

Administration Focused on Instruction

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Two persons who have, themselves, served as school administrators, suggest to superintendents guides to and a plan for organization of a school system in which administration focuses its primary consideration on the growth and welfare of children. Zeno B. Katterle is professor of education at Washington State College in Pullman, and Don S. Patterson is in the Elementary Division of the U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C.

IDEALLY, any educational administrative act is designed to effect better education for boys and girls. The developmental process which is inherent in democratic participation is essential in any program for children. This implies leadership which is continuously helping to evolve better ways of securing desirable results.

Actually, too many systems are near the limits of maximum influence and effectiveness under their present patterns of administrative practices and policies. Further progress will be difficult, if not impossible, unless the prevailing limited staff and community participation and interaction is significantly modified. It can be achieved only when the school administration creates an atmosphere in which all concerned can think and act under the stimulus of democratic leadership. Many means have been utilized. Some hold much more promise than others of realizing truly significant results.

In too many instances further advancements are being impeded because the avenues necessary for initiative, united action, and pooling of intelligence are closed to the rank and file of

the teaching staff, as well as interested parents. The individual control exercised by many administrators is acting as a barrier instead of a stimulus to group interaction. The misunderstood responsibilities of the few are preventing the widespread sharing of ideas and abilities which are necessary in the development of improved school services.

FROM ONE-MAN RULE TO SOCIAL ENGINEERING

Designing more desirable school programs is more than a one-man job; and more than a few individuals can ever hope to realize successfully. It is a total staff-community-resource personnel undertaking. Such an important undertaking calls for united concern, shared responsibilities, continuous study, planned experimentation, constant and careful evaluation. Hope for future progress along desirable lines will be dependent upon changes in attitudes, policies, and procedures which, in turn, will bring into operation practices which will make possible a higher quality of group interaction.

The arrangement of conditions which will bring this about is dependent upon

the school administrator working with his entire staff. Concern on his part alone will not bring the desired results. Desire for improvement of the school system and its operation must be present in the administrator and, through his leadership, developed in the entire staff. For all this is essentially a learning experience. As individual members grow, a developing program results.

Selecting the Important Task

The prevailing concept of responsibilities accepted by many administrators is questionable. Too much time is being consumed with minor details which leaves little opportunity for dealing with the major leadership function of instructional improvement. The individual, who feels that he alone can do these so-called "administrative" chores, well needