

## Return Engagement

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP ushers in the New Year with an issue devoted to supervision. By coincidence the January number a year ago also dealt with supervision, but that issue seemed rather to whet appetites than to be a final word on this many-sided topic. The poll taken last spring to determine what subjects readers were most interested in revealed that supervision was still high on the list.

The January 1945 issue, called "Supervision for Modern Schools," treated the topics of "What Is Supervision?" "Who Is a Supervisor?" and "How Should We Supervise?" including in the discussions concrete illustrations of supervision at its best in the schools of today. Issues since that time have been concerned with workshops, in-service growth, and curriculum experimentation—all parts of good supervision and integral, inseparable aspects of teacher growth.

Now, under the heading of "Changing Concepts of Supervision," we again present a treatment of supervisory practice. It is not our purpose to give a complete, all-around picture, but rather to fill in the gaps by presenting discussions in areas where there is speculation with resultant changing viewpoints. Our authors offer principles for action with definite proposals, as well as analyses of theory. Subjects treated include supervision in the secondary school, activities of the supervisory principal, the relationship of supervision to community living with illustrations of how it works in special and general fields, and the trials and joys of supervising student teachers. We present these discussions in the hope that they will help readers to see more clearly the current trends in supervision.

—G. H. and L. C. M.

¶ *Today's supervisor has an important and varied job to do*

## Looking at Supervision

MILDRED E. SWEARINGEN

SUPERVISION TODAY FACES a challenging period in its development. As the number of people involved in supervision enlarges and as the complexity of the whole educational scene increases, it becomes necessary for those concerned with supervision to clarify the thinking in the field in order that purposes may be clearly seen and the implications of these purposes for the immediate future be understood.

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*Supervision is playing a changing role. What's more, it is a realistic role—one in keeping with the democratic ideals and the educational philosophy which we believe are basic to sound learning. The full meaning of such an interpretation of supervision for actual practice in our schools today is carefully examined in this article by Mildred E. Swearingen, specialist in elementary education in the State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Fla.*

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It would doubtless be possible for supervision to continue to exist for some time as it is commonly found today, an aid to doing more efficiently the tasks the schools have already undertaken to perform. Certainly any institution as large and as many-sided as the school is in need of coordination and effort toward efficiency. But supervision of such a limited nature is usually slightly on the defensive, constantly justifying itself, never touching its real potentialities, and never approaching the major educational need of our time—the development of a clear, integrating philosophy as to the role of education in modern living, a vision capable of serving as a guiding, working hypothesis.

The schools of the nineteenth century had such an integrating principle, for their purpose was singular in nature, the transmitting of the cultural heritage to those who desired it. But today there is diversity in the intelli-

gence and tastes of the students in school, diversity and unresolved tensions in the society in which the children live. Adults and children alike are faced with many pressures and many choices. In such a situation, the mere transmission of the cultural heritage is an inadequate guide for the school; nor is the concept of social utility a sufficient expression of purpose for the schools. Meanwhile, the growing realization that the democratic ideal on which our society is based is not a semi-static achievement to be inherited by each generation but is rather an emergent, yet to be achieved ideal, has brought new insight as to the role of education in society. The extreme importance of social values and the part of the school in developing such values is becoming clearer. To whatever extent supervision concerns itself with deepening insight as to social values and their development, to that extent supervision will be vital and essential. If supervision were to remain technical rather than interpretive, it might be helpful, to be sure, but it would be in constant danger of subordinating its purposes to its mechanisms and would fail to reach its potential service of aiding in developing the integrating principles necessary to modern education.

The problem of supervision is rooted in the problem of securing good instruction. The characteristics of good supervision must coincide with the characteristics of a good instructional program. The purposes and scope of supervision will be determined by the purpose and scope of good instruction. To put it still another way, the function of supervision is to implement the instructional program.

There can be no real instructional program unless it is consistent with the democratic ideal of our society and with known facts about the nature of learning. Neither can there be supervision in any fundamental sense without a deep understanding of social values and a basic consideration of the learner.

### The Democratic Ideal in Action

The understanding of social values should go so deep and should so persistently shape thinking and action that supervisors would, through their manner of working with teachers, develop the values that teachers in

turn would develop with children. Let us take four commonly accepted characteristics of the democratic ideal—participation, initiative, scientific attitude, pooled judgment—and note their implications for supervision:

- If our basic assumption is true that we desire a democratic social order, then members of that society must know how to participate and be willing to participate. What is the supervisor doing to develop skill in participation on the part of teachers? What does this principle mean to the planning and conducting of professional faculty meetings?
- If our basic assumption is true that we desire a democratic social order, then initiative is to be prized. What is the supervisor doing to encourage the development of initiative among teachers? Is original work recognized and given support? Are individual ideas encouraged and given consideration?
- If we desire a democratic social order, the scientific attitude in thinking needs to be developed. Does the supervisor help the teacher employ suspended judgment, collect and weigh evidence, formulate better and better hypotheses for action?
- If we desire a democratic social order, pooled judgment or shared thinking is essential. Does the supervisor help make it possible for teachers and faculties to work together in groups, committees, panels, and other means of cooperative effort for the study of real problems and the formulation of policies? Does the supervisor help teachers experience the stimulation that can come from group thinking and aid them in making the discovery that because of the dynamic nature of both personality and environment, the thinking of a group is something different from and more than the sum of the thinking of the individuals composing the group?

