

constitution or the group charter allows for questions to be raised about the health and needed continuation of the group.

Groups can lose their original purpose for existing, find no other reason for continuing, and yet they remain alive. We have suggested some hypo-

thetical reasons for the survival of these groups and have described some cues that may be useful in determining when a group is ready for dissolution. New groups that wish to be cautious about outliving their function would do well to provide the means and the criteria for determining when their day is done.

Learning the Skills of Cooperative Planning

ETHELEEN DANIEL

From the record of a study of how children learn the skills of cooperative planning, Etheleen Daniel, supervisor of elementary schools, Montgomery County, Maryland, illustrates the skills which children of various maturity levels use as they operate in a group situation. Excerpts from planning sessions also reveal the extent to which the teacher operates in guiding group planning. The study which Miss Daniel reports is being carried out in cooperation with the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation.

"I think we should say what we want them to do."

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"I don't like that."

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"Where my father works when something is wrong they have a committee to find out what can be done."

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"We are wasting time."

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"Could we vote?"

"What should one do," the teacher asks, "when children are expressing such ideas about problems and ways of working together?" Does a leader tell a group what to do? Should attention be given to members who say, "I don't like that?" What about the techni-

ques from the adult world that children bring to their discussion groups? What about the pupil leader's ability to sense direction and timing in helping members move forward to decision and to action? Does the question "could we vote?" always take into account the value of differences in opinions?

A Look at Six-Year-Olds

Teacher, first grade: "Bill, will you be the leader?"

Bill: "Who wants to tell something?"

The chairman calls each child's name.

Child: "I got a big bicycle."

Child: "I've lost a glove."

Child: "Our turtle got out of its pan last night."

Such a conversation may suggest that six-year-olds have much to learn in cooperative planning under the guidance of teacher leadership. Teachers of six-year-old children find that pupil leaders in a "show and tell" period, for example, can do little more than call the names of children.

Perhaps one of the best ways of learning pupil leadership is for young children to be participants in group situations where the role of the teacher affords opportunities calling for many suggestions before evaluating their appropriateness. During the "suggestion gathering" time the teacher may need to remind young children that, "this is the question we are now working on," or ask, "do you understand our question?" If ideas and uniqueness of children's personalities are to be respected, young children may need to move slowly, participating step by step with the teacher, toward making choices and decisions.

One teacher, participating in our study dealing with this problem, pointed out that pupil leadership was more effective in small action groups. Being the leader of a game, acting as chairman of a committee for a party, doing construction work, or leading the discussion when it centers around concrete materials or objects provides opportunities for children to act as group leaders.

Moving on to the Seven-Year-Olds

One conclusion reached by some members of the faculty in its study of cooperative planning is that six-year-olds must learn something about pupil leadership because seven-year-olds seem to be able to do more than merely call names of group members. Although the teacher in the next situation is working on only one facet of cooperative planning—pupil leadership—we see the seven-year-olds moving ahead in leading a discussion and also note the role of the teacher.



Courtesy Teachers College High School, Univ. of Nebraska

The teacher stands ready to give guidance

Teacher: "Do you remember what we were going to decide today?" (*Making sure that children know the purpose of the planning time.*)

Barbara: "What to bring for Christmas."

Child: "Take down pictures and put up just Christmas pictures."

Teacher: "That is what Carol would like to do. What did others suggest?" (*Distinguishing between individual and group decision as to what is to be planned.*)

Ann: "To get our room ready for Christmas."

Teacher: "Have you been thinking about this? Are you ready to plan what Christmas decorations we are to have? Carol, would you like to plan this with the group?" (*Suggesting opportunity for pupil leadership.*)

Carol: "What can you bring?"

Child: "Something for the windows."

Child: "A Christmas tree."

Child: "Tin tops to paint."

Carol, leader: "But that doesn't answer my question. We are saying how we can decorate our room." (*Pupil leader reminds participants of purpose.*)

Mary: "Cones for the tree."

Joe: "A little fence to put under the tree."

Carol, leader: "That's nice." (*Tends to evaluate a suggestion.*)

Teacher: "Let's stick to the main question." (*Helps pupil seek more suggestions before evaluating them.*)

Carol, leader: "Yes, how decorate

the room." (*Goes back to group purpose.*)

Teacher: "Carol, how could we use our art period?" (*Helps pupil leader to another source of suggestions.*)

Carol continues to call on members of the group who suggest making paintings and clay objects. Then the teacher leads off helping children to decide and to limit the next step.

The Teacher Has a Role

From an analysis of running records dealing with cooperative planning, teachers agreed that skillful pupil leadership was dependent upon the delicate role played by the teacher. Pupil leaders operated more adequately during discussions if the teacher stood by to help during the suggestion gathering time, to evaluate all suggestions, to move toward and to make decisions up to the point of action.

Teachers helped pupil leaders by assisting in getting started, making sure members understood the purpose of the planning period by using specific questions, recalling a situation, or by giving an explanation.

Teacher, first grade: "We agreed to notice the cafeteria to see what we could do to help."

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Teacher, fifth grade: "What are we planning to do?"

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Teacher, second grade: "Name one problem we have in this room."

Child: "I don't know what you mean."

(Teacher explains by recalling another problem that the group solved through planning.)

Child: "What to do about our tadpole that is changing into a frog."

By keeping track of ideas by writing suggestions for the group or making provisions for group members to do so; recognizing that some listing may be essential for evaluating all ideas later; and by referring to list in order to summarize from time to time—thus, making sure that the account reflects group thinking.

Teacher, first grade: "Who would like to lead in making plans today?"

Richard responds.

Teacher: "I'll write it down for you—Not so fast—All right, Richard."

Richard: "Barbara—We will play games."

Richard: "James—We will have poems."

