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Work together in harmony

Can We Supervise Through Group Planning?

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Supervision with emphasis on "we" instead of on "I" is illustrated here by William Alexander, director, Division of Instruction, Battle Creek Public Schools, Mich. That Mr. Alexander is convinced of the value of this type of effort is evidenced by his emphasis on planning for effective supervision through cooperative efforts of a group.

SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTION is still pretty generally regarded in American school systems as something an individual—the supervisor—*does to* a large group of people—teachers—to improve their practices. This concept is based on the assumption that a group of individuals will change their beliefs and procedures as a result of what any one individual *does to* them. It fails to recognize that beliefs and procedures are changed fundamentally by what various individuals *do with* each other. A plan

currently being followed in the Battle Creek (Mich.) schools provides opportunities for many individuals to plan together for improvement of the instructional program. Although the Battle Creek program emphasizes the role of the individual school in proposing and solving instructional problems, we are here concerned with efforts toward citywide planning. Inadequate evidence is available now to answer the question proposed by the title, but some informal experiences and reactions are described.

Teachers Have Their Problems

In the spring of 1946 when the organization of a program of curriculum study was underway, a survey was made of teacher welfare problems which the faculty considered important. Some of these problems concerned such administrative matters as teacher selection, assignment, and tenure. These problems have been or are being attacked by appropriate groups within the system. Another group of problems of more concern for the present article, had to do with committee organization, in-service study, and the like.

Some teachers felt that too many demands were made on their time; that meetings were called on too short notice; that there was too little time available for personal purposes. A contrary but also apparently real problem was that of need for intensive study of instructional problems. Related to this was the problem of frustration because teachers felt inadequate to do some of the things they had heard were good things to do. Others felt that a new salary schedule requirement of six semester-hours of college work every four years created too much pressure.

Another group of problems concerned committee work. One complaint here was that committee reports had been "shelved," or at least that no apparent action had occurred. Perhaps the larger concern was that committee membership was restricted to a relatively few persons who had to give up all their free time to committee work. All these problems seemed to be definitely related to the matter of providing supervision through group planning. Many of them would ultimately disappear, it was hoped, as good oppor-

tunities were provided for faculty groups to work together and without pressure.

Meetings Need Scheduling

Setting up a schedule of meetings was the first step in problem solving. As a schedule for 1946-47 was agreed upon, an effort was made to determine the various needs for meetings and to allocate time accordingly. Actually, experience has shown the very real difficulty involved in anticipating the needs for meetings long in advance. However, the general principle of the schedule has been heartily approved. The difficulty has been that of providing for emergency meetings without interfering with the free time the schedule was designed to provide. The basic features of the schedule are:

Meetings of the general faculty, principals, supervisors, counselors, and working committees are held on school time. Meetings of study groups, organized on a voluntary basis, are held after school. The Monday after-school hour is reserved for building meetings; the Thursday one for study groups, teacher organizations, and general faculty meetings (early school dismissal). Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons are to be free of after-school meetings.

Committees Go to Work

In organizing fifteen committee groups, each to study some instructional problem or program of significance, no attempt was made to cover all areas of instruction. The committees appointed were those recommended for continuation by existing committees or those agreed upon as new ones needed. Each committee was made representative of

all levels, and each was kept small enough that meetings could be held on school time by employment of supply teachers. Friday afternoons were designated as the time for committee meetings, and each committee meets monthly until its job is completed.

The entire faculty was asked to indicate interests in serving on the committees, although the voluntary nature of committee assignment was stressed. About one-half of the faculty wanted to serve on some committee, and about one-third was finally appointed. No teacher was placed on more than one committee, so that about twice as many persons are on committees in 1946-47 as in 1945-46.

The Faculty Takes Responsibility

Perhaps the most significant feature of the new committee organization is the responsibility of the committees. Previously committees had functioned in direct responsibility to the superintendent and had made their reports to him without any necessary reference to the faculty who would generally have to take the ultimate action involved. It was felt that this very common practice was, too often, responsible for the blockage in getting from recommendation to action. A committee as well as a supervisor could do something *to* rather than *with* the faculty, and thereby fail to get results from studies made.

