

Prefabrication for Houses—not for education

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IN THE SPRING of 1943 a one-room rural school, situated in a hitherto peaceful and attractive farm river-valley, closed its doors on the last day of the term with an enrollment of less than 15 children from the old, established homes of the community. In September of that same year, a barracks-like, prefabricated building opened its doors to admit 147 children from 18 different states, of 8 or 10 different nationalities, and with almost as many diverse backgrounds as there were families.

The equipment on that first day consisted of 60 books and 200 adult folding-chairs, with some pencils and paper thrown in for good measure. Each teacher was new to the situation and completely unacquainted with the others on the staff of nine. Parents and other community members were strangers in a strange land, many untried for their new work, yet pressed into feverish activity with a war job to be done.

Each month for almost two years other families continued moving into the prefabricated, "row" houses, until the former one-room rural school district attained a peak

enrollment of 650 children of elementary-school age and 390 in child-care programs. In addition, a recreation program, which had an average enrollment of 1,400 adults per week was carried on in the new school building.

This was the situation that developed at Badger, Wis., during the war years. Here a powder plant sprang into being and "industrialized" a tranquil farm community in a few flashing months of hectic activity. Here, in the spring, were open country, fertile farms, old homes, established community mores, neighborhoods, and friendships. Here, in the fall, were factory and store buildings, new, raw housing units, sidewalks and streets; here were heterogeneous groups of children and adults, trying to adjust to new jobs, new homes, new friends, and a new school. Present, too, was the reluctance of the "old" community members to accept the "new" population, the industrial plant and attitudes, the different school, and the changed modes of living. It is in such a situation as this, that the part played by the school in the life and growth of a community is more sharply clarified and more easily defined than would be possible in a stable, well-established locality. In the latter type of community the leadership and influence of school supervisors and staff members may be exercised in a more subtle and gradual manner, yet be equally effective for a particular situation. But by meeting the immediate necessity for leadership in a school and in a community which grew simultaneously and literally from the grass roots, a clearer picture can be obtained of what the role of the school can be.

The opportunities for leadership by the various supervisory officials concerned with the inception and growth of the Badger Village School were limitless. The principal, who was charged with the direct responsibility, had a key position. The success or failure of the school could be determined by the understanding of educational objectives, child development, social institutions, and people. The school could be helped or hindered to the

To find laboratory conditions in a real situation has been the rare good fortune of school people in Badger, Wis. Here was a war-swollen community needing immediate guidance in almost every aspect of its life. The situation provided an opportunity for the school to take the lead in community organization and, in so doing, to test the practicality of the kind of supervision which reaches out to meet the needs of the whole community as well as the school. How this broad concept worked when actually applied is described by Lois G. Nemeč, state supervisor in Wisconsin, and Clarence J. Krumm, principal of Badger Village school. Because of the unique opportunity afforded by Badger Village, local educators acting as a DSCD committee have been studying and recording the philosophy and progress of the community as it strove to solve its problems. This is an illustration of how the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development—a national organization—operates to help meet specific problems in local situations.

extent that the teaching staff, students, supervisors, and members of the community worked together in formulating the program.

Two Ways Lay Open

At least two different paths of development were open. One path, easy of access and with the gate wide open, would suit the "traditionalists": conform to all the old standards of grade lines and subject matter, all activity being planned in advance and executed by the school people alone, without knowing anything about the pupils themselves or the community-that-was-to-be. In short, the "life" of this school might have been as prefabricated as was the actual building itself.

The other path was more difficult to follow, but promised broader vistas, higher goals, and more sincere cooperation and group interaction along the way. It was this path that was chosen. All of the leaders in this undertaking felt that here was an opportunity to build—actually and literally from the ground up—a school and a community *together*; neither one being hampered by tradition, yet free to accept the "best" from it; neither one being nor desiring to be separate entities, yet respecting the special facilities each could offer for the development of its youth while the community was to exist.

The temporary quality of the undertaking was recognized. Indeed, it was partly this very impermanence which caused the supervisors to realize that teacher-pupil-parent relationships could not be left to develop gradually and leisurely. Therefore, as soon as the establishment of a school and community became a certainty, the first community members were drawn into the planning.

Pre-planning by the principal with all the school officials and community members who were to share, however slightly, the responsibility for the organization and management of it laid the groundwork for building a cooperatively planned and enthusiastically supported school. That the school became and maintained a vital part in the life and development of the community was due largely to the ability of the school staff to organize "nothing into something," and to draw upon the parents and other laymen for leadership and assistance in many of the activities of the school. A careful study of Badger Village indicates the impossibility of

singling out an activity in order to say, "This was *school*," or "This was *community*." Instead, it is a clear picture of a school-community or community-school development, planned and executed for *this* community and no other.

The School Is for the Child

A school without a functioning philosophy is in the same category as a religion without a heaven. It is not enough to say we are educating children. It is necessary for the supervisor to lead in establishing a philosophy and see that it is put into practice. Of course we all agree that the philosophy should center about the child because schools are in first intent devised for children. A school that is a good place for a child to learn and grow is, of course, a pleasant place for teachers and administrators to work.

The philosophy of Badger Schools has been and is: Badger Schools will begin with the pupil where he is, study his needs, and in meeting those needs provide for his further growth and development in line with his interest, possibilities, and capacities.

Whole Community Grows Together

The best philosophy and plans on earth are of little use if the staff is not educationally and emotionally equipped to carry them out. Inasmuch as the school was one of the important agencies, if not the important agency, in developing a community spirit in Badger, the selection of the elementary teaching staff meant the appointing of teachers who had the overall community viewpoint of education. With this in mind, rural and state graded teachers in the main were elected to the various positions.