In like manner we need to consider some of the elements in the learning process and study their implications for the work of the supervisor. The way the supervisor works should take into account factors in the learning process just as surely as should the way the teacher works.

- Do we really believe that a person learns what he lives, as he lives it, and to the

degree he accepts it to act upon? If so, does the supervisor act accordingly in helping teachers grow through an extended series of new experiences, in helping them evaluate materials and procedures in terms of the purposes those materials and procedures are intended to serve, and in seeing that teachers have opportunities to make choices?

—Do we really believe that success in learning is increased by seeing the product whole, that creative energy is stimulated when the learner sees clearly the relationship of the intermediate steps to the ultimate product? If so, does the supervisor, who is in a position to attain perspective, help teachers see as one continuous flow the development of the child from the first to the last of his school experience, help teachers overcome the tendency of their specialized work to compartmentalize their thinking and their efforts?

—Do we believe that learning is improved through variety of procedures and materials? If so, what does the supervisor do to help teachers obtain breadth of experience and discover means of appealing to different senses?

It is only when teachers are fully aware of the foundation on which a sound instructional program rests—that is, a sense of social values and consideration of the nature of the learner—that they can deliberately plan to include in the day-by-day living in the classroom the experiences necessary for the growth of children in a democratic society.

### **The Job Has Many Sides**

As supervisors work from day to day helping teachers and principals with their problems, it is essential that each problem be examined critically as to its surface appearance and as to its roots. Sometimes it is not until the surface problem has been pushed back and back that the real relationship to instruction is discernible.

Experience has shown that the work of supervisors usually deals with several large areas or categories. It is obvious that any classification of work according to areas is largely artificial since any one problem will cut across several categories. However, for the purpose of description the following headings are of service:

*Improvement of the Curriculum.* Curriculum work today usually involves helping develop understanding of the continuing goals of education for which all teachers are responsible, working toward balance and continuity in school programs, increasing the harmony between elementary- and secondary-school programs of study and anticipated pupil accomplishment, emphasizing the thorough teaching of the fundamentals including a continuation of tool subjects in the secondary school, promoting articulation between general and special education especially academic and vocational, emphasizing health practices as well as health information and service as prerequisite to a well-developed individual.

*Improvement of Teaching Personnel.* Here may be considered the problems related to developing professional growth and professional pride and pleasure of teachers, helping teachers see the relationship of their fields to the total program of instruction and understand the contribution of other fields, stimulating teachers toward participating in overall planning and toward planning the day's work so as to provide for some of the individual differences among students, helping teachers see the ongoing nature of their own growth and education through new experiences and more formal study, enlisting the interest of young people in teaching as a life work.

*Improvement of the Teaching-Learning Situation.* Both the physical and the emotional quality of the setting in which the child lives during his school day will determine in part the extent and quality of his learning. The physical condition of the buildings and grounds should not only be healthful and safe but should also invite desirable behavior and encourage good social attitudes. Often the supervisor can assist the principals and teachers in the persistent struggle toward adequate buildings and grounds. Sometimes the assistance is in the form of interest or enthusiasm, sometimes in the form of suggestions, and sometimes in the providing of prosaic but appreciated information on where materials can be obtained and what they cost.

The emotional quality of the classroom is composed of many factors including pupil-teacher relationships, provision for pupil participation and other essentials of democratic

## Is your supervisory program providing these experiences?



*Courtesy St. Louis (Mo.) Public Schools*

**Democratic living calls for making wise choices**



*Courtesy Seattle (Wash.) Public Schools*

**Personal development is a part of professional growth**



*Courtesy San Francisco (Calif.) Public Schools*

**Breadth of experience is part of today's curriculum**



*Courtesy Seattle (Wash.) Public Schools*

**Today's parents come to school**

living, the need for pupils to be aware of their purposes, the use of a variety of teaching procedures, the provision for stimulating and satisfying curiosity. Supervisors should also be able to help teachers see the importance of making adequate teaching plans not only as a means of good instruction but also

as a means of poise for themselves and freedom from exhausting nerve tension.

*Improvement of the Resources and Materials of Instruction.* Supervision has a distinct contribution to make in assisting with the distribution and use of adopted textbooks. Teachers, principals, and supervisors will

want to examine and evaluate materials together to determine the purposes the materials can best serve. Manuals and guides can also be studied carefully. Supervisors can locate other resources useful in instruction, help improve library materials and usage, assist in securing and promoting wise use of audio-visual aids, encourage the use of a wide variety of materials outside the textbook, including many local resources.

