

ability to participate in the process of group thinking is necessary to the solution of social and individual problems. The participation is dependent upon

the recognition of the leadership function of every individual and the encouragement of it according to each person's interests, needs, and abilities.

Peers in Planning for Children

KATE V. WOFFORD

At present, while we are still facing the problem of the shortage of teachers, supervisors have the responsibility of giving to each individual teacher the particular help which he or she needs. In this article by Kate V. Wofford, head professor of elementary education at the University of Florida, Gainesville, a supervisor and a teacher summarize experiences of growth and give us a clear picture of supervisory activity.

THE KEY WORD which perhaps most adequately defines the relationship of the modern teacher and supervisor is cooperation. Gone is the traditional concept of the supervisor as the person who knows and the teacher as the learner—and good is the riddance! The modern teacher and supervisor are peers. Each learns from the other and both learn from the children. The supervisor usually has the advantage of wider experiences and longer years of schooling. From these deep springs, help is to be had for those who seek it. The teacher, on the other hand, clearly has the advantage of day by day contacts with children. These are deep resources, also, since from an intelligent knowledge of child development comes all that we best know of educational method, philosophy, and curriculum practice.

In modern education, curriculum is truly an *inclusive term*. It is also a *weasel word*. Meaning all things to

all men, the curriculum is gradually achieving a common definition as all of the experiences which children have. This is a large concept and it develops from the assumption that we learn through experiences, whether these be good or bad, and that we learn all the time. This means, of course, that many people are responsible for the curriculum—fathers and mothers, bankers and bakers, the postman, the manager of the movie house, librarians, policeman, and all others who compose the labyrinth of the modern community. But the most important of all people is the teacher. It is the responsibility of the teacher to see that the experiences had by children achieve meaning and direction and that they square with acceptable educational objectives. This is a large task and for it the average teacher needs help. Most frequently the teacher appeals to her supervisor who, in turn, looks to her teachers for help in the

over-all responsibility of developing a curriculum to meet the needs of modern children.

Many techniques have been developed and tested by teachers and supervisors in the cooperative process of curriculum construction. The story of how a supervisor and one of her teachers worked and learned together is illustrative of experiences which supervisors and teachers who are truly partners are discovering. In the accounts from both Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Tingley is a record of growth that speaks clearly for itself.

THE SUPERVISOR GIVES AN OVERVIEW Starting With Teacher Problems

Direct suggestions to a teacher from a supervisor sometimes bring rich and unexpected rewards. Who could have foreseen that a project of setting a hen in a first grade in the spring, suggested by a supervisor, would assist a teacher in achieving a more functional approach in the organization of curriculum experiences, and finally lead to a wider pupil participation in the life of the school? Says Mrs. Jordan, the supervisor:

"I learned from Mrs. Tingley's records and by working with her that she had been teaching intermittently for the past twelve years. She is a graduate of a typical traditional two-year training school. She married after teaching two years and has one child ten years of age. She returned to the classroom last year. She had the traditional point of view and knew very little of the trend toward modern school practices.

"Through the in-service program of interest groups (art, rhythms, and other creative experiences), reading, inner-

visitation and discussion groups, she became interested in newer practices and expressed a desire for special help and guidance in developing a program that would offer wider opportunities for children to participate in the program of the school. Developing freer ways of working with children, providing opportunities for them to engage in experiences suitable to their interests and needs, and child-teacher planning were matters of concern to her.

Summarizing the Areas of Growth

"We explored some of the problems that were involved in helping her to make the transition. We found that she was frustrated and felt a lack of security. She needed procedures and techniques for incorporating child-teacher planning and evaluating in her program. She needed to gain skill and confidence in teaching many things she was attempting—art, rhythms, music, dramatic play, manuscript writing, experience chart reading.

"She got very tired and discouraged. She felt uncomfortable and frustrated with the supervisor or any other administrator in her classroom. There were pressures from parents and other teachers in the school for more rapid subject matter growth. She was anxious because she felt that the children were not progressing rapidly enough in reading and writing. She needed to know how to study and understand children, how to keep records. She needed to know, also, how to plan and work with a parents' group.