It is realized, too, that the faculty may not be a part of the group planning process by mere participation in voting on a series of recommendations made by a committee. Hence, efforts have been made to enlist the cooperation of the faculty in the original planning of work to be done by the committees. The

committee on instructional materials, for example, has submitted a report to the faculty three times, each time revised according to the previous referendum, in order to prepare a final statement of basic policies and procedures in the selection and use of instructional materials. The committee on records and reports began its work by submitting a questionnaire to the faculty to obtain criticisms and suggestions on every record and report used in the system. The committee on the winter workshop submitted a questionnaire to the faculty to determine whether there was interest in a winter workshop, and if so, what kind. An interesting result of this study is that a winter workshop, if held, will probably involve only a part of the faculty. The committee on counseling services began its program by planning a series of tours of social agencies requested by counselors, teachers, principals, and others. This matter of group planning has involved many headaches for all concerned. Although the committees have made real progress this fall, there have been complaints about the number of questionnaires and the number of building meetings needed to explain and answer inquiries made by committees. Further complaints can be expected when reports begin to come back from the committees for faculty review. There have also been questions as to why a building faculty or a study group should be concerned with a problem which a committee could solve or why a committee should do a job which a supervisor might do. But, it is repeated, the hypothesis being explored in Battle Creek is that fundamental changes are made in people by what *they do to-*

gether rather than by what is *done to them*.

Steps to Further Study

The in-service study program was given great impetus during the past summer through three kinds of workshop programs made possible by grants from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. One group of twenty-one Battle Creek faculty members were provided scholarship assistance to participate in the Clear Lake (Mich.) workshop on Intercultural Education. Another group of six persons received scholarships to the summer workshop of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation. A workshop sponsored by the local schools, with the cooperation of the University of Michigan, was held at St. Mary's Lake, near Battle Creek, and enrolled thirty-three persons from Battle Creek with many other part-time participants. Various requests for other types of in-service study projects during this year have emerged from these summer programs as well as from summer school experiences had by approximately one hundred other faculty members at various institutions.

A committee on in-service study organized during the summer has carried forward the planning for the current study projects and the preliminary planning for the 1947 summer workshop program. Its work, like that of other committees, has taken account of faculty interests. A first step was a questionnaire to the entire faculty during August asking suggestions for the in-service study program. Suggestions received from these questionnaires and from the St. Mary's workshop group provided a basis for a second question-

naire asking for a sign-up by those interested in one of the following study groups: individual differences, teacher-pupil planning, behavior problems, promotion policies, evaluation, health education, audio-visual aids, remedial reading, and core program. The results of this questionnaire led to the elimination of the group on evaluation and addition of one on intercultural education. These groups were subsequently organized; selected chairman and planning committees as desired; and arranged various types of programs.

A second series of meetings along subject lines was arranged in response to requests from the faculty, and followed a similar pattern of organization except that responsibility was assumed by the Elementary Club for meetings of elementary teachers on social studies and other subject areas proposed by the group. Still another project carried on by the committee was that of organizing, in connection with the University of Michigan, an extension course in mental hygiene enrolling fifty school and lay persons from Battle Creek and vicinity.

Real difficulties were encountered in organizing these programs. Some persons first questioned whether the groups were voluntary, although this point was clarified and the total group membership declined. No records of membership are maintained, and each group is given such assistance as requested in arranging programs, engaging consultants, and the like. Complaints have been made that there are too many groups, too much overlapping, too many meetings. Suggestions have subsequently been made regarding combining and eliminating groups and meetings.

Problems and Progress Go Hand in Hand

It has been the purpose of this article to describe a "plan for planning" an instructional program. Difficulties and successes encountered have been described, but the writer does not feel that there is adequate evidence to support or reject the hypothesis involved. From time to time there are reactions which indicate that some individuals are finding in this program a real opportunity for planning together. There have been disappointments for persons planning meetings which seemed to have

no good results. There have been discouraging reports of the "pressures" which the program was planned to remove. There is real encouragement, however, in the fact that there is steadily increasing participation in preparation of committee reports, in planning of meetings, and in requests for help from research and practice on group problems. If our *doing together* is as effective as this factor indicates, there should be correspondingly less reliance on "supervision" and more on "group planning" as the road to educational progress.

Successful Leadership Must Be Constructive

PHIL LANGE AND AMO DeBERNARDIS

The supervisory program at the Naval Training Station, Norfolk, Va., described by Phil Lange, professor, New York State Teachers College, Fredonia; and Amo DeBernardis, supervisor, department of audio-visual education, Portland (Ore.) Public Schools, both of whom served at this station during the war, is illustrative of many excellent methods by which constructive supervision can be carried on in the field of civilian education with equal success.

THE INGREDIENTS for real success in educational supervisory programs are the same whether they be found in public schools, industry, or the armed forces. Skills, understandings, materials, ideas, and personalities—all are dependent for their effectiveness upon the rapport developed among all members of the learning-teaching situation. The supervisory program for Precommissioning Training at Naval Training Station, Norfolk is described here because (1) it gained this rapport by being generally helpful, and (2) its balance of co-

ordinated supervision and respect for individuals has implications for any program of general education. Supervision in this situation was boiled down to constructive human relationships.

How It's Organized

Precommissioning training is the final period of training for Navy men before they go aboard newly constructed naval ships. At NTS, Norfolk, approximately 10,000 to 20,000 men were in precommissioning training at any one time for destroyer-type ships. Instruc-

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