A PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
FAMILY LEARNING CENTER

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PROJECT

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Rationale</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. OVERVIEW OF THE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER PLAN</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE PLAN - A FAMILY LEARNING CENTER</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. SAMPLE WORKSHOP FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Public school education faces crises today unequalled in history. School districts face financial pressures which are forcing changes in programming, cuts in special services, and lack of concerted interest in the affective needs of teachers and students. Counselors, psychologists, social workers and other support services are being cut to a ratio of 1/1000 or more students. Teachers are concerned with problems of discipline, integration, mainstreaming, and communication. Frequently negative interest is shown in professional in-service workshops, because these are often based on theoretical information without practical application. Teachers increasingly face children with unique problems in the classroom and will continue to require expertise, as special programs are deleted and children with handicaps are placed in the regular classroom. Special categories, such as educationally handicapped, blind, deaf, physically handicapped and educable mentally retarded, will increasingly be part of the total academic program. Needs for prescriptive, individualized teaching will continue to be voiced; yet, school districts will not have the funds or personnel to provide the needed services. Many districts now state that these needs must be met by county and/or private agencies.
Teachers voice concerns and demonstrate needs for an emotional support program which would provide information and options for these new dilemmas. Many theoretical viewpoints are represented today to help persons understand human behavior. One effective way of understanding human behavior is found in the study of Transactional Analysis. TA, as it is popularly called, is a personality theory developed by Eric Berne in the late 1960's. Since then, TA has been used by therapy, business, and education as a significant approach to mental health. This approach believes in preventing mental illness and speaks to the positive aspects of personality development.

The intent of this project is to present a dream. This dream has evolved through fifteen years of specialized teaching, attending graduate school, and training in Transactional Analysis. The research which has been done is my own, although many of the ideas have come from association with colleagues and books. The dream is to develop a Family Learning Center based on an understanding of the principles of human behavior TA offers to educators. These principles include an understanding of transactional analysis, game analysis, and script analysis. These principles assume an experiential approach to education, an appreciation of the worth of each individual and a concern for positive development in the mental health of
families. Finally, TA offers the individual the ability to express adaptation appropriately and curtail it when the adapting limits and stifles options in creativity.

The goals of TA are to provide an individual with 1) awareness, or the capacity to see the world in one's own way and not the way one was taught; 2) spontaneity, or the ability to experience a full range of feelings, emotions, and behaviors; 3) autonomy, or the ability to be self-determining; and 4) intimacy, or the ability to express the natural feelings of warmth, tenderness, and closeness to others. Some teachers want to experience these goals for themselves, as well as to see the end results in the children they teach. Some parents want to grow and change along with their children.

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

There has been a chasm between the home and school. Most public school education does not develop the creative potential of each child, but instead teaches adaptation to a societal system. Family related problems are usually not dealt with in the school system, although these same problems relate to the learning performance in school. TA has values and benefits which enhance the philosophical structure and rationale for teaching children, families
and teachers to experience intimacy, autonomy, spontaneity, and awareness. The family learning center concept would be a support system for educators, a source of extracurricular activities for students and a therapeutic stabilizer for the entire family.

**Philosophical Rationale**

Within the structure of public education I have found teachers who typify three approaches to learning. Type I are those who are firmly grounded in the system, have little interest in changing their teaching model or exploring new approaches other than adaptive-rote learning. Type II are those who enjoy the security of the system, but are creative, innovative, and interested in new areas of self-fulfilling education. These teachers encourage growth in students by giving positive recognition to new forms of behavior and neutralize the tendency toward negative growth. Type III is the teacher who is extremely creative, autonomous and self-directing in teaching. These teachers are often encouraged to become specialists, giving leadership to special projects, and invest much time and effort in future educational developments.

Working in the public schools I have found that many teachers crave emotional support. Many parents come to teachers for help and support in dealing with family crises. School districts are increasingly unable or unwilling to
provide support. Thus, my reasons for developing a Family Learning Center are three-fold: 1) The center would be a catalyst to provide new ideas for teachers within the system. That is, some information-giving would be absorbed by these teachers and provide help, change, and willingness to listen to new ideas. 2) The center would provide support and training for innovative teachers who would invest the time and energy to improve their skills in teaching creatively and promoting positive mental health. These teachers would take part in many facets of the program (to be described later) and pass on the information to others not involved. 3) The center would create a structure of growing, creative, autonomous people who could promote positive growth and mental health in the lives of children and adults.

This dream would also bridge the gap between home and school. As the plan unfolds you will notice that parents are actively involved and participating in the program. The creative facets of the plan will give teachers an honest approach to creative teaching in a society which has expected children to learn adaptive behavior. This will promote mental health in a thorough, contractual and all-encompassing approach.

