time with their students than teachers at conventional schools, since "it is more a style of life than a school".

"Because you're so involved with kids trying to get them to be happy with themselves you expect to be available 24 hours. If a particular kid is in trouble it's a particularly rewarding thing if he gets in touch with you at 10.30p.m. That's your role. That's why you're here".

In school time the teacher sees his students daily, meets regularly in Home Groups of about 15, often sits and has lunch with them, and arranges individual interviews with each one. One co-ordinator called it "an intensity of caring".

After school hours, in addition to his usual marking and preparation time, the Four Avenues teacher reported spending from half an hour to two hours after 5.00p.m. organising his Home Group's activities. This is one feature which clearly distinguishes his function from that of a Form Teacher in the ordinary school. He is available all the time and at all hours. Students and parents phone him and he then on evenings or weekends.

In 1975 the Director and the co-ordinators recalled spending almost 100% of their evenings on school activities, mainly talking to students on the telephone, planning timetables for the following day, getting feedback and checking absenteeism. One teacher estimated that during her first year she spent two hours per night five nights a week, including Sunday, on the telephone. In subsequent years the amount of time spent on the phone at night was somewhat less. In 1976 the Director was spending about twenty hours per week on school work after 5.00p.m. including evening telephone time which varied from half an hour to two hours a night, sometimes seven nights a week.

Other typical after hours activities include Senate meetings (twice weekly), Committee meetings in the lunch hour or after school, Home Group meetings for parents (once a term)

home visits, School forums, Parents' and Friends meetings, week-end trips, and Public Relations (addressing meetings in the city).

6. Different Set of Goals for Students: At Four Avenues teachers' explicit and implicit aims for students are different from those of other schools. They are described variously as "helping students to become self regulating; to be in charge of the search for their own knowledge", and "to become socially mature" (see Chapter 2, page 21), whereas conventional schools appear to give more stress to passing examinations and the '3R's'. For an account of how a senior student perceived the goals in both types of school, see Appendix 6, page 3.

7. Close Relationships with Staff: Staff commented as follows about relationships. Six said "Excellent". Others said, "wonderful, one of the best things about the school", "superb", "staff relationships were the best I experienced anywhere. Really great!" "Very strong, supportive, contributed to me as a person". "During my time at Four Avenues the staff were extremely good. The Director (Graham Robinson) was fantastic!" "Staff relationships were very good, you get to know people well. There is trust - no plotting and scheming - open, honest, brotherly, sisterly". Several mentioned this strong feeling of camaraderie that came as a result of sharing common aims and common problems. It was a team effort with no sense of competition, "since the lack of any P.R. status helped in unification".

Two mentioned differences or tensions that arose "but these were never allowed to get in the way of our central aim: the running of the school".

Concerning staff turnover (see Figure 1, page 58), most found this unsettling as new relationships had to be made and there was "always someone learning the ropes". On the positive side however, it did bring in new people with "fresh ideas and talent which is especially important in a small school".

8. Contact with Parents: Teachers all mentioned the co-operation and support they had from most parents, but the degree of involvement parents had in the education of their children varied from Home Group to Home Group. Two teachers stated that for them it was the strong point of the whole school - that both teachers and parents were working together for the same end, "to help students grow up well". In the conventional school it is hard for a parent to walk straight into the classroom. In the traditional school one usually gets in touch with parents "only when there is a crisis on". At Four Avenues teachers are often working with the parents who can come and go as they wish. Eight teachers stressed the fact that the parents they met were really interested and involved in their children's education and that there was good attendance at parent Home Group meetings, and most take an interest in the government and politics of the school.

Two felt, however, that there was good liaison only:

"Parents co-operated well in spirit, but less in practice. They were interested but left much for the staff to work out for themselves, with the students. They were, in fact, very trusting, sometimes I thought, too trusting".

However, all agreed that contact with parents was much closer, more overt, and more supportive than at the conventional school.

9. Contact with the Community: Four Avenues began as a school that was meant to be diffused throughout the community almost 100% of the time (i.e. five days a week) and is now in its originally intended form about 20% of the time (i.e. one day a week). Nevertheless, the contact with the community is still much greater than in the conventional school, even where work exploration and Work Experience schemes are in operation. Every resource which the community has to offer may be tapped by both staff and students if they wish. The Public Library is the school library, and the Art Galleries and Recreation Centres are school resources. Every student, regardless of his intellectual ability, is encouraged to do regular work in the community, and many have worked in shops, factories, offices and nurseries etc.

Most staff were comfortable with organising work opportunities for members of their Home Group when the student was reliable and when they felt the student was making a contribution to the enterprise. They enjoyed making contact with employers and felt that they were well received.

Under different circumstances, however, for example, when asking someone to tutor in an academic subject for no remuneration, some felt acutely embarrassed, that they were trying to arrange for someone else to do their job, "like some form of 'professional beggar'". Some adjusted to this situation, others did not. For the latter, it remained an area of dissatisfaction.

10. Tasks relating to the care of the school building:

Because of the 'family atmosphere' of Four Avenues, the cleaning of the school buildings was done on a 'do-it-yourself' basis to save money to use in school or for charity. Co-ordinators agree that from the outset this has been an "insoluble problem". At first only a few students were willing to take their turn and it took a great deal of time and effort on the part of staff encouraging others to take their share. In 1976 the money for cleaning was given directly to the Students' Committee to manage, but amounts were deducted when work was not done. Even that was only partly successful. The following year the Students' committee decided to set up their own Radio Station (intercom system) which would cost them about \$230. For a month the cleaning was done well! "It was the only successful contingency introduced until then". Now (1977) the cleaning is done on an 'Options' basis, and more students are involved in it than formerly.