"We planned together some specific things which we thought would help her to get started with her program—to observe key teachers frequently and

to participate in the interest group activities, rhythms, and art. A program of wide reading, supervisory participation in classroom activities to make her feel more comfortable and at ease, and a tentative daily schedule with large blocks of time that would free her day and the children's day from a series of lessons were scheduled also. We planned suitable learning experiences and a pattern for writing teaching units. We began by using very simple activities—planning a picnic, dramatizing a story, setting a hen, writing experience stories.

*“Some of our other plans were:

Keeping records of experiences had with children

Making cumulative records for each child

Planning for children over a long period of time

Attendance at a summer session at the University

“Mrs. Tingley cooperated in carrying out all these plans and her progress may be summarized in the following manner:

She has gained poise and self-confidence to the place where she has volunteered to do demonstration teaching

She recognizes many of her problems, helps to identify them and knows where to seek help in their solution

She can make definite and positive plans and can carry them, often independently, into action

She is interested in studying and understanding children and is developing skill in keeping records

She has lost her fear of supervision

She has developed a program of experiences rather than of subjects and has acquired skill in keeping records

She has learned how to secure the cooperation and direct participation of children in planning, executing plans, and evaluating the results.”

THE TEACHER TELLS HER STORY

Mrs. Tingley's account of her experience gives us more details.

Here Was My Problem

“My big job was to make the transition from a teacher-directed program to a more functional and democratic type that would meet the varied needs, abilities, and interests of children and provide for wider pupil participation in the program of the school. Specifically this meant I had:

to plan a curriculum rich in interesting and desirable experiences for children to provide opportunities for wider pupil participation

to plan activities based upon changing needs and purposes

to recognize the fact that children have ideas and to use them

to help children plan their own activities and accept responsibility for carrying them out

to develop in the child the power of self-evaluation and of self-discipline

to help the child grow as an individual and also as a member of a group

to guide children in finding and recognizing their own problems and attempts to solve them.

More Than Enthusiasm Was Necessary

“My first successful approach to a type of teaching based on teacher-pupil planning and an experience real to children was made in the spring of 1944. Up to this time I had used more or less of a teacher-directed program with the children engaging in many activities—usually suggested by me. Many of the activities were desirable, but I knew they were not developed cooperatively with the children.

“For some time my supervisor had planned with me wide reading on

modern educational programs and trends and a program of visitations to observe teachers who were planning with children and providing wider pupil participation in the school program. More and more I became dissatisfied with what I was doing.

"Last spring, when my supervisor suggested that we set a hen in our first grade room as one of the major activities to bring live things into the classroom, I consented, with much misgiving on my part. This will be just one more failure, was my thought. She gave me some suggestions about planning, about writing a teaching unit, and about keeping a diary of our activities, as well as some material to read which she thought might be helpful.

"We discussed an article 'It Can Happen' by H. H. Giles in *Educational Method* which brought enlightenment regarding planning to my confused mind. Among other things he said, 'Basically, the method is as simple as asking the following questions, effectively and continuously—What, Who, and When?

'What do we need to do? What do we need to know? Who should do what, when? What do we need to work with? How shall we divide the tasks? Who can help us most?

'And—as the job is underway and when it is done—What was well done? What was not so well done? What did we get out of it? What next?'

"With our activity in mind, I began to write answers to the questions Mr. Giles suggested. A teaching unit such as I had never seen before was evolving before my eyes. I could hardly wait to begin the activity. I recall how enthusiastic we all were, and how much more satisfying was this experience than any previous one.

"But it took more than enthusiasm to make a success of even such a simple experience as setting a hen and caring for her and, later, her chicks. I learned that much pre-planning was necessary on my part. Often there was much confusion in the work periods because we hadn't done enough specific planning beforehand. It was difficult to find



enough worthwhile activities for everyone. Sometimes I found myself telling children rather than guiding them to accept responsibility. At other times I interrupted a class to tell a child of his mistake instead of letting him profit from it. I had a tendency to let responsible children always accept responsibilities rather than letting weaker ones do some developing along this line. We set up standards and often failed to evaluate our work and ways of working in terms of these standards. We had difficulty in expressing ourselves adequately in the making of our plans and in the writing of our stories.

"In spite of mistakes, I feel the experiences were very worthwhile to my pupils and to me. We were learning to do things together, whether it was planning the day's work, solving some problem that arose in the work period, or watching Bidy and her chicks enjoy their breakfast.