The Transactional Analysis approach is based on the belief that many learning problems are the result of early childhood decisions about the way the child learned to
adapt to the expectations and viewpoints of those around him. Children, if given permission, are seen as driven to the highest expression of humanity. However, these full capacities are often interfered with, forcing the child to make negative decisions to fit the situation. In this instance, children are born with the capacity to think, but if this capacity is interfered with by messages which tell him "don't think", he will decide that there is more to be gained in life by not thinking. By giving the child permission to decide otherwise, based on new information, new recognition for thinking, and advantages in thinking the child may experience immediate successes in the learning process.

Along with the affective approach it is important and necessary to provide the child, the family, and the teacher with accurate information about the cognitive phases of learning. When a child has had one or more years delay in learning, there may authentically be skills/facts that have been missed in the sequential stages of learning. For this reason it is important to provide the missing information in the form of tutoring or special help. This can occur when a child sits idly in the class day-dreaming, leaving several times a day for special classes, or retention. The child may have missed learning vowel-consonant patterns, verbs/nouns, or some other skill. This, then, needs remediation and, at this point, cognitive training is helpful in
providing the missing information. How all of these aspects can fit into the total plan is the next step. Now we will look at an overview of the Family Learning Center Plan.
Chapter II

Overview of the Family Learning Center Plan

1. Psycho-educational work-ups
2. Educators study groups
3. Consultant services to school districts and/or individual schools
4. In-service workshops for teachers, students, counselors
5. Parent-family workshops and treatment groups
6. Childrens' groups and/or play therapy
7. Seminars for teachers for professional growth
8. Curriculum laboratory
9. Peer tutoring - cross-age teaching
10. Continuing education - adult ed., junior college, college for parents and teachers
11. Publications
12. Planned evening activities for teen-agers
13. Yearly conference centered on educational theme
Chapter III

The Plan - A Family Learning Center

The following services will be offered and available through the Family Learning Center. The consultant staff will consist of a psychologist/psychometrist, speech/language specialist, reading specialist, learning disability specialist and a family therapist. All staff members will have Transactional Analysis training leading to a Clinical Membership of Special Fields Membership. The psychologist/psychometrist will hold a California psychologist credential and be well-trained in testing, diagnosing and prescribing for remediation, as well as to have the ability to work with individuals and groups in therapeutic treatment. The speech/language specialist will hold a California credential, have training in working with individuals and groups in remediation of speech and/or language problems. The reading specialist will hold a California reading specialist credential, know the various reading tests available, how to administer, diagnose and remediate reading problems, as well as having expertise in correlating remediation with affective problems. The learning disability specialist will be trained in working with educationally handicapped students, hold a California Learning Handicapped credential, and be capable of working with individual students, groups, and parents in consultation.
The family therapist will work with families together and/or separately, consult with the specialists and help with diagnoses. All of the staff will work together in presenting the workshops, seminars, and classes.

1. **Psycho-educational work-ups** will be available to elementary school-age children, on referral from a teacher, administrator, or parent. This work-up will include testing, outline of prescriptive teaching, suggestions for private tutoring and/or placement in a children's group. As a follow-up to this service, there will be a monthly consultation of the referring teachers when information and prescriptive recommendations will be shared with the teacher. This will meet the needs of the school for state requirements for financial assistance for special programs and needs of the individuals involved.

2. **Educators study groups** will meet weekly, consisting of 8-10 educators who will study the principles of TA as related to classroom management and interests. Many of these teachers will be interested in working for the Special Fields Membership (SFM) in Transactional Analysis. As part of the required training for the SFM these teachers will assist as interns in the groups and private tutoring of children who come to the center for special help after school or during school hours.
The trainees will also, as a combined effort, develop a glossary of psycho-educational terms and TA information to go with each term. This will aid them in better understanding the literature, and in communicating with other colleagues about special problems.

3. **Consultant services** to districts and/or individual schools will be an integral part of the work of the staff consultants. With the wide variety of expertise represented, this team will be prepared to go into a district and/or individual school and assess quickly and accurately problem areas due to conflicts or unresolved needs in the schools. I picture meeting with a staff, finding out what the immediate sources of frustration are, and through use of exercises, presentations and discussion arrive at a workable solution to these dilemmas.