It is apparent from the responses of staff that the Four Avenues teacher has to be prepared to "get behind a sponge mop", "sweep floors, clean toilets, wash basins, do dishes, clean windows, paint walls, clean ashtrays, empty

rubbish tins", a situation unheard of in the conventional school.

Some staff were very disappointed that students did not show a more caring attitude for the cleanliness of the school and, by implication, for each other. "We were bugged by problems relating to hygiene, disorder and dirt. We had to ride kids. The school was theirs and they should be proud of it".

DISCUSSION

One teacher remarked that on coming to Four Avenues you had to "forget all you knew about the conventional school", that being a teacher at Four Avenues requires a very different perception of education and of 'schooling'.

Evidence seems to indicate that the members of the early Advisory Committee said, "Let's provide kids with an opportunity to 'deschool' their education", but 'the kids' when they arrived on the scene said, "Not entirely". There were facets of conventional education they wanted to reject, some they wished to retain. Of the latter, the 'teacher' was one of the most important, but only a certain kind of teacher. The Four Avenues kind was different from many they had formerly known. In some respects over three years the Four Avenues student has evolved "the school I'd like"¹ and "The teacher I'd like". To fit into this school comfortably, one has to be a certain kind of teacher who has different roles and functions from the conventional teacher.

The ten differences outlined above describe the kind of teacher who is "like a warm democratic parent in a large household on a Saturday". This adult helps other people in the family to organise their time and choose their activities, has an equal voice in making all decisions relating to family policy, accepts a great deal of

¹Blishen, Edward (ed.), The School That I'd Like, Penguin, 1969.

responsibility for the family whether at home or away from home and is in a uniquely close relationship with them. He or she is accessible to the family members at any time of the day and night and may have several clambouring for attention at any one time. The younger members may be on the phone running in and out of the house, hurrying to catch buses, playing on the lawn, quietly reading in a corner, or returning from activities in the community. The adult may be vacuuming the floor and encouraging others to help or may be simultaneously preparing something to give to the family and supervising a game.

All this is acceptable 'in the family on Saturday' because the 'parent' believes that it will help the young person to develop his individuality, responsibility and independence.

Some co-ordinators accept fully this kind of school which requires him or her to fulfil certain roles and perform certain functions, others were not happy with particular aspects.

The most outstanding satisfaction arose from the closeness of the relationships with the students, though this made extra demands on them. Four Avenues has discovered by listening and responding to students' needs the fact that students in New Zealand in the seventies want their schools to have the warm family atmosphere advocated in the

Johnston Report of 1977.¹ Four Avenues has demonstrated that students come closer to teachers, without showing disrespect, by calling them by their first names, and can relate to them openly and honestly as one does with a close friend. This relationship normally does not exist in the conventional school.

Yet the multiplicity of roles and functions which a Co-ordinator in the alternative school must perform often creates a conflict between his responsibilities to members of his home group and his responsibilities to his class group. Sometimes both demand attention at the same time. This may be a function both of the small size of the school and its staff and of the need for further evaluation and development of the teacher's role. It may well point to the need for immediate preparation and publication of much more programmed material for an individual to study at his own pace, and relieve the teacher of routine instruction. Whatever the reasons, teachers at Four Avenues find that their job can be 'round the clock'.²

When considering the multiple roles and functions of the co-ordinator, and the conditions under which Four Avenues was established, in an old empty house in a Christchurch winter with no programme, no books, no furniture,

¹ Johnston Report, 1977, Growing, Sharing Learning. The Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education.

² "72 Classes of One", - New Zealand Listener, 29 November, 1975.

and an influx of 72 unknown students, most of whom proved to have exceptional needs, it is no wonder that the first staff members had to dedicate all their time to it. It is remarkable that both school and staff survived.

This prompts the question, "How much preparation should be given to the establishment of such a school? How much should a teacher know about alternative schools before applying to teach in one?" One teacher remarked that she was still marking exam papers of her previous school the night before Four Avenues opened! Obviously more time and planning was needed. And since the role is very different from that of a teacher in the conventional school, more care needs to be given to the selection of teachers.

Chernow and Genkin¹ provide a useful "checklist for teachers" which help them to decide whether they are equipped to work in an alternative setting. It asks "how many of these tenets can you subscribe to?"

Checklist for Teachers

1. Students are not expected to do the same thing in the same place or at the same time.
2. Students should organise their own time.
3. Required course work should not be arbitrary but rather should have some relevance to the life expectation of the students.
4. Activities are not confined to the school building, but also make use of resources beyond the school walls.

¹Chernow, F.B. and Genkin, H., "Teaching and Administering the High School Alternative Education Program". Parker, 1975, p. 55.

5. Teachers should move away from valuing memory and ventriloquism, and more toward questioning, problem solving, research and inquiry.
6. Teachers should move away from valuing knowledge for knowledge's sake and value application of knowledge.
7. We must accept as legitimate many of the "new" subjects such as anthropology, cinematography, space, ecology, etc.
8. A student who is slow at reading but good at something else should be judged on a broad scale and not a narrow one.
9. Teachers should forego their role as sole authority and view themselves as learners. They should function as coordinators of learning activities rather than as dictators.
10. Students are not objects to which things happen, but are encouraged to be active shapers.

If you cannot agree with 80 percent of the concepts above, you may not be ready at this time to move into an alternative high school situation. If you agree with all of the above you probably should not be in a traditional high school".