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Leader, while working on suggestions for possible news article: "Which one of these listed should come first?"

1. Ask for help.
2. Tell what we are working on.
3. Tell what kind of help you want.

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Jane, third grade: "How can we keep our playground clean? Who has the first suggestion?"

Child: "We shouldn't throw orange peelings—"

(Jane, the leader, turns to write the suggestion before group.)

Child, interrupting: "You're going uphill, Jane."

Teacher: "Do you want me to write for you, Jane?"

Jane: "Yes, thank you." Hurries on with her task as leader.

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Teacher, fifth grade: "Now we are ready for suggestions—Norma, what are you supposed to do?"

Norma: "Take notes."

The three children involved as secretaries were Mary, Norma, and Willis. The children had not had much experience. They met together to pool their records...

Mary: "How many suggestions do you have?"

Norma: "Seven."

Willis: "I have a couple."

Mary: "I just jotted down some things."

(It was evident that the committee would go back to the group with some definite recommendations.)

Norma: "Here's what I have done." She reads. (Norma summarizes for the group.)

By encouraging many to give their ideas during the suggestion gathering time, thus setting the tone for "we-mindedness," common goals, direction, and tasks.

Barbara, leader: "Mary, is this the kind of thing (container) you could bring (for fish)?"

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Teacher: "Do you have something more to suggest?" (*Sets tone for "we-mindedness."*)

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Child: "Send our list around and ask others to add to it."

By asking in what way a participant's idea is different from another suggestion already given rather than saying, "Someone has already said that."

Norma: "We could make a booklet."

Jack: "We could write something for the PTA paper."

Child: "Write a story."

Leader: "That's like the booklet. We usually write paragraphs (for booklet)."

By recognizing a participant's question and by directing it to the person who gave the suggestion; by sensing misunderstandings and using conflicting ideas creatively; by reminding a participant of the point of discussion, asking if he is willing to wait until ideas are out and then to evaluate all suggestions; and by helping pupil leader move off a "dead level" or to move along to a new point.

Member: "Was that the question?"
Steven tries to suggest something, using his hands to make meaning clear.

Member: "It isn't clear. I don't understand."

Steven tries again.

Teacher, to leader: "Could Steven draw it?"

Steven draws his idea.

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Child: "I think we could just say what we want them to do." (Children in cafeteria)

Child: "I don't like that." (Permissive atmosphere.)

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Teacher: "Several suggestions have been made. You might ask the children to think them all over and then to decide." (Helping leader to move toward decision.)

Teachers helped pupil leaders by assisting the pupil leader to move into suggestion for action stage by evaluating the relative merits of all suggestions, combining some ideas, rejecting others, or asking a group member for a further explanation of his suggestion; by recognizing steps in the group process, and the need to help pupil leader gather suggestions without judging them lest the discussion bog down, participants wander, get

away from the subject, and the discussion deteriorate into a laissez faire situation before an evaluation process begins.

Child: "We need a place to put the bottles we brought for our paints."

Child: "We could use orange crates until the easels come."

Leader, before a wide range of suggestions is before the group: "Is that good?" (Leader asks group to evaluate. Might leader have waited until group of suggestions has been given so no one member's suggestion is being attacked?)

Child: "That is not a good place because we need it for our ferns we planted." . . .

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Child: "We could use the windows."

Leader: "The bottles might get broken when we open the windows." . . . (Teacher might help children to withhold such comments until the evaluation time. Suggestions come more freely in a permissive atmosphere.)

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Norma: "I want to know how many are on the committee?"

Willis: "About four."

Norma: "That's a nice number."

Teachers helped pupil leaders by assisting the pupil leader to go from gathering suggestions and raising questions toward what to do about the group problem; by recognizing decision difficulties of the democratic process when pupil leadership is lacking and helping to clinch decision; by asking questions to find the cause of disagreement; by seeking harmony between group members and an opposer; and by seeking common agreement or acceptance of a proposal.

Norma: "Which should we decide, class book or individual book?"

(Norma, in committee, is pressing for a decision.)

Willis: "That is for the group to decide."

Norma: "That is what we (committee) are for."

Mary: "I think we could do both."

Willis: "I think the group should help decide." (Willis takes a stand for group decision.)

Mary: "Let us get the booklet settled. Shall we have large or small or both?" (Mary sees need to make one decision at a time.)

Norma: "Both. I think Frank's idea would be hard." (Norma turns discussion before decision is made.)

Mary: "Let's get settled on something instead of scrapping around. Are we going to have a mural?"

Norma: "That is settled." (But not to everyone's satisfaction.)

Willis: "Why don't we let the group decide? Why not let those who want to?" (Willis is asking for individual choice within group.)

Teachers Learn, Too

As the members of this faculty group studied pupil leadership they saw values

for themselves as well as for the children. Teachers consciously held back on various occasions to see how children would handle a situation and to determine what further help they needed on skills of cooperative planning. Thus, teachers frequently came back into the situation in a less directive way. The hard spots for children in cooperative planning were often the hard spots for the teachers themselves.

Observing and studying the children have opened up still further opportunities for the adult group to continue working with the group process. If adults are to help children become more skillful in cooperatively planning solutions to the problems they face as participants in group life, all need a better understanding of ways of working together. Thus, we have a major task of understanding the behavior of members working in a friendly or hostile atmosphere. As we study the group process we begin to see the need of understanding ourselves as members of groups and each other as people.

A New ASCD Publication

The Department Head and Instructional Improvement is a new pamphlet prepared by a committee of the Northwest Curriculum Society under the leadership of Merle Ohlsen of the State College of Washington at Pullman. The publication deals particularly with the function of the department head in the whole field of instructional improvement in the high school, and with valuable suggestions for the further development of that position. It can be ordered from the ASCD office—75 cents.

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