4. **In-service workshops** will be available to schools, districts, and professional groups upon request. These workshops will be available on special topics for a one time only request or as a series of ten comprehensive classes to teach the principles of TA as directly related to educational needs. Suggested topics to be developed by the staff would be:

- Teachers' values versus children's values
- Games Students Play
- Teaching children not to be hungry
- Let's listen (receptive language in the classroom)
- Talking straight (expressive language in the classroom)
- How to waste time effectively (time structure)
- Rx for learning
- Parents are people, too
5. **Parent-Family Workshops and treatment groups** will be available to 5-8 people on a weekly basis. These groups will provide the structure for parents to be involved in the treatment and learning experiences of the children, so that the total home environment may experience the change and encouragement needed. Concern for early childhood education will be demonstrated by providing groups at a time of day convenient for working parents of pre-schoolers enrolled in nursery schools or day care centers. Daytime classes will combine information-giving and a contractual approach to therapy; that is, information will be presented on aspects of human behavior, and then parents will have opportunity to make contracts for change. Evening classes and groups will be available for parents to have an opportunity to learn, grow with others, receive new information about their own relationship to the child enrolled in the center.

6. **Children's groups and/or play therapy** will be available and an integral part of the prescriptive treatment for the children evaluated at the center. Consultants and trainees will be experts in creatively teaching children that life can be exciting. When the entire family is involved, the child may be referred to a family group; however, the children's groups will focus on creativity, learning to think, responding with options and take care of oneself.
7. **Seminars for teachers** will meet once a month at the center. This will be an opportunity for any teachers interested to hear a lively presentation on a topic relevant to classroom interests or teacher effectiveness. These talks will be presented by trainees, invited guest speakers and the consultants on topics of interest to all. These topics may be similar to the workshops, but will also include areas of interest such as motor-coordination, diagnosing a language problem, when to refer for outside help, teaching with games, classroom management, and taking care of yourself as a teacher.

8. **Curriculum laboratory** - One room in the center will be devoted to making pre-packaged kits and games developed or used by the consultants, trainees, parents and teachers who use the center. These kits would be available for a nominal charge. One wall will be a display of each game/kit with a number attached to it. In a nearby cubboard manilla envelopes with corresponding numbers will contain all of the materials and directions to develop the game/kit. Teachers will come to the center at designated hours to work on the project, spend time together in a pleasant atmosphere away from the classroom, get new ideas and enjoy friendship with colleagues.

9. **Peer tutoring and cross-age teaching** will develop as teenagers in the groups develop new skills, learn how to
talk to other people and learn to think for themselves. They will then be trained to do peer-tutoring with younger children coming into the program. These would be the 12-16 year olds who want to continue to grow and use the TA knowledge and learning skills to teach specific prescriptive tasks to younger children. They will also use their own creativity to develop new materials, organize leadership for their own activities and present talks and activities at other functions the center offers.

10. Continuing education will be offered by the consultants through adult education, junior college, and university class offerings. These classes will be designed to include application of Transactional Analysis to the teacher training process. They will include many aspects of education, child development, learning theory, educational thought and parenting. As specialities emerge and as the consultants develop new techniques, these will be written in outline form and submitted for credit approval. Trainees and interns will also be encouraged to develop expertise in presenting creative teaching techniques and skills to those who are in advanced degree programs. Presenting original material will afford those involved the opportunity to contrast and validate the effectiveness of TA theory with other behavioristic and humanistic theories in the academic world.
11. **Publications** will be developed as sufficient interest is evident to publish. The consultants will write and edit material presented in classes, workshops and seminars. These publications will include a basic understanding of the TA concepts which underlie the total program of the center. Publications will relate to relevant topics and to the goals of Transactional Analysis. Articles will also contain evidence of the broader understanding of other modalities and philosophical contricutions.

12. **Planned evening activities for teen-agers** will be held twice a month as the program of the center develops. This will be an evening planned by the young people with the direction of the consultants. The purpose will be to provide a safe, creative, fun place to go and be with friends, to learn about people and to express oneself in an environment of spontaneity. This will be a positive force in the community as young people discover new ways of responding to creativity and fun. Adult supervision will be available for the evening of panel discussions, crafts, games, music, food and other planned activities.

13. **A yearly conference on education** will be sponsored by the center as a tying-together of the support system for teachers and parents. There will be opportunity given to express viewpoints, discuss new developments in home-school communication, present papers and panels of
new information and hear guest speakers from other parts of the state and nation who share common concerns. The conference organization will consist of persons involved in the learning center who want to see education move in a positive direction.
Chapter IV

Conclusion

A dream does not develop overnight, nor does it come about only with financial investment and thoughtful planning. This dream will take commitment to a belief that people can change, that people have a creative, thinking potential. This dream will take hard work, much commitment, and people caring about each other and looking outward to mine the hidden gold in others. This challenge will take constancy and flexibility to discard the parts that don't work and push harder into areas that do work. This dream will become reality as those who implement the foundations of it are open to advice and direction from others who have paved the way — those who can deter the leaders from snares and obstacles already experienced. This is a dream of giving families new ways to relate, to grow, and for individuals within those families to decide that life is worth living. Viktor Frankl said, "Man ultimately decides for himself! And in the end, education must be education toward the ability to decide."
Chapter V

Recommendations and Further Research

Any dream when put on paper has many uncompleted lines, and so it is with creating a Family Learning Center. There are many questions yet to ask and answer. Among these are the following:

1) More factual information is needed about the crises schools face today. Research and study needs to be done in this area to validate the statement that "school districts face financial pressures which are forcing changes in programming." This has been my experience in the teaching profession, but further validation and study could be done on this.