4. PERCEPTION OF THE IDEAL TEACHER FOR FOUR AVENUES

The Ideal Teacher

Seventeen of the twenty-one staff answered the question: "What kind of person, in your opinion, would succeed best at Four Avenues as a teacher? What particular skills and attitudes would he or she need?" Table 7 sets out the number of times various qualities were mentioned. These qualities are now described using the responses of the staff.

Tolerance: The responses indicated that the ideal teacher should above all be tolerant of young people. He or she should trust them, accept them, be open-minded and free to listen to their point of view, being always aware of individual differences. His tolerance should arise from an informed understanding of the tasks of adolescence, for instance, the establishing of identity and the transition to independence, to mention just two. He should be able to identify much of adolescent behaviour as an expression of these processes, to "see beyond the academic to the whole child and to value his development as such, to accept one doing comparatively little at times, as part of his growth". He should be "shock-proof", accepting behaviour as it is presented "without irrational disgust or intolerance, and be willing to talk it out should it be harmful or damaging".

TABLE 7

Attitudes, Qualities and Skills of the Ideal
Teacher for Four Avenues

Teacher Attributes	No. of times mentioned
Tolerance	14
Flexibility	11
Understanding	11
Security	7
Calmness	6
Genuineness	5
Warmth	4
Resourcefulness	4
Wide range of teaching experience	4
Wide range of subjects and interests	3
Patience	3
Enthusiasm	2
Sensitivity	2
Firmness	2
Friendliness	2
Leadership	1
Sense of Humour	1
Consistency	1
Encouragement	1
Self-assurance	1
Self-knowledge	1
Approachability	1
Determination	1
Perseverance	1
Doggedness	1
Youthfulness	1
Good health	1
Being human	1
Being realistic	1
Ability to counsel young people	1
Non-materialistic	1
Being committed to alternative education	1

NOTE: The seventeen teachers mentioned more than one attribute.

Flexibility: He or she should be flexible in personality and planning, being willing to learn and adjust to new ideas, styles of life, and methods of teaching. He should not, therefore, be in a psychological, social or academic groove, but have the capacity to see things from a completely fresh viewpoint and be open to change. It is essential to be "able to adapt to the informal staff-student relationships and be mentally able to rebound afresh at various points throughout the day".

Understanding: The ideal teacher should know young people and be concerned about their interests and needs. He should devote time and energy to them, being concerned for them as real people not as stereotypes of 'pupils' or 'adolescents'. For him the school is above all else 'a caring community'. He should strive for empathy with them, even cultivating the ability to "become fifteen again, to look at life through the eyes of a fifteen-year-old - genuinely and even with the naivety of a fifteen-year-old". One teacher emphasised this as a very important skill which he worked hard at. He would test his perception of what the fifteen-year-old would like to do against the young person's behaviour and knew that when they matched up he was fairly close to true understanding.

Security: The ideal teacher should be very secure and strong, with plenty of emotional resources, like a 'terminal' to whom students can go for stability. He needs to have a thick skin, so that he can take criticism while remaining sensitive to others. Because of the peculiar

emotional demands of the work, he should himself have a stable home background. One teacher made the suggestion that at the time of teacher selection the family situation of the applicant should be fully known.

Calmness: The ideal teacher should remain calm, relaxed and placid in the presence of disorder and crisis, objective in the face of irrationality, and completely unflappable.

Genuineness and Warmth: To be effective in relating to young people, the ideal teacher should have few defences, should be an authentic, integrated person without artificiality or superiority. He should come across as a warm, real person who may have problems in living but who knows how to cope with them. Only by being honest and straight in his own relationships with others will the teacher encourage students to be genuine, without the "'jerk', the bravado and artificiality" so often seen in groups of adolescents in large schools.

Resourcefulness: The Four Avenues teacher needs plenty of ideas, and the ability to think creatively and imaginatively. He needs to be able to overcome the lack of facilities and be able to use and adapt to community facilities, having a pioneering spirit.

Range of Teaching Experience: Since he must relate to or teach students from all kinds of backgrounds, of all ages and abilities, often in small groups, the ideal teacher for Four Avenues must have had experience with remedial classes as well as A streams. He must be most responsive to individual needs, aware of the "practicalities of the management of students" without setting up undue barriers between them and staff.

Range of subjects and interests: Three emphasised that it is essential in a school where there is a small staff and so few students engage in so many activities, that the teacher is one who enjoys doing many things that could stimulate interest in students. One felt that he should be one who enjoys living all the time, and should be seen to genuinely gain a great deal of satisfaction from his own work, for its own sake, "not just at week-ends when you enjoy spending the money you've earned". If he does come into the work with only one or two narrow fields of specialisation, however, it is of more importance in the eyes of one co-ordinator, that he be willing to try new things - "to give it a go".

Other personal qualities mentioned: In addition to all this, the teacher at Four Avenues must be patient, friendly, consistent, sensitive, yet firm. One teacher laid stress on leadership of the teacher: "We should not be afraid to be a leader, an educator of young people". He or she must be approachable, enthusiastic, encouraging, and have a sense of humour, have self-knowledge, implying in this instance, a reasonably explicit value system, likewise self-assurance, youth and good health. He should be well-organised, determined, persevering - even dogged. He should be non-materialistic in attitude, human, realistic, able to counsel young people, and committed to alternative education.

In brief, as one put it, aptly, the teacher at Four Avenues must be "a paragon of teachers"!

DISCUSSION

The composite description of the teacher best suited to Four Avenues which emerged from the inquiry emphasises three essential characteristics, viz.,

- 1) Personal qualities that facilitate good relationships and personal growth in others. (This 'counselling function' was of far greater importance than any other).
- 2) Teaching experience, or at least an acquaintance with young people of varying ages and abilities.
- 3) A non-specialist's wide range of subjects and interests.

This was the opinion of teachers in 1977 and may reflect some shift of emphasis in the perception of the co-ordinator's job specification since the inception of the school, when a 'guidance function' was emphasised almost exclusively. 1

As part of the selection procedures for staff appointed before the school opened in May, 1975, applicants were required to answer the following question in writing: "What do you see as being the most important qualities a Co-ordinator must possess?" In March, 1975 one foresaw clearly the need for the first of the 'essential characteristics' mentioned above, but no mention is made of the other two.

"As I see the co-ordinator's task, it would require considerable ability in inter-personal relationships, tolerance of others' views, based on a wide experience of life, an understanding of the effects of social conditioning on behaviour, and an appreciation of the emotional as well as the rational factors in motivation.

1. The Education Gazette, January 31 1975. (see Appendix 11)

We must be at ease with young people, their parents and other adults in the community in any situation. For instance, he would not be unduly impressed by academic, social or economic status, nor be daunted by displays of negative emotion. His role requires acceptance of other people as well as himself, and the ability to detect insincerity and be wise in handling it. He should be a creative listener in order to hear clearly what the young people are trying to say, and to help clarify it for them.

He needs the ability to 'let go' and relinquish any authoritarianism in order to encourage pupils to become independent and self-reliant. He has to trust people, like them, believe in the availability of their own resources in a problem-solving situation. But at the same time, he should understand that blockages occur and should be able, himself, to provide a warm, facilitative atmosphere in which these resources can become accessible. I suppose, in short, he needs an appreciation of the counselling situation and its limitations.

He needs, also, an appreciation of 'Discovery Learning' and its appropriateness to various pupils in various situations. (I believe the concept of Discovery Learning to be basic to the type of school).

Add to this a sense of humour, patience, an ability to evaluate a situation imaginatively, an ability to project and receive honesty, a flexibility and openness of mind, a lack of rigid perfectionism, and of course, some considerable administrative ability". (see Appendix II)

Of significance is the fact that in 1975, the co-ordinator's job specification included little 'instruction' as such. It was understood that tutors were to be employed where needed by students for most academic subjects or interest studies and that the main task of the co-ordinator was to elicit the needs of individual students and arrange for them an appropriately balanced educational programme. Every resource that the community had to offer was to be explored and made available to students. Since full-time staff members were to 'co-ordinate' the activities

of students rather than to instruct them, much greater stress was given to inter-personal skills. Less importance was given at that time, to "range of teaching experience" or "range of subjects and interests".

By 1976 however, the co-ordinator was required to spend more time teaching a number of subjects to students at different levels. Three factors accounted for this shift of emphasis. Firstly, more students than anticipated wanted to sit external examinations. Secondly, most preferred to spend more time with their teachers than out in the community. Thirdly, funds were not granted by the Department of Education for tutor payments. Whilst some tutors and Teachers College students gave their services freely for various reasons (see Table 1, page 3) in 1975 the main teaching load in all subjects to all levels fell on the six co-ordinators and the secretary.

Since this proved to be an impossible task, two part-time teachers were employed in 1976, to replace a full-time co-ordinator who had resigned at the end of 1975. Their specific task was to teach core subjects to levels One and Two students (roughly equivalent to Forms 3 and 4), which then left co-ordinators free to offer to the whole school, those subjects required for School Certificate and University Entrance. Now such teaching is shared among full-time and part-time staff. The Home Groups then met with the co-ordinators once weekly for tutorial purposes, not teaching purposes.

Experience indicates, therefore, that the co-ordinator's role is at present much more that of a teacher than formerly envisaged (see Table 6). All 3 of the 'Essential Characteristics' therefore, must be present in each co-ordinator in order for

him or her to feel satisfied personally or professionally at Four Avenues. A feeling of inadequacy in any one of them appeared to contribute to some of the early resignations of co-ordinators. For instance, one felt that though his resources were drained to their limit through providing a dozen different 'options' in succession he could still suffer guilt "that he was not more versatile than he was!" Some found that whilst six full-time staff provided a surprising variety of supplementary skills and interests, they were sometimes helpless in the face of important needs, for example in the physical education area.

Omissions

Of significance are the omissions.

No one mentioned intellectual excellence, academic distinction, or specialisation in a single subject area, attributes almost taken for granted by many secondary school teachers. It may be inferred from this omission that Four Avenues teachers believe that these qualities are not sufficiently important to be mentioned. Moreover, specialisation in a single subject area is seen to be a disadvantage.

Similarly, emphasis on status or ambition, commonly accepted as advantages in the hierarchical secondary school, are irrelevant at Four Avenues where stress is laid on democratic decision-making and equality. Even the Director is in fact a leader among equals. Much more is demanded of the teacher's personality. One commented that in the classroom

"one's teaching was under greater scrutiny and this has initial problems. One has to be able to justify the topics for and methods of study there are no 'role playings or teacher-authority' to fall back on".

No mention was made of teaching skills, although since staff are graduates with teacher training, these skills can perhaps be assumed. Expertise in only the instructional area, however, would certainly not be adequate at Four Avenues.

No one mentioned the need to be a parent nor the parent of adolescents to succeed at Four Avenues. Most co-ordinators have young children but relate well to teenagers.

A further significant omission related to 'discipline'. No reference was made to the need for ability to enforce discipline in the authoritarian sense. At Four Avenues it is taken for granted that 'discipline' is maintained through relationships, discussion and ultimately, self-control. Punitive measures are considered irrelevant except where the laws of society are flouted, a matter not for the school, but for the courts to handle.