Planning a Picnic—Our Next Venture

"In the meantime my supervisor had suggested that we use the same procedure in planning our 'end of the year' picnic. Because of the fun and learning we had with our hen, we looked forward to doing the work involved instead of having our mothers prepare our lunch.

"The activities were of a greater variety and more detailed than in the previous experience. For this reason it was not difficult to find enough worthwhile activities for everyone. The detailed planning which was necessary in order for the children to do independently such activities as building a campfire, making potato salad, and preparing orange-lemonade created prob-

lems which I did not handle as skillfully as I might have. Both the children and I needed planning techniques and also to get used to the freer way of doing things.

"There were other problems. Some children tired of a job before it was completed and had to be guided into seeing the importance of finishing one's job. I did not always check carefully to see that everyone understood the directions for his job before starting it. This caused interruptions, for few children would go as far as possible and then wait for conference periods to ask questions. Such techniques are not learned overnight. I was not doing enough pre-planning. It was difficult for me to realize ahead of time what problems would arise; nor was I particularly skillful in asking questions in the conference period that would bring out problems of the children.

"In spite of mistakes, our picnic experience was as successful as the previous one; perhaps more so. The children realized that a good picnic meant much planning and a great deal of work beforehand, as well as lots of fun. They seemed to get a tremendous amount of satisfaction from the carrying out of their own plans, and they learned many needed skills and techniques in a real situation.

Summer School Gave Further Leads

"By this time I felt like a bird released from its cage. I was beginning to see the light, but there were many things I still did not know. Again my supervisor came to the rescue with the suggestion that I go to the University summer session and take some workshop courses.

"At the workshop each of us was

asked to write a teaching unit on a 'doing basis,' preferably using an experience with children. The thought came to me, 'Why wouldn't it be a good idea to let my youngsters help make our room attractive and convenient, a place in which they would want to live and learn?' Heretofore, I had done most of this job myself.

"By a 'doing basis' I mean activities, such as talking, deciding, judging, discovering, listing, planning, recording, choosing, discussing, evaluating, reviewing, constructing, painting, sewing, decorating, listening, enjoying, drawing, writing, sharing, inquiring, questioning, explaining, and so forth. The activities in our units were to be listed in sequence so there would be continuity. Understandings, skills, and techniques were also to be included.

"I worked diligently during many hot summer hours, but when I was through I had something usable to take back to my classroom. There was a continuity and a completeness to the thing that I had never quite grasped before.

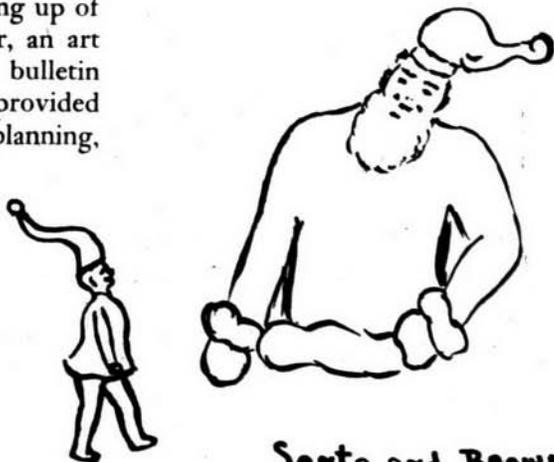
Group Planning Was on the Upgrade

"The unit proposed the setting up of work centers: a library corner, an art center, a science corner, a bulletin board, and a play corner. It provided for continuous teacher-pupil planning, for wide pupil participation and accepting of responsibilities. There was to be much working together in groups which would make it necessary to set up standards for working together and for evaluating our work. Many stories would have to be written. There would be a great

opportunity to use the children's own ideas and ingenuity. We carried out our plans and were so pleased with the results that we decided to invite our parents to visit us.

"An activity program in the first grade demands the writing of many group stories of various kinds. I had discovered last spring that the creating of such stories was not a simple matter, so I wrote a unit on writing experience stories. I became particularly interested in the original plays written by children.

"At Christmas time we made a record of our Christmas plans and started working on them. These included an original play. Our room soon began to take on a Christmas atmosphere. Decorations, planned and created by the children, were being made for our room and the tree; gifts were being made for parents; many Christmas stories, as well as others, were read, discussed, and dramatized; the children were full of 'talk' and enthusiasm about other Christmases, Santa, and surprises; free dramatic play about their own home ex-



Santa and Brownie

periences at Christmastime were being carried on. Things needed for the dramatic play were already being brought from home. We decided to use our dramatic play as a basis for a play for our Christmas program.