2) New, accurate information needs to be obtained on the requirements for Clinical, Special Fields and Teaching Memberships in the International Transactional Analysis Association. This can be obtained by making contact with the ITAA Office in San Francisco.

3) In speaking of psycho-educational testing, research and study will specify and validate the types of tests best suited to this proposal, how the tests would be administered, and how they would be interpreted to correspond with the total program.

4) Many more topics for consultation services and in-service workshops need to be brain-stormed and developed.
These could deal with many relevant topics, but with catchy titles to appeal to the fun-loving aspects of those to whom they would be offered.

5) How bi-monthly planned evening activities would be supervised is an area that needs to be considered in much detail. It would be helpful to do research on other places that this has been tried to discover some of the problems encountered.

6) I know of several learning centers, but none that are as all-encompassing as this proposal. Interesting research would be to study several learning centers to see what their main focus is and how the program is operated.

7) Fees were not even mentioned and this is an area for consideration. Would there be a sliding scale? Would school districts be charged for work-ups or would the parents be responsible for the fee? There are an infinite number of possibilities to consider.

8) Are grants available for such a project? This would be another valid topic for research and discussion. What would be the stipulations and/or expectations?

These and many more questions will only be answered as those who are committed to doing the project work together and utilize the abilities of many dedicated people. It is not an impossibility unless we believe that it is. The family is important, the school is important, people are
important. People can change and rid themselves of the negative behaviors which keep them from getting on with the creative aspects of living. To take away from others what there is to give would be denying a life-time to many people who hurt. This dream is possible.
Chapter VI

Sample Workshop for In-service Training

Title:

"The Eyes Have It"
(or Visualization in Learning)

I. How visualizing affects childhood decisions
   A. Difference between sight and vision
      1. Theoretical difference
      2. Group exercise - Divide into partners.
         Select one picture from a magazine. One partner describes specific details of picture. Other partner then tells him what that picture reminds him of, giving exact names to each item.

   B. Eyes as organs of vision and organs of contact
      1. Reichian orgone theory
      2. Exercise - Divide into partners again. Look at the other person for 5 seconds at a time expressing emotions of hate, love, fear, sadness, anxiety, and joy.
      3. Discussion of how the emotions are portrayed in visual pictures in the brain, leading to feelings of rejections, acceptance isolation.

C. Eye messages which are given verbally and non-verbally
   1. Group discussion - list verbal messages about vision/eyes
   2. Present information on eye dysfunction and how messages are received through optometrist, parents, peers.

II. How visualizing is important to a teacher or group leader
   A. Centering
      1. Chart presentation of the body systems and centering process
      2. Group exercise - Become aware of soft, hard and eccentric centering

   B. Illustrating
      1. The teacher becomes the eyes of the student temporarily
      2. Discussion of how visualizing options and goals can lead to growth in the student
C. Up-dating
   1. Teacher needs to de-contaminate and up-date own attitudes
   2. Exercise - Fantasy trip - Where were you 5 years ago? Where are you right now? Where will you be 5 years from now?

III. How visualizing can be taught - Rx for developing new skills
   A. Group exercises to be discussed.
      1. Ernst OK Corral - Centering by standing in each quadrant.
      2. Doodling while talking in group - watch eye contact or lack of.
      3. Categories
      4. Octopus drawing
      5. Fantasy trips
      6. 3-chair technique
      7. Range of emotions exercise
      8. Pass the mask
      9. Make a group collage

   B. Teaching activities
      1. Balance boards - chalkboard activities
      2. Geo boards
      3. 20 questions
      4. Read teacher's mind
      5. Number fact game - play like War
      6. Math puzzles
      7. Tic-tac-toe
      8. Hangman
      9. Brain twisters

   C. Commercial games
      1. Scan
      2. Twister
      3. Bingo
      4. Qubic
      5. Hi-Q
      6. Parquetry
      7. Battleship
      8. Tell It Like It Is
      9. Suspendable bat/ball

   D. Discussion and other ideas presented

IV. Summary and closure time
   A. Sharing what has been gained

   B. Evaluation and Recommendations for further development
BIBLIOGRAPHY