For one co-ordinator, the highlight of his time at Four Avenues was to see "some wonderful social experiments where egotistical people have, after discussion, reached a decision based on concensus, having made compromises and agreeing to supervise their own decision".

It is apparent that Four Avenues staff believe that the school requires a teacher who does have particular attitudes, qualities and skills. These have been isolated and described above. It therefore is possible that the teacher

in the conventional school whose position rests on competent instruction, authoritative discipline and subject specialisation may find himself in deep trouble at Four Avenues.

5. IMPACT OF FOUR AVENUES ON THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

Influence of the Four Avenues Atmosphere

Teachers were asked, "To what extent has Four Avenues been an atmosphere in which you could develop as a person?"

It may be assumed that the more time spent at the school, and the greater the involvement in its activities, the greater the impact on the person. Certainly every one of the eleven co-ordinators emphasised the positive impact of the school upon their personal development, and most of those said that this was one of the greatest benefits teachers gain from Four Avenues. Most of the part-time teachers, tutors and Teachers College students found the atmosphere stimulating and challenging even though some had spent very little time there.

Individual co-ordinators spoke of learning a great deal about themselves, of gaining confidence, increasing efficiency and the ability to plan. Some stressed gains in tolerance, adaptability, patience and understanding. Others emphasised autonomy, strength of character, firmness, self-understanding, and leadership in decision-making. One who left Four Avenues to become the Principal of a more conventional school, said that although this seemed a paradox,

he believed he was more able to give firm leadership and to make decisions now than he was when he first went to Four Avenues "even when personal decision-making was then denied me".

Six co-ordinators said that they had learned a great deal more about teen-agers than formerly at the conventional school. Teen-agers had become 'real people' because Four Avenues freed the space to talk with them about "their needs, values, behaviours, and the strategies they used in the classroom", in an honest way. One came to appreciate the 'crucial hurdle' that adolescents have to cross and questioned the practice of "force feeding them material for exams and jobs" at this critical time. Two co-ordinators who had left Four Avenues to take up positions in conventional schools, later expressed disappointment that, by contrast, they found so many teachers and students there defensive and artificial in their relationships with each other, lacking the mutual trust they had experienced at Four Avenues.

One co-ordinator who left to become a full-time Guidance Counsellor said that her two years there were a unique personal and professional preparation. "It enabled me to know personally many different young people and their families. It challenged me to genuineness and gave me the ability to remain calm in any situation of stress involving either parents or teen-agers".

One beginning teacher found that he had gained "a valuable insight into the running of a school as a whole". A more senior teacher came to see himself as 'a professional educator' rather than as an instructor. He also came to

value other disciplines than his own, and found that some students could get on quite well without his treasured possessions, mathematics and science.

"I discovered the real living value of a subject like history. Seeing people and teachers studying history together and the way in which people inter-act essentially politically and the necessity to look to the past, changed my whole attitude toward history and the humanities. Also in relation to art, I saw pupils doing art therapeutically, getting involved doing something, achieving something".

These co-ordinators gave reasons why this personal and professional development occurred more rapidly at Four Avenues than in other schools in their experience. "You have much more contact with life as a whole, and less opportunity to remain cloistered and removed from the world in your classroom," said one. "You are forced to analyse your reactions and attitudes", said another. A third said, "You are exposed. There is no place to hide - no staffroom, no role of authority, even as a leader, to protect yourself from examination. Everything you offer has to be open for criticism. So you make sure you offer what has good reason".

Most teachers felt that their experience at Four Avenues was beneficial to them in applying for positions elsewhere in education. Three reported specific instances where their experience with administration and their involvement with your people had been definite advantages in applying for another position.

Of the part-time teachers, tutors and Teachers College students, only one questioned its value for her, but she did say that her experience at Four Avenues had later been influential in her gaining promotion at another school. She spent one term at Four Avenues in 1976 and felt 'cut off' as a teacher and would have preferred the greater involvement of being a co-ordinator. (In the following year, part-time teachers became co-ordinators with small Home Groups and found this a more satisfying relationship with their students).

Teachers wrote of many other satisfactions they gained professionally at Four Avenues; the satisfaction of surmounting difficult objects, seeing the school work as planned, seeing someone get excited about the prospects opening up to them because of an option they had arranged, seeing young people who had been virtually unmanageable at their previous schools fitting in well with others. One mentioned "getting a tremendous feed-back from a drama group", and another wrote of helping a boy labelled 'delinquent' to pass School Certificate English. One commented on the satisfaction of having a student gain all A+'s in the U.E. English, Maths, Biology and Chemistry exams in spite of Four Avenues explicit non-academic bias. (This boy had been "relatively unconcerned about U.E. - more interested in the nature of my aims", and had followed numerous other interests in addition to his U.E. Course.¹ In 1978 he was granted Direct Entry to both the Otago and Auckland Medical Schools and is studying at the latter.

¹"A Student's Eye View of Four Avenues", A personal view by Mike Morreau. N.Z.P.P.T.A. Journal, June 1976.

Staff Turnover

One may well ask, in view of the many personal and professional satisfactions that Four Avenues teachers gain from the school, why is the staff turnover so high?

