

WHEN TEACHERS SUPERVISE

MARY A. HENDERSON

Alice Moore, a June graduate of a teachers college, was appointed to a third grade across the hall from Grace Jones, an experienced third-grade teacher. What an opportunity for Alice! What a challenge for Grace! Being young, inexperienced, and perhaps a little awed by the responsibility of teaching, Alice was overwhelmed by many things during the first months of school. Many routine matters which had become automatic to Grace loomed as unsurmountable to Alice.

It meant a lot to Alice and built up a fine relationship when Grace took a few minutes to explain each new problem as it presented itself. Such things as filling out attendance forms and cards; understanding building procedure for recess, lunch-time, rainy days, or fire drills; understanding how and when to order supplies, use the school library, auditorium, visual-arts room, or music room; understanding when and why the special teachers come to the building.

As soon as Alice saw that Grace was willing to help, it was perfectly natural to go to her with other questions. This made it easier for Grace to guide Alice and help in straightening out some of the complications which arose. Her guidance was as informal as—

These children are sharing new books which they received as gifts.

We have moved our library materials over

here so the children may sit in a more social group.

The children have so much fun choosing something from this shelf, and it gives them an opportunity to select for themselves and not depend on teacher direction. This child is timid but very artistic. We are helping her to gain confidence by making her art contributions an important part of the group project.

And so on, just bits of conversation, but how much it meant to Alice! She in turn asked for help in ways of handling individual children, grouping or room arrangement. Or perhaps Grace made an informal remark which answered a question, or raised a question for discussion. It is helpful if it comes at the right moment.—And it is apt to, if it comes from "the teacher across the hall."

Simple? Yes, but it is the simple things which present the best opportunities for the kind of careful guidance and wise leadership that may be handled so well by another teacher in the same situation.

When Common Interests Bring Us Together

Supervision, guidance, leadership—whatever we may call it—it is present wherever two or more people meet who are interested in child growth and development. If we agree that the three words are synonymous, then every teacher is supervising some one at some time during the day. Good supervision is based on leadership which brings out the best in the individual through a complete understanding of his potentialities and problems. To help the individual, it is necessary to develop a closer and more human relationship. *The quality of leadership will never rise*

Alice Moore and Grace Jones are fellow-teachers. There is a story of supervision in the way they help each other. The informal guidance that grows out of this kind of a relationship is described by Mary A. Henderson, a teacher in Brightwood School, Washington, D. C.

above the quality of human relationship.

Supervision and teaching are complementary. The teacher-to-pupil, teacher-to-teacher, and teacher-to-supervisor relationship should be the same. It should be a relationship of guidance, counseling, and cooperation. It should be a relationship which brings people together to work on a common problem concerning the needs of all, and the welfare of each individual. One of the people closest to the teacher and, therefore, the one who can best understand her situation, is another teacher.

The individual school is becoming more important as a planning unit and community influence, and with that growing importance comes an increasing need and opportunity for teacher responsibility and leadership. We are beginning to realize that many of our problems are common to teachers of the elementary and secondary level. These problems and many others are understood best by the teachers who face them and can, therefore, best be solved by the teachers, working together.

Special Helps Fill a Need

In one section of a large city, a plan was devised whereby each beginning teacher is assigned an advisor who is an experienced teacher. Opportunities are provided for the beginner to observe the advisor and then talk over personal problems. Quite often the inexperienced teacher will state her real needs to another teacher more easily than she will to her supervisors or principal. The new teacher hasn't had the opportunity to realize that her supervisors and principal are going to guide her, through helping with her problems and bringing out the best that is in her. In many instances she comes so indoctrinated with the old meaning of "supervision" that she doesn't dare make

her needs known for fear of showing an inadequacy.

The advisor holds conferences with the supervisors and principal to plan ways in which all can work together to help the new teacher. Then, when the supervisor or principal observes again, she has this extra insight into the teacher's expressed needs and gains the teacher's confidence much quicker by being able to give specific help.

Sharing Experience Gives Perspective

Teachers, both beginning and experienced, learn when they work together. Through cooperative faculty planning the leadership shifts during the discussion so that each person is the leader when presenting her viewpoint. Faculty groups are constantly planning together, discussing curriculum problems, sharing group projects or ways of bringing several classes together for a single experience.

In many buildings two classes meet together for a game, rhythms, story telling, dramatization, or music, with one teacher in charge of the whole group. In this way the other teacher has a chance to observe the teacher in charge and also to see how her own children react to the new situation. Or the teacher not responsible for the large group may use this time to observe in another room in the building, with time before and after the visit to discuss what has been observed.

Groups of teachers in a building, community, or city are organizing study groups or workshops, and working together under cooperative leadership. These groups are meeting regardless of grade level or personal experience, not only to solve common problems but to start new projects, try out their findings, and report back to the group.

Copyright © 1945 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.