

## HARRY IN THREE CLASSES

In this paper, I describe the implementation of the *HARRY* program and the use of analytic teaching with three different populations in public school classrooms in Austin, Texas, where I have been a teacher for the past seventeen years. I have been working with *HARRY* for the last five of these years.

In the late 1970's, I was a teacher of emotionally disturbed and learning disabled students in a partially self-contained unit, which means that students are instructed in a class for their specific educational needs for no more than five hours daily. I taught students by using their individual educational plans on a one-to-one basis and I used various affective curricula to bring them together as a group in order to develop their social skills and provide a support group for talking about feelings. As I worked with these emotionally disturbed or learning disabled but quite intelligent youngsters, I continually sought out methods and curricula which served to integrate the cognitive and affective domains in a holistic manner. I found that, though I was very much interested in educating the whole child, in practice I was dealing with parts and pieces instead.

Fortunately, I got some help. A newsletter describing the Texas Wesleyan Analytic Teaching Program came to my attention and brochures for the Philosophy for Children program at Montclair State College had been sent to my principal, Dr. Mary Lou Clayton. When I spoke to her about pursuing this program, she made sure that I applied to Texas Wesleyan and to the Austin school district for pilot project funding. These funds were granted after I made a presentation to a committee based on publication information I had received from Professor Ronald Reed at Texas Wesleyan.

The training which I received that summer at Texas Wesleyan was a revelation to me. I quickly became a *HARRY* fan and eagerly looked forward to sharing *HARRY* with my students. I felt that I had found the integration of the affective and cognitive domains in the cohesive, developmental program for which I had been searching. The community of inquiry offered the qualities of a support group with a purpose and direction that had been lacking in the previous groups designed solely for therapeutic purposes. The notion Harry expresses, that "... when we think about thinking, we seem to understand ourselves better," was what I had been trying to achieve, unsuccessfully, with my previous groupings.

The success of this program with special education students exceeded my expectations. There were twelve emotionally disturbed and learning disabled students in my class in 1982-83. We met for "Discov-

ery" thirty minutes a day for four days a week. I was determined to understand *HARRY* well, so I set about doing every activity in each chapter with the students. They seemed to enjoy talking about important questions and most were able to stay with the group for the full thirty minutes. Those activities which dealt with affective questions were especially beneficial; students who otherwise found it difficult to talk about feelings learned to do so in a reflective and critical way. There was less teasing and hostility shown to each other as the group developed. As the community of inquiry developed, respect and caring for each other began to flow over into other parts of our academic work. *HARRY* became a touchstone during academic discussions and filtered into our work throughout the day.

As the program continued, we were visited by people from various levels of school district personnel who were interested in a thinking skills program. Their reactions were uniformly positive. One of the effects which these kinds of visitations had for these children was that, for a change, they were getting attention for doing something special which was not "special education," with the unfortunate pejorative sense that term carries for many. The academic improvements in reading and mathematics as measured by individually administered standardized achievement tests, especially for youngsters identified as emotionally disturbed, drew further inquiry and interest from the support personnel on the students' academic planning team. *HARRY* was in.

My need to feel more confident about being a facilitator and a better member of the community of inquiry motivated me to return the following summer to Texas Wesleyan. Professor Reed kindly allowed me to be a full participant in the training again. I was becoming a *HARRY* devotee.

The following year I again used *HARRY* with my students. Since the majority of them were continuing in the unit, we picked up where we had left off the preceding year. The few new students who were added to the unit received a review and reading along with the previous participants to get started. Since my pacing was very slow, we were never too far from the beginning anyway. Adding new members did present the problem of building trust among the members, but since the previous students already understood how to listen well, how to express reasons for opinions and how to agree or disagree respectfully with the ideas of others, the new members seemed to adjust quickly to this kind of group.

As a result of my work with these youngsters who helped me to learn so much both cognitively and affectively, I strongly recommend *HARRY* to special education teachers who work with students over an

extended time during the day. Let me sum up my reasons for recommending this program.

- (1) It helps to bring a cohesive affective and cognitive curriculum into a highly segmented learning environment.
- (2) It provides children who have special learning needs with a structured, productive way to talk and to listen to each other. This benefits them socially, emotionally, and academically.
- (3) It provides a central core that unites the pieces of learning in a meaningful way.
- (4) Using the analytic teaching methodology helps to improve teaching skills in many areas.

In the academic year of 1983-84, in addition to my work with special education students, I introduced the program to certain regular students as well. Again with the support of Dr. Clayton and pilot project funding, I decided to introduce *HARRY* to a volunteer group of fourth graders. To do this I went to the three fourth grade classrooms, talked about a thinking group and played the detective game. Students were asked to express their interest in becoming members of a group in a letter sent to their parents. Parents were given a brief description of the program and, upon request, a copy of an article about *HARRY* and the program which had appeared in the September 1982, issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. Since students would be substituting their work in these sessions for some of the work in their traditional language arts program, the fourth grade teachers were asked to recommend students as well. Unfortunately, we could not accommodate all of the requests and had to limit the group to eighteen.

This volunteer group of regular fourth graders met twice a week for thirty minutes a day. Student interest in and understanding of the leading ideas were to determine the starting place for discussions. These students felt very special about this group and it was typical for them to take our questions home for continued consideration. The parents reacted positively and supported the program. In fact, there has been no negative parent response during the entire five years I have been doing the program.