"We invited the rest of the school to come see our play. When it was over, Richard, who was one of Santa's brownies and who hardly ever says a word, said, 'Let's write another play soon.'

"The entire experience was a rich one in which everyone shared, cooperated, created, and enjoyed. After working with children in this way, I felt a great need for help and guidance in learning more about and understanding the children I am teaching and for a system of records and reports.

Child Study Was the Next Step

"Cumulative record cards were distributed to be kept for each child in the county last spring. The card was to give a summary of the child's physical, mental, and social development from the time he enters school until his public school education is completed. I tried to keep some records for each child but, because of the lack of time and the lack of experience in taking notes of this type, I found it very difficult. A notation now and then is not enough to form conclusions nor to decide means of helping the child solve his problems.

"My supervisor suggested that I try making a study of one child as an approach to understanding the children in my class. This I am doing at present—keeping daily anecdotal records and a diary of Phillip's behavior. As I work on these records I hope to be able to grow in techniques in helping to under-

stand the child and help him to understand himself.

Learning Had Many Facets

"I believe that one must become saturated with the feeling of an activity or experience program before attempting it. Perhaps the most accessible way an in-service teacher can do this is through wide reading, experimenting with guidance, and observing experienced teachers at work.

"I am sure that I should never have had the courage to attempt an activity program if I had not felt free to talk with my supervisor about anything and everything. Her faith and confidence in me have kept me going at all times and, especially, when my spirits were at lowest ebb.

"As I have already stated, the summer course at the University helped me immeasurably, particularly in organizing learning experiences. Observing other teachers, more experienced than I, also is helping me to make the transition. In the near future I hope to participate in a workshop.

"From time to time I have attempted to keep a log book or diary, but I am not very skillful in taking notes at the proper time. The keeping of such a record is desirable and profitable so I must become more adept in note-taking. Finally, the anecdotal records of Phillip will help me to understand his behavior, help him, and, in turn, help me to understand other children."

WE DRAW THE IMPLICATIONS

A careful reading of this account will reveal certain characteristics of supervisor-teacher practices in the improvement of the curriculum. In the first

place, *there is an evidence of mutual respect between supervisor and teacher.* Respect, on the one hand, suggests confidence and this, on the other, implies professional integrity without which the work of supervisors and teachers becomes as "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." Projects undertaken by the teacher were usually begun after a personal conference with the supervisor who suggested rather than directed the procedure. But there is no evidence anywhere of the old, traditional concept of supervision where the supervisor not only initiated projects but hovered over the teachers with advice until they were consummated. The supervisor rather *gives evidence here of faith in the ability of a teacher to carry through.* The teacher is treated

with the consideration and appreciation which is the due of a trained professional worker serious about the improvement of her work. And finally, *the focal point of curriculum improvement is placed in children.* Practice rarely goes awry in curriculum improvement when teachers are sincerely interested in the welfare of individual children. This means, of course, that both teachers and supervisors will make an effort to know the children in relation to their interests and needs. And it means they will attempt to understand child behavior which teachers and supervisors know never happens but is always caused. When such an intelligent approach is made to curriculum construction, success will surely crown the efforts of both supervisor and teacher.

We Look at Ourselves

What happens when a supervisor—or a principal—or a curriculum director sits down with himself and carefully examines the way in which he has worked with teachers for a period of time. How does he feel about his successes and failures? How does he evaluate his achievement in terms of working with teachers? We asked some of these people to engage in such a self-evaluation—with particular emphasis on relationships with beginning teachers. Their self-analyses point out some aspects of the supervisory relationship which are basic in any program of cooperative planning.

Me Talking To Me

Miss X, a curriculum director, takes a look at herself and asks herself what she did to help new teachers move ahead: the one with imagination and vision, the one who needed new materials, and those with varieties of personal problems. She invites us to sit in on this self-examination session.

"Hmmm. Do those ASCD people realize what this assignment means?"

"It means you are forced to evaluate what you do."

"Why this job is making me face unpleasant facts."

"How have I failed beginning teachers?"

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