*Improvement of Instruction Through Performance of Auxiliary Functions.* Auxiliary functions that most frequently occupy the time of the supervisor include working with the school-lunch service, improving attendance through more vital and appealing instruction, dealing with personnel problems, working with distribution of textbooks, developing better public relations than most schools now enjoy, cooperating with other agencies such as Junior Red Cross and Scouts that are interested in the youth of the country. Auxiliary functions are definitely important. However, there is an inherent danger in the situation since it is easy to become engrossed in one or more of the activities and temporarily fail to distinguish among ends and means. Supervisors must keep ultimate purposes clearly in mind as they work through auxiliary functions.

### Supervision Is Where You Find It

Supervision is varied in nature, calling for the work of persons serving in different capacities. Not all supervision is carried on by people whose titles include such a word as *supervisor*, *director*, or *consultant*. Part of the supervisory task is performed by the teachers, part of it by principals; some by general supervisors, some by subject-area specialists; some of it is carried forward locally, some by county and state personnel; some responsibilities lie with the local and county school board, some with the state legislatures, and still others with the teachers colleges.

The teacher is the one who is in daily contact with the children, the one who is in the best position to observe certain aspects of child nature and child need, and to carry through certain phases of plans developed in the light of the nature of the learning process and the social values needed by the individual and by a democratic society. The principal, by virtue of his position, has a

slightly different perspective and a different contribution to make. He is, or should be, the instructional leader of the faculty and has a special responsibility for helping the faculty develop insight as to the total school program. By the skillful use of committee work and the scientific method approach to common problems, the principal can help teachers develop initiative, pooled judgment, and cooperative effort. Furthermore, the principal through his administrative capacity, should facilitate the work planned by the faculty, for it is to be remembered that the function of supervision may be described as implementing a good instructional program.

Like principals, general and special-area supervisors also have a particular contribution to make because of their perspective and because they can help facilitate the achievement of good instruction. Often, supervisors can, through enthusiasm and persistent, practical effort, help teachers and principals get things done. But, even more fundamental, supervision should be a unifying force amid the numerous and sometimes conflicting pressures of the modern school day. It should aid teachers in seeing more meaning in what they do.

Some types of supervisory help can be provided by the state and others by the county and local school people. Thus, a statewide guide in social studies can be developed which sets forth major purposes, problems, and materials of instruction. But it is at the local and county level that faculties or curriculum committees need to work out the optimum sequence of study and use of materials. Still other types of supervisory service can be provided by colleges in following up their graduates especially in the first year the teacher is on the job.

### Of Native Roots

Supervision is indigenous. It has its roots in the nature of the community, county, or state in which it exists. It is shaped by the factors that have brought it into being. It must be native to be successful.

The major purposes of supervision would be similar from place to place but the activities, intermediate steps, or means of attainment would be varied. Procedures would be influenced by such factors as the number of schools, the number of teachers, the distance between schools, the accessibility of faculties

to one another in terms not only of distance but also of usable highways, the tradition of the area in regard to faculty meetings and countywide meetings, the extent of teacher education, any previous experiences of the teachers with supervision, the instructional materials in use and those available, the health of the children, the mores of the people, the condition of the buildings and grounds, the ability of the community to support its schools. A good program of supervision is, therefore, shaped by the community in which it exists.

### A Changing Process

The time element in supervision is significant. What was a good supervisory program one year is not equally good the next year and the next. The environment does not stay the same, for some of the immediate goals of last month are achieved today, thereby altering the setting. The human beings involved are different, for they have had another month of experience and development of insight. The interactions, therefore, cannot be the same today as they were a month ago. A plan of supervision must always have an emergent quality about it, be in the process of becoming or achieving. When it becomes crystallized or static, ceasing to be emergent, it begins to lose effectiveness.

The evaluation of supervision is on-going

in nature. There could hardly be a test day on which minute questions were concisely answered. Evaluation must go on over a period of time and the ultimate worth of supervision will be judged by many people, including pupils, parents, and teachers. Here are four questions that may serve as guiding principles:

1. Is the instructional program planned increasingly in terms of the democratic values needed by society and of the basic nature of the learner?
2. Are teachers growing professionally?
3. Is the pupil product of the school improving in quality and breadth of attainment?
4. Are parents and lay people increasingly informed and concerned about public education?

Supervision is at the focal point at which the schools as a whole are constructively critical of their ways and are striving constantly for improvement. One of the most encouraging signs of our time is the eagerness to improve on current practice. Supervision should be an integrating force in the sense that it builds shared interests and common concerns and in that it helps develop an animating sense of direction and purpose. In fact, in the last analysis supervision should be a demonstration of the educative process at its best.

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## Meet Us in St. Louis

IT'S A DATE for March 21-23. DSCD members and all other interested persons are invited to attend the national convention of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, to be held in St. Louis at the Statler Hotel, beginning Thursday morning, March 21, and extending through Saturday afternoon, March 23.

Advance publicity about the convention has already gone out to all members of the Department. The program will include group discussions, general sessions, working committee meetings, and informal get-togethers. Outstanding men and women in education will appear as speakers and as participants in group discussions. Meetings will center around problems of providing better schools for today's children and youth.

Further details about the convention program will appear in the February EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP. We hope you are planning to attend. May we hear from you when your plans are completed? Registration for non-members will be \$1. There will be no charge for DSCD members.

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