



Courtesy Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa

# What Is Supervision?

Reams of paper have been covered with countless words about the function of supervision. Yet, by drawing aside the heavy curtain of abstract phraseology and allowing us to glimpse their day-to-day activities, these supervisor-authors give us a clear vision of what supervision can be.

## STORY FROM A DIARY

☐ *A state supervisor at work*

ANNE HOPPOCK

LOOKING BACK over the pages of a diary is useful and pleasant. It is useful because it provides opportunity to study

the year's achievements and to face the sins of omission. It is pleasant because it serves as a reminder of days spent with rewarding people, little ones and grown-ups. It recalls trips up and down the state through the green promise of April and the white splendor of winter, and all the days of fruitfulness in between. (Through fog and sleet, and rain too, and occasional discouragement and weariness, but these are forgotten long after the others remain.) All of these reminders are contained in the pages of my little red diary.

Here is a page which reads: "Spent to-

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*A philosophy of education that results in supervision at its best is inherent in this author's account of what each day contains. Her sensitive, understanding approach to the needs and problems of the people with whom she works reflects a thorough comprehension of the responsibilities of a supervisor. Ann Hoppock, as assistant in elementary education in the New Jersey Department of Public Instruction, works under the leadership of Thomas J. Durell, assistant commissioner of education, in carrying on the activities which she describes on these pages.*

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day with the helping teachers in \_\_\_\_\_ county discussing plans for their new curriculum program." This was an eventful day. Out of it grew a plan to have all the teachers freed from their work for several days a year for curriculum planning. They are working in small workshop groups, studying their children and the findings of science, selecting the purposes and principles and deciding the policies by which they will work. I have been attending and helping with these workshops. I have been acquainting myself with this democratic program of curriculum planning and how it is working so I can pass accounts of it along to others who are seeking to make teaching intelligent and creative.

*Understanding People Is  
a Big Part of the Job*

"Visited schools all day with Miss \_\_\_\_\_." She is a young helping teacher in her first year of service. These young people have so much humility, such an awareness of the almost frightening potentialities in their jobs; yet with it is enthusiasm, freshness of approach, and a wholesome understanding of the teacher's point of view, for they are, themselves, just out of the classroom.

At noon Miss \_\_\_\_\_ and I sat on the beach with a sand dune for a back rest, and while we ate our sandwiches she talked about her plans and problems. It delighted me to see that almost instinctively she had been working to find what the teachers' main interests are, what they wanted to do, how she could help them do these things and how they could be evaluated. I took a lesson from her book and tried to help her find ways to realize her gradually emerging purposes. Our Division holds frequent meetings with these new supervisors. During the first year or two of their work they need

help which the large conferences of supervisors do not provide. Participation in their own small meetings soon helps them to find a secure place in the larger group.

"Attended a teachers' meeting at \_\_\_\_\_." This was based on problems they wanted to discuss with us. I remember that meeting especially because the teachers, instead of being politely and passively acquiescent with their supervisor and the State Department representative, freely expressed their own ideas. It seemed to me that they talked out some conflicts in their thinking and arrived at tentative conclusions which were truly theirs and which they wanted to try. I thought on the way home that perhaps any seeming lack of cooperation and unwillingness to move ahead among teachers really lies in fear or misunderstanding. I congratulated myself that for once at least I had not tried to indoctrinate with my own cherished ideas but had been willing to listen to and profit by and think with this group.

"Met today with the committee working on the language arts bulletin." The Division is issuing a series of bulletins, mimeographing instead of printing them so that we don't perpetuate our less useful ideas in print and can make revisions. We sometimes think the *process* of developing these bulletins may be the most fruitful thing about them. First, developing them promotes working together. It calls for the cooperation of elementary and high school people, of classroom teachers with principals and supervisors, of teachers in service with the staff of the teachers colleges, of all these groups together. Second, as the bulletins are being developed and revised, they call for widespread thought and discussion of current issues and problems. Finally, they serve as a medium for drawing together, recording, and sharing outstanding work being done throughout the state. They are being used increasingly

by school systems as they plan curricula based on the needs and experiences of their own children.

### *The Best Conferences Are Meetings of Friends*

"Attended a joint conference of city supervisors and helping teachers who work in rural schools." The semi-annual conferences of these groups, sometimes held jointly, are always mentally invigorating. They are the meetings of friends with common interests and common devotion. They are working meetings where experiences and problems are shared and where outstanding educational leaders come in as consultants. From this sharing and consulting new ideas and improved practices and materials emerge.

"Went today, at the request of Supt. \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss the program for the 5-year-old children in his schools." Most of our field visits are on call to help with some specific problem, although often we go to see some especially fruitful project in order to report it to other teachers. Because our function is to help, not to inspect, the people in the field feel free to show us not just their outstanding successes but problems and difficulties as well. This gives us opportunity to serve and helps us to avoid the danger inherent in our position of losing touch with the realities of educating children.

"Spent today discussing child development and parent education with the home

demonstration agents." This was only one of many contacts we are having with lay groups who have concern for child welfare. We expect these contacts to increase and become more significant, for a major concern of our commissioner of education is that all people and groups serving children should be moving toward common purposes and concerted action.

### *Looking Back Helps Us See Ahead*

It seems to me as I look back over the pages of my diary and forward to the 1945 edition that we who work at the state level can profitably proceed along such lines as these:

*We should watch for and encourage interests and projects which have promise of improving the education of children.*

*We should stimulate, and participate in, a continuous process of thinking, experimenting, and evaluating. This process furthers growth. Imposing ideas and patterns hinders it.*

*We should be a clearing house for the most useful ideas and procedures that are to be found in and out of the state.*

*We should be a means of harmonizing purposes and coordinating effort within the profession and among lay groups and school groups.*

*We should promote morale. We can help create the atmosphere and provide the machinery through which teachers can get a feeling of belonging to a strong fellowship in which each has a secure and significant place.*

We need frequently to recall and re-define our purposes. It is dangerously easy to become absorbed with the trees of routine and so lose sight of the forest of genuine educational leadership. Perhaps the greatest safeguard against this deviation from our purpose is constant and intimate contact with those who justify our professional existence, the children and their teachers.

THE DRAWING UP of a platform of beliefs and a plan of action for 1945 will be a major consideration of the DSCD Board of Directors meeting in Chicago, February 22-25. Suggestions for items to be included should be mailed to DSCD, Executive Secretary, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington 6, D. C.

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