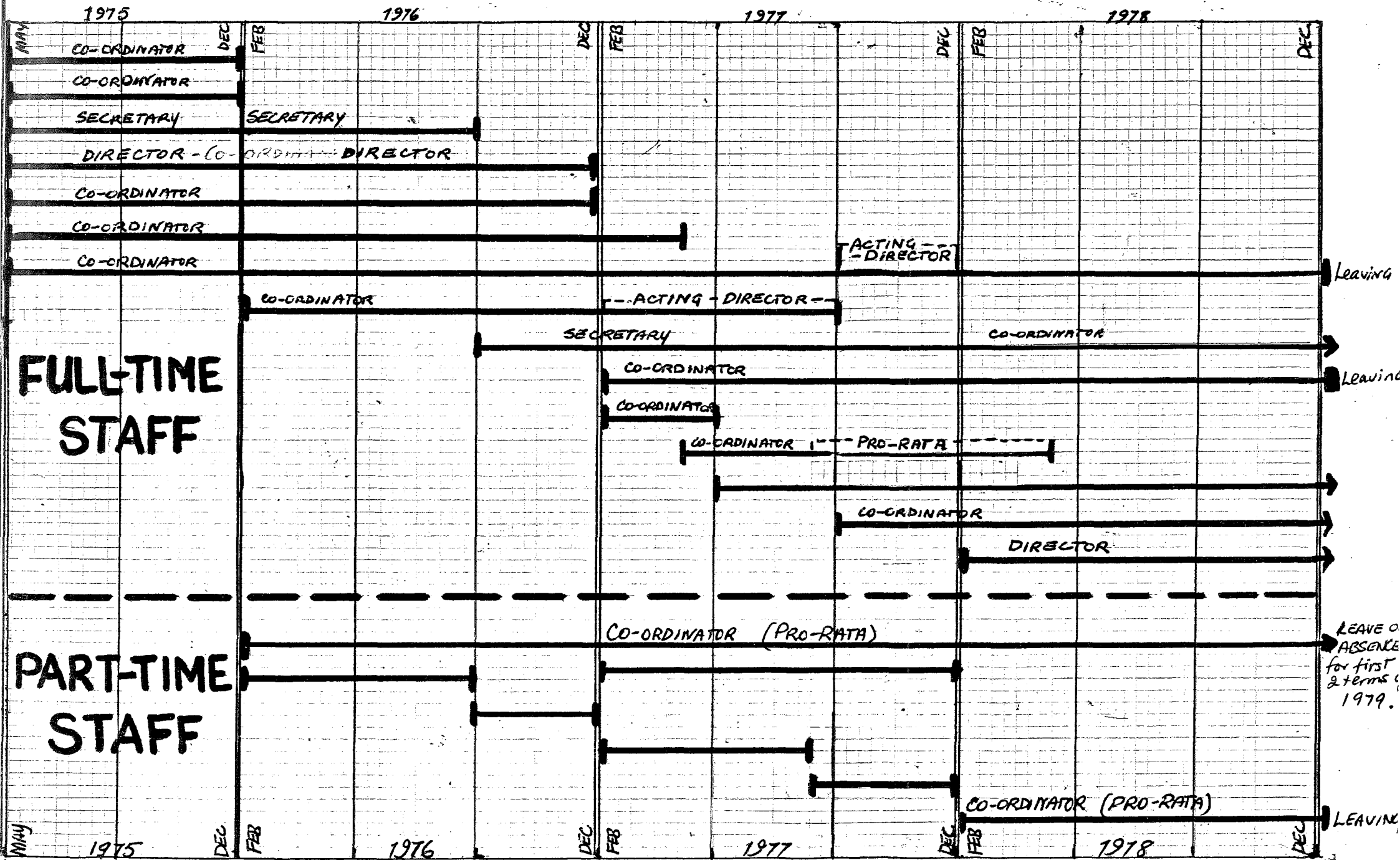
Trends: Figure 1 on page 58 shows the duration of staff employment at Four Avenues from 1975-1978. During the three and two-thirds years of the school's existence, twenty-two teachers have been employed there. (This does not include many unpaid part-time tutors). Of these twenty-two, two have remained at the school for three years or more, two for 2 to 3 years, 10 for 1 to 2 years, and 8 for less than one year.

Staff have commented on both the instability and the stimulation of staff changes (see page 33) specially in 1977 when there were eight new staff members and five who remained throughout the year. Not only did 1977 have an almost 50% rate of staff turnover during the course of the year as seen in Table 7 but no Director was appointed, and two co-ordinators filled in as successive Acting-Directors.

Reasons for Leaving: One might assume from this rapid turnover that teachers were not very happy at the school and left for negative reasons. Their replies to the question "What are your reasons for leaving" indicate that this is far from true.

Positive Reasons: One co-ordinator described Four Avenues as "an outward-looking, expansive place, where people find themselves, and move through, not back". Three senior teachers left on promotion to conventional schools, one became a Principal, one a Deputy Principal and one a Guidance Counsellor.

FIGURE 1. DURATION OF STAFF EMPLOYMENT AT FOUR AVENUES.*†



SCHOOL TERMS FROM MAY 1975 TO DECEMBER 1978.

SCHOOL TERMS FROM MAY 1975 TO DECEMBER 1978.
DATA BEYOND Aug. 1977 was obtained to give a complete pattern of staffing to Nov./Dec. 1978. * Excludes UNPAID TUTORS AND TEACHERS*

TABLE 7

Pattern of Staff Turnover at Four Avenues1975-1978

Year	Number of Paid Staff Full Time & Part Time	Number & Percentage of Staff Leaving		Staff Turnover %
		During the year	End of year	
1975	7	0	2 (28.5%)	28.5
1976	8	2 (25%)	3 (37.5%)	62.5
1977	9	4 (44.4%)	2 (22.2%)	74.4
1978	8	1 (12.5%)	3* (37.5%)	50.0

NOTE: *Indicates staff who in November 1978 are known to leaving at the end of that year.