During the first several days each teacher and child wore name cards. The children organized get-acquainted committees to greet new elementary children and visitors. Teachers meetings were held each day for a fifteen-minute period to clear up current problems. Each teacher visited the home of each of her pupils and made anecdotal records of the visits. Each new family upon entering children in the school was given a conducted tour of the building. The students, teachers, and parents were all made aware of their responsibility in the formation of the new community by printed articles, private conferences, and town meetings.

The school building was used for all activities of community interest—religious, health, educational, recreational, and housing services and for all of the various community activities such as rationing, town meetings, and the like. The powder plant used pictures and articles related to the Badger Community School as part of its recruiting campaign. Most visitors at the plant were told to include a visit to the Badger Community School in their view of the project. The superintendent of schools was appointed to various local, county, and state committees concerned with community planning, labor organization, and juvenile delinquency.

A Program Tailored to Fit

The elementary teachers selected the following as their objectives or goals to work toward:

That the Badger curriculum should include—

1. Provisions for personality development
2. Flexibility in grouping
3. Definite provisions for teaching skills and fundamentals
4. A cumulative record system
5. Use of pupil experience in selection of areas of learning

During the first week of school it became apparent that if the staff were to live up to the philosophy of the school as stated, it would be necessary to adopt the procedure of groups rather than grade levels. By using the group method, it was possible to have youngsters work at their own speed, and to live socially with children their own age.

In order to know the child and his needs, records were necessary and the development and use of such records became a major problem. Most of the children came without written records. Some pupils had attended as many as four or five different schools in the previous year. An individual folder was prepared for each pupil and information relating to his social, emotional, physical, and educational development was filed.

Upon enrolling, each child was given mental tests. Then subject-area tests were given to determine at which point we were to meet the child.

The records at the end of each nine weeks reported areas of growth, listing them as follows in their order of importance:

Health (weight, height, vision, hearing, dental)

Social Development

1. Individual growth
2. Relationship with others
3. Attitude

Subject Areas—Knowledge and Skill

1. Social studies
2. Science
3. Mathematics
4. Language arts
5. Special subjects

General Recommendation by Teacher

The child-care program included the setting up of a twenty-four-hour nursery school seven days a week, and an extended school program seven days a week. The same philosophy and procedure was followed as far as possible within these departments.

A lunch program that was expanded to include breakfasts and evening meals was carried out with special emphasis not only on nutrition but the lunch hour itself. Each elementary teacher, as well as child-care teachers, was asked to eat with her children. Table manners were stressed along with table conversation.

At the beginning of the second year the following departments were included as a direct responsibility of the superintendent of schools: foster-home care of 20 children, 14 months to 2 years old; 190 nursery-school children, 2 to 5 years; 175 children in extended-school care; 650 elementary and kindergarten boys and girls through eight grades; recreational responsibility for the township including high school and adult groups in Badger Village and barracks residents and farmers in the town of Sumpter—a community of approximately 6,000. The school district had kept its identity as a rural district, even though its schools had a peak enrollment of forty-three times as many children of elementary-school age as were formerly attending the one-room school.

As a part of the in-service training of teachers, copies of professional magazines and books dealing with recent educational trends, pupil behavior, child development, and curriculum planning were made available to teachers. Each teacher's program was so arranged that she had a thirty-minute period

some time during the school day to devote to professional reading. Visiting days were allowed and encouraged. Each teacher selected the situation which she wished to observe and study and made a report to the group after her visit. Representatives from the State Department of Public Instruction, county education groups, and the University of Wisconsin aided in the in-service training of teachers. An interstate conference on child care was held at Badger in which national, state and local authorities lead discussions on trends in child care. The in-service training program was carried out through all of the school programs—elementary, child care, and recreation.

The recreation program included groups for junior-high and senior-high pupils. Programs were planned by the children. This type of planning was also used in all the recreation and adult programs.

In our analysis up to the present, we believe that the program should include an opportunity for children and adults to learn by doing desirable things. There is one word which should assume importance for all who work with children in or out of groups. It is the word "let." *Let* children find their ways to grow and to develop. Group care is only a composite of individual care.

The Outlook Broadens

This brief story of the part a school played in the life and growth of a community will be more than merely interesting only if some of the practical implications are drawn out of it. Even though the opportunities at Badger were greater for home-school-community development than are those in "ready-made"

communities which are bound by too much tradition, the experiences of these teaching and supervisory staffs make it possible to derive some implications for other situations. A few of the more basic ones would include these:

- Supervisory functions can and should broaden and enrich their activities to include vital leadership in the total school-community pattern of living. No longer is the sole end and aim of supervision the improvement of instruction within the classroom alone; rather, active supervision should be directed toward the ever-broadening objectives of improving individual and group living.
- Planning with other people who comprise our society should become more dynamic and functional in all public school situations. This includes pre-planning with those directly responsible for the undertaking, followed by planning with and among interchangeable groups of teachers, pupils, parents, and other social agencies.
- Communities will not only tolerate but actively support "changes" in school programs and philosophies if the people understand that teachers and supervisors want to improve the learning experiences of their children. The more "school people" and laymen get together to encourage mutual understanding and friendly relations and to plan education for *their own* situations, the more supervisors can lead in putting acceptable theories into practice and more vital living into our schools and communities.

Films Bulletin Being Revised

COOPERATING FILM Evaluation Committees are now at work bringing up to date the bulletin *Films Interpreting Children and Youth*. This publication was prepared last year by Margaret Hampel, Edgar Dale, and Aileen Robinson for DSCD, the Association for Childhood Education, and the National Association of Supervisors of Student Teaching.

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