The positive response from the students in this group prompted other faculty members in the school to consider instituting a fourth- through sixth-grade program. The following summer, Professor Reed was invited to Austin to help train our faculty. Teachers attended the workshop on a voluntary basis. This provided initial training for three fourth-grade teachers, two fifth-grade teachers, two sixth-grade teachers, a resource teacher, and the psychological associate for the school.

In the academic year of 1984-85, one teacher on each grade level began implementing the program. Unfortunately, this could not be continued. Due to staff changes, including the transfer of Dr. Clayton to another school, we were not successful in maintaining the program on every level throughout the year. I continued working with my previous volunteer group as fifth-graders. We met for thirty minutes a day for four days a week. By this time we were a very cohesive and dedicated group. Many of the responses and reactions to questions that have been recorded in other articles were typical of what I experienced working with these students. For most of us, this was the favorite part of our day.

Meanwhile, I was continuing with my special education students. The group had changed quite a bit. One difficulty was that of keeping the students who had been in the program for some time involved while others got tuned in to the logic, the story, the characters, and what it was that this kind of group was all about. The addition to the unit of some children with particularly severe disturbances and whose tolerance for group activities was very low was an additional difficulty. There was an overall increase in disruptive behavior which took a great deal more one-to-one intervention time and on a number of occasions we were unable to have a group because of these crisis situations. This was most unfortunate for a number of reasons, but particularly because one of my students who had been severely emotionally disturbed at an earlier age was beginning to get noticeably better and looked forward to participation in the group. Our not meeting was upsetting to him because this was a time he could really shine. Many of his most bizarre behavior- and speech-patterns were almost absent when he was talking about *HARRY* and thinking about thinking. Though the Philosophy for Children program was not intended to serve therapeutic purposes, it is clear to me from these experiences that it may well have this benefit for certain students.

At the close of this year, I felt that it was time for me to try another kind of challenge in a different school setting, so I made the request to become a regular fifth-grade teacher at a different school. Dr. Clayton, who had encouraged my work in this area from the beginning and who continued to be interested in beginning a Philosophy for Children program on the intermediate level, served as principal to the school to which I was successful in being transferred. For the academic year 1985-86, we began by preparing a fourth- and sixth-grade teacher for a beginning program. We tried introducing it during the language arts program, but this posed problems. It meant, first of all, that some students on each grade level would be missing out and that continuity from one year to the next would be difficult to achieve. Moreover, the

fourth-grade teacher was also the teacher for high level students and was working with fourth- and fifth-grade students during the same time period. Asking her to implement a new program was asking a lot.

I began working with the remainder of the fifth-grade students in language arts. The number of students in the class was such that, even after dividing the class into two groups, they were still larger than ideal. We usually managed to meet for two thirty-minute periods a week, but we were not able to be consistent about this. The children very much enjoyed coming to the group when we did meet. I extended a number of questions to include writing and creative dramatic activities. For example, the exercise on invention and discovery in Chapter 1 of *HARRY* led the students to the creation of some memorable works in writing, drama and art. These children seemed particularly interested in sharing their questions with their families; many groups would start with a point from a previous session that had been taken up at the family dinner table. One youngster who was quieter in the group than some of the more outspoken ones said to me about two months after we had discussed personal identity, "I have been thinking about the questions about change and what makes me me, and I think I've figured this out for now. . . ." He went on to tell me about his unchanging "inner core," as he called it. I asked him another question and he said, "I'll have to think about that." One cannot help but be enthusiastic about a program which rewards this kind of reflection.

This past year was a particularly rewarding one. The students who had been introduced to the program in the fourth grade had retained the logic and familiarity with the story and main characters. They were interested in pursuing a "Discovery" group. This time I was going to work with all the fifth graders and meet as part of their social studies curriculum. Each group met for forty-five minutes one day a week. This allowed each group to be manageably small, though it depended on the willingness of students to work independently in the same room when a group other than their own met. Actually, there was a lot of listening going on by the independent workers, which was evident when they came to the group the following day. The majority of the students in my homeroom had not been exposed to this program in fourth grade, however, so we started at the beginning. Those students in the other class who had been in groups the previous year were able to help their new groups move quickly into a community of inquiry. I was able to become a member of these groups fairly rapidly in spite of the students' initial skepticism about accepting my dual role as teacher and participant. About two months after we started "Discovery"

groups, we introduced Junior Great Books into the language arts curriculum. Since these students were used to supporting ideas from evidence, giving reasons for opinions and interpreting written material analytically, they were able to sort out those questions of philosophical interest in the literature and discuss them energetically. They came to these groups with excellent questions in hand and our discussions began with them. Even though this meant that we had to reduce the amount of group time doing *HARRY*, it is quite clear that the use of analytic teaching in other parts of the curriculum has enhanced our learning and enjoyment of what we do.

*HARRY* continues to be the touchstone throughout our day. For example, because we had talked about stereotyping and jumping to conclusions, discussions in Social Studies about prejudice and the civil rights movement of the 1960's were more than a recitation of events as presented in the text. Issues related to racism were discussed in reflective and productive ways. There were days when students did not want the social studies period to end because they wanted the discussion to go on. Thanks *HARRY*.

In conclusion, my experience with three quite different student populations, namely, a fourth- to sixth-grade special education group, a fourth- and fifth-grade volunteer group of regular students and a fifth-grade regular classroom group, has led me to an appreciation of the versatility and teachability of the program. Perhaps the most surprising academic and behavioral gains were those made by the special education students. This is an application of the program which has not, I think, been widely recognized or explored but which I would like to close by strongly encouraging.

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