

much exceed twenty-five in number for best results.

¶ A flexible school schedule should be set up to provide longer periods of time (two class periods or more) during a given school day for working on community projects.

¶ Service-to-community projects should be considered part of the school curriculum and conducted as part of the regular class work.

¶ For many activities, such as surveys and food preservation, small committees working together is the most efficient form of organization.

¶ The organization form should be shifted

during the execution of the project to facilitate the working out of the problem and to increase the growth of the participants.

¶ Tangible results should be sought as soon as possible in at least a few phases of the project.

¶ Educators should guard students against the exploitation sometimes involved in the use of their services in community projects.

¶ Evaluation techniques should be worked out in terms of individual and group objectives agreed upon by the participants and utilized in process as well as at the completion of the service-to-community activity.

---

## *Social Cement for Group Unity*

---

HAROLD R. BOTTRELL

A college which is an integral part of community life in contrast to one which merely exists within the confines of a community is the goal of many institutions today. Harold Bottrell, director, Burrall Community Service Projects, Stephens College, Columbia, Mo. writes here on group projects and community service based on his own research and experience.

THE COMMUNITY as a learning laboratory implies ways in which the community may be used to this end. Ways of providing community experience for youth develop in practice into organized patterns of activities and experiences. They are cooperative patterns and, at their best, are jointly supported by a school and the community. Group projects are considered here as one such pattern of student participation in service to the community in junior colleges.

Community service can be seen clearly only in terms of field experience and field data, for the activities and experiences have sharpest meaning and greatest reality where they happen and where they visibly connect with the life of the community. It is to be

understood, in this connection, that this article is based on the professional experience and research of the writer in the field of community service in junior colleges.

Community service is defined here as responsible, directed student participation in the services and activities of local community agencies, organizations, and groups, organized and supervised by the college through the medium of cooperative working arrangements between the college and the community. Group activity, as considered here, has social structure and operating design within which the functions of community service are related and its processes are carried on.

Community service efforts using the medium of group projects provide or-

ganizational structure, tested group processes, trained supervision, and cooperative arrangements with community agencies. As an organized pattern, community service through group projects is characterized by continuity in functions, time, and personnel.

Generally, the student group is organized around the project and the services provided to the community through it. The services are the primary and continuing fact and the students the operating resource. The roles and functions of participants are clear and manageable and the recognition of work and learning outcomes correspondingly direct and specific. Opportunities for student self-direction and leadership under guidance are widely and responsibly available in well operated group projects. At their best, group projects bring the college and the community functionally together and afford the participating student evaluated experience in the interaction occurring between the two groups.

Group projects require an operational blend of three factors—a student group, a cooperating community agency, and a pattern of organization and operation, including supervision. Fact-finding and fact-facing are involved at all times in group projects.

### Group Work Is Scarce

Group experience and group techniques are shortage areas in modern education. Although it is normal behavior for man to work in groups, school programs are often sadly lacking in this area of experience. Perhaps this accounts, in part at least, for the tendency to define leadership in terms of status and personal characteristics and

to think of participation as resulting from individual volunteering.

Leadership is a function of the social situation and a leader is one who can enable the group to achieve its collective purposes, one who can weld unity and direction out of the diverse interests and abilities of the individuals composing the group. Leadership, then, is developed through experiences in many situations in which sensitivity to persons, functions, and relationships is exercised and appraised.

Participation is a social, rather than an individual, activity. It involves being *within* the group and *within* the processes through which the group seeks to achieve its purposes and fulfill its functions.

Is lack of such opportunities one reason why college graduates are not community leaders—why they are passive more often than contributing members of groups? When the volunteering principle is supplemented by guided group experiences, cooperative processes, group techniques, and leadership abilities are rooted and nurtured in a productive social setting, interest and competence are interwoven and goals for development and progress emerge naturally and responsibly.