Five part-time teachers, tutors or Teachers College students returned of necessity to normal schools. Two went overseas, another went to the Department of External Affairs, and two women left because their husbands' jobs took them away from Christchurch.

Most mentioned that they found it a place for defining themselves, for sorting out their own values, for attitudes and plans for the future. One said, "Perhaps my greatest personal/professional gain through Four Avenues is a knowledge of where I stand on the educational continuum that lies between the extreme liberalism of this type of alternative education and the most conservative". Two left to go to small country schools for the benefit of their young families and one attributed to Four Avenues the development of courage needed to sell his house and go to England on a training course. The majority claim not to be leaving the spirit of Four Avenues behind but to be "extending it, putting it into practice elsewhere". One left partly because she wanted "to test how much is possible within ordinary schools".

Negative Reasons: These were the 'pulls', the forces that drew staff away from Four Avenues. But there were also the 'pushes', the frustrations which made teaching there over a period of time an accumulated strain, particularly for the first co-ordinators.

These stresses arose from a combination of:

- 1) Lack of protection from the demands of the total involvement.
- 2) The impact of the physical environment.
- 3) Uncertainty about the school's future.

Lack of protection: Because of the total nature of one's commitment as a co-ordinator, the school's life and one's personal life became inseparable. One described it thus:

"You talk about and think about your role late into the night - the good things and the mistakes. You talk about it on every social occasion. You're giving yourself all the time, your emotional substance, both in decision-making and in your values. It's like being retrained as a teacher".

One part-time teacher whose husband was a co-ordinator, found it "too much to have two from one family on a small staff". Yet this demand on a teacher's resources was not in itself a reason for leaving. Many found it very rewarding (see p. 29) but the demands made it harder to remain buoyant under the weight of the other two.

The impact of the physical environment: One of the most frequently-mentioned frustrations was the lack of sufficient accommodation for the type of alternative school that evolved, where up to 80 teenagers and adults could on any day of the week be moving in and out of a home with eight small rooms and two toilets, a home originally built, no doubt, for a family of five or six. Those who were teaching groups upstairs or working in the downstairs offices found the vibrancy, the noise levels and the interruptions very great - hard to take if you were tired. But they were no greater

than in the normal school. It was just that you were closer to them. Others teaching in buildings away from Four Avenues, however, were never conscious of noise and interruptions.

Two mentioned the lack of facilities for staff, in particular rooms or offices, in which to store materials, interview students or parents in private, and hold group meetings. Often one would wander from room to room in vain trying to find a place to work or talk to someone. One co-ordinator felt that the whole concept of student centred education had been carried to an extreme and that teachers' needs had not been sufficiently considered in the planning.

Uncertainty about the School's Future: Nine teachers felt they were in a position to answer the question, "How secure did you feel, professionally, at Four Avenues? i.e. Do you believe the Department was entirely committed to the institution? Did the degree of its commitment affect you in any way?"

Two did not feel insecure, and six felt 'somewhat insecure'. One who had the heaviest burden of responsibility and worked closely with the Department of Education felt 'professionally most insecure'. He went on to say:

"The Department's attitude was ambivalent. It valued having an alternative school - it was a nice thing to be able to say - it sent visitor's to Four Avenues at times. On the other hand it had no real place for such a school, it fitted no regulations, and the Department was loath to adapt regulations to fit the school. Consequently, there were conflicts about

staffing, equipment, buildings, inspection and so on. Nor were we sure whether with a change of government, we would be allowed to survive.

The lack of departmental commitment affected me in a number of ways. I spent time in battles which would have been better spent in establishing the school. As a consequence, I became bitter at this drain on my nervous resources. There was also continual uncertainty about the school's future - would it be closed by the Department? (quite apart from the question - would it fail?) This does not give one confidence in what one is doing".

Although the staff were grateful for the genuine support and interest taken in the school by individual officers of the Department, all felt that the Department, represented in particular by one influential member, did not seem wholly committed to the school. Fortunately, one reported that relations with the Department have improved since the appointment of a sympathetic liaison inspector to the school. In the early days, however, the staff felt on the one hand, very proud to be part of the exciting new experiment, but, on the other hand disillusioned that the Department did not appear to appreciate the worth of what was being attempted. "It seemed for a long time that we were fighting on all fronts: facilities, the System, the Department, even the weather!" wrote one of the first co-ordinators.

Would teachers who leave Four Avenues wish to return?

Of the seven co-ordinators who had left at the time of this survey, one did not reply, one felt he had completed his task in setting up the school, one would prefer to return as a part-time teacher, two would like to return if facilities were improved, and two had gone overseas

and would definitely like to return. One of these hopes to establish an alternative school when he comes back to New Zealand. One part-time teacher would definitely return and one might if she could be a co-ordinator. The only other part-time teacher who left before August, 1977 is teaching in the United States.

Of the three Teachers College students, one has entered journalism. If he returned to teaching it would be to a school like Four Avenues. The other two would definitely like to return.

Professional Future for Teachers at Four Avenues

It has been noted that most teachers who have left Four Avenues have found their experience in the school to have been of benefit when applying for another position in Education (page 55).

Four, including one of those mentioned above, commented on how they seemed to be regarded by other members of the teaching profession. They had the impression that they were regarded as radicals or misunderstood, and categorised as 'trendy liberals' and felt they had to deny that this was so. "When I apply for other schools", said one, "I feel I have to explain why I taught at Four Avenues very clearly to persuade others I am not a 'freak stirrer'".

Nevertheless, fourteen out of fifteen teachers commented that they were optimistic about the future role of Four Avenues and the experience it had to offer to teachers.

The main reason stated or inferred by all of the fourteen, was that Four Avenues provides for educationists and teachers a research opportunity for the testing of ideas to be incorporated into the conventional school. This was already being done in a formal way by the University and in an informal way by teachers. Teachers are finding, for instance, that closeness to students improves communication and discipline, that "you can be human without having a riot", and that non-punitive forms of discipline lead to permanent behaviour changes and increase in student responsibility. Possibly for these reasons, one commented on the value of Four Avenues for broadening teachers. One felt that Four Avenues would function better if it were attached more closely to a traditional school. Another felt that all schools should have alternative programmes, such as those offered by Nga Tapawae, Aorere, Penrose, and Glenfield, for instance.

The only co-ordinator to stay at the school since it opened, thought that Four Avenues had launched a kind of educational 'probe' into various possibilities, exploring and accepting some, rejecting others.

"Four Avenues was a product of its times in 1975 - a somewhat exaggerated expression of the mood at that time - somewhat ahead of it. Now (1977) it is about to start on a new phase with clearly defined new sets of aims and goals".

He felt that its role in the system is to "eventually merge not to be a safety valve or to find its niche," in the sense that as educational institutions become more humane and family-like there would no longer be any need for Four Avenues. At that time (1977) he saw Four Avenues as "the system, the other schools as the alternatives".

DISCUSSION

The positive influence of the alternative school on personal and professional development which teachers at Four Avenues experienced is common to teachers in other alternative schools.¹ Chernow and Genkin report that they gained personal satisfaction, confidence, increased awareness of how children learn, and a new perception of their role in general. "They began relating to the students in ways they had never thought possible and the students responded by becoming more open, more trusting and more involved with the teachers in planning what turned out to be their mutual education".

The Four Avenues experience is identical. Teachers find more advantages than disadvantages in teaching at Four Avenues, describing it as a broadening, strengthening and stimulating training experience. It also provides teachers with positive feedback from the successes of pupils who are able to follow the course that interests them, demonstrating, like Thornlea Secondary School in Toronto, that students in progressive schools can do well academically, and in Thornlea's case, better than students in traditional schools (see Appendix 10). Teachers also mentioned the professional advantages to themselves; that teaching at Four Avenues was valuable in gaining promotion to other positions in the education service.

¹Chernow, F.B. and Genkin, H., "Teaching and Administering the High School Alternative Education Program", Parker, 1975 p. 55.

Yet staff turnover at Four Avenues is high and increased dramatically from the end of 1976 to the end of 1977. Although the positive reasons given by teachers for their resignations from the school outweigh the negative a close investigation of their dissatisfactions is necessary by those in authority, in order to improve conditions and stabilise staffing for the benefit of students. Figure 1 on page 58 indicates that a Third or Fourth Form student in 1977 was likely to experience the departure of six staff in a total of nine. He or she would also have to get to know six new staff. (Although nine incoming staff are shown, three of these had been tutors before taking up paid employment and therefore one can assume that they were reasonably well-known by students).

An added difficulty in 1977 appears to be the absence of a permanent Director, although an appointment had been made by the Council of Four Avenues in the latter half of the year. The ratification of the appointment had been held up by the Department, however, because the person appointed was inelligible according to the Department's regulations.¹ Application had to be made for special approval.

It would seem that teachers at Four Avenues need more Departmental backing. Four Avenues like any experimental undertaking, must have the wholehearted support of an

¹Four Avenues Newsletter No. 14, 10 August, 1977.

enthusiastic and objective patron if innovation in education is to be successfully evaluated. According to Chernow and Genkin, evaluation is an essential part of the alternative school programme, not just for the purpose of improving internal structures, but for establishing the credibility of the alternative programme and as a means for identifying strategies that work and those that do not. Moreover, it should feed back to the traditional school information on aspects which could be adopted and incorporated into existing high schools.¹ If only for this reason, Four Avenues staff believe they would feel more secure if the Department saw the school as a valuable research laboratory rather than an embarrassing anomaly.

¹Chernow, F.B. and Genkin, H., "Teaching and Administering the High School Alternative Education Program", Parker, 1975 p. 239.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This report indicates that Four Avenues has undergone a process of accelerated evolution both in philosophy and in structure throughout its two and a half years' existence. It appears now to have reached a real understanding of the needs of the students who choose to put their names forward for the entrance ballot: a warm family atmosphere, an opportunity to choose from a number of educational alternatives the one that suits them best, or the choice to live in a school system that does not make them feel failures. It is now imperative that Four Avenues turn its attention with some immediacy to the problems and needs of its teachers, since the fulfilment of student needs depends wholly on the attraction and retention of suitable staff.

The evidence in this survey clearly shows that Four Avenues requires an exceptional kind of teacher, dedicated, tolerant, and versatile, with a high level of moral functioning, and a broad approach to education. He or she has to assume a complexity of roles and perform a multiplicity of functions. He or she is Counsellor, tutor, guide, instructor, friend, Head of Department, craftsman, caretaker, cleaner, Chairperson, liaison officer and maker of school policy. Hence the teacher's

relationship to students in the alternative school differs from that in the conventional school. He or she has much more responsibility for students, is much closer to them and their parents and seeks to introduce them to the wider community. This relationship is undoubtedly of therapeutic value to students, but places great demands upon the staff. In sub-standard working conditions and without adequate support to maintain morale, they are more likely to suffer from "burn out" than teachers in conventional schools. With these two major problems solved, however, and with the proviso suggested by the evidence that because of the dynamic nature of the school, staff turnover is likely to remain fairly high, most teachers would still like to return to Four Avenues.

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