The aim is to put together the service needs of the community and the interests, abilities, and resources of students. This is a personnel job involving specific information about students and clearly defined services and activities in cooperating community agencies. *Selection of participants and careful choices by participants* are facilitated by a centralized campus source of information and by available interview and counseling processes. Interview-counsel-

ing may be provided by student leaders, staff supervisors, cooperating community personnel, or any combination of the three. Qualifications to be met by participants assure competence to perform the services involved and enable students to appraise their readiness to undertake these services. In any case, the information made available to students on the service opportunities, on project organization, and on the operation of the group project must be first-hand, accurate, and specific.

Services to the community do not always require high orders of skill and previous experience. When they do, *responsibility for providing training and preparation should be specifically located*, either in courses or in resource offerings, either pre-service or in-service. At present the preparation offered is entirely too general and unrelated to the actual situations involved.

Community service activities are provided by colleges in order to afford students experience in community participation and community life. Appropriately, *all opportunities available for the exercise of student leadership should be utilized*. Clear definition of functions and responsibilities maximizes leadership opportunities for students. With the situations involved made descriptively and understandably clear to students, they can undertake responsibility for many delegated functions, first under guidance, later on a largely self-directed basis. They can serve as project leaders, as chairmen of project subdivisions, as on-the-spot supervisors of students at work in the community, as liaison with community agencies and personnel. The variety of activities possible provides opportunities for dif-

ferentiation of responsibilities in terms of participant needs and abilities and in terms of their developing interests and increasing competence.

### Community Agencies Cooperate

The available evidence indicates that communities are often more interested in utilizing the services and resources of junior colleges and their students than the colleges are interested in obtaining and utilizing opportunities for students to engage in services to the community. It is important to consider ways in which this interest by the community may be drawn upon in group projects.

*Opportunities for community service* by students may initiate in the community as requests for services, as invitation to participate in community events and projects, or as possibilities for the college to investigate. They may also initiate in the college through inventories of services that can be provided and resources that may be used. They may arise, as a third way, through joint college-community efforts to survey and study the community situation in terms of needs that can be met and services that can be provided through group projects. In each instance, the intent should be to discover opportunities that afford services to the community and educative experiences for youth. When location of service opportunities is systematically pursued, it is valuable to establish criteria that may be applied to them to determine their significance and feasibility.

As has been pointed out, group projects need clarity of structure and definiteness of function. Continuity in time is highly desirable. To these ends, it is helpful for the college and the com-

munity agency to work out together *a cooperating arrangement* setting forth the services to be undertaken, the allocation of guidance and supervisory responsibilities, and the principles of operation to be followed. It is well for this agreement to be put in writing and kept available for reference. To do so gives increased assurance of the project being continued from year to year, despite probable turnover in college and agency personnel.

In general, colleges have not given adequate thought to *the role of agency personnel in community service projects*. Their interests, abilities, and experience should be recognized by the college, staff supervisors, and participating students. They should be utilized as consultants and co-supervisors. Their functions should properly be correlative to that of college staff. Agency personnel are in a position to exercise teaching-counseling functions with reference to members of the project group. Particularly sought should be their cooperation in practical evaluation and in ways to improve the project and aid growth and development of participating students.

#### Set a Realistic Pattern

Effective operation of group projects requires coordination within the college, within the project group, and in relationships with the community. The pattern of organization should be realistic with reference to each of these three areas.

The college and its students can not be expected to proceed any considerable distance beyond the administrative support given to community service and student participation in the com-

munity. The extent to which the college provides budget, trained supervision, and time for staff and student participation exerts determining influence upon the quantity and quality of community service undertakings. College support should also be expressed in designated channels of communication between the college and the community. The personnel responsible for administrative decisions on community service should be clearly identified. Nothing so irritates cooperating community agencies and personnel as does duplication of effort, indecision on location of responsibility, and vague allocation of functions.

It is not always necessary to form new student groups to obtain project groups. Group projects may be an integral part of courses. Student clubs and other campus organizations may utilize community service projects. In other instances, community service may have an identity of its own and recruit directly from the student body the personnel for the projects composing its program. Or the college itself may operate a community service bureau or center that serves as the means of selecting participants and organizing project groups. Whatever the organizational base of group projects may be, it is important that the service to the community be recognized as the primary concern and the students viewed as the enabling resource. Ideally, the services provided the community and the learning experiences of students are correlative values. Finally, in order for students to participate effectively and freely in group projects, the college must accept responsibility for providing time for them to work together as

groups both on and off the campus, and on bases equivalent to other educative opportunities afforded them.

Students should have responsible freedom to plan and organize within the project group. Here they have a genuine opportunity to experience cooperative processes and group techniques firsthand. In so doing, it is necessary for them to know and to make decisions in terms of the actual persons and the actual situations confronting them. They can obtain a sense for the fact that problems belong to the group rather than to individual members, a realization that considered consensus is preferable to voting, an awareness that thought and action have practical consequences. Within the project group, therefore, there should be understanding of the job to be done, of the persons to do the job, and of the processes most appropriate to the job to be done.

The executive functions of the project group can be undertaken by a student leader or project council. The project may be organized in terms of groups of its operations and functions. Specialized activities can be the responsibility of those most qualified. The organization within the project should take into consideration three principles: first, the actual situation defines the organization needed; second, the organizational pattern should be as simple as possible and yet provide adequate social structure and effective division of labor; and, third, the members of the project group are responsible to the group as a whole and report regularly to the project group as a whole.

It is important that student leaders

meet regularly to appraise their work, to formulate their plans, and to evaluate their experiences. Similar opportunities should be afforded the project group. Of special importance in the program of a project are some service situations in which the total group can work together, for they provide social cement for group unity and cohesiveness and foster realization of the service contribution of the group as a whole. Finally, it is desirable that students participate regularly in community service, week by week if possible and preferably throughout the school year.

Group projects require supervision that is primarily coordination and consultation. It is important that supervision be face-to-face and in terms of actual community service situations and experiences. Therefore, staff members responsible for supervision must be concerned with more than making arrangements for student participation in the community. They must engage in field visitation of students at work serving the community. To do this the college, in turn, has to assume responsibility for providing staff members with adequate time and resources to do an effective job of supervisory visitation, field consultation with cooperating community personnel, and counseling with participating students. The college attitude at this point exerts determining influence upon the role expected of and accepted by agency personnel for supervision of students engaging in community service. If the college does an adequate job of supervision, then cooperating agencies and their personnel tend to participate more fully and responsibly in supervision. Similarly, the social understanding and community

participation of staff members exert influence upon students. If the college staff shows social understanding and themselves participate in community activities, then students tend to accept community service as normal and expected experience for them also.

The operation of a community service project is essentially a process of social planning. It calls for a working blend of individual and group effort. It is dependent upon functions competently performed and responsibilities effectively fulfilled. It is firsthand experience in cooperative processes. It places a premium upon sensitivity to relationships. The pattern of operation should be indigenous, which requires that the college know itself, its students, and its community intensively and extensively enough to develop a pattern that fits the college-community situation.

Attention should be given to record keeping. Events have such momentum and experience such moving continuity that history must be recorded in process. Student leaders should submit regular written reports. These should be progress reports evaluating service activities and accomplishments and the growth in competence of project personnel. Supervisors should maintain records of field visitation and

observation, of observations and suggestions of agency personnel, and of the project group. Record keeping procedures should be as simple as possible. Group projects should be reviewed and analyzed in annual reports for two reasons. First, it is important to record in detail the planning and operation of the project over a period of time. Second, such reports constitute basic data for successive project groups.

#### Bases for Improvement

The college concerned about student participation in community service through group projects must direct its efforts into five basic areas of practical knowledge and understanding through continuous study and experimentation:

a growing body of *facts* of all kinds about the community; an enlarging resource of *opportunities* in the form of organized service projects and activities; an expanding arsenal of *techniques*, primarily group and cooperative techniques; a flexible, adaptive *pattern* for participation in and operation and supervision of community service; and, an accumulating reservoir of *criticized experience* obtained through participation and evaluation.

Efforts in these directions lead to improvement of practice in group projects and to increase of contributing competence in community living.

---

**WE THINK** *The Changing World* for this month is particularly pertinent to the world situation. Be sure to read it, won't you?

Copyright © 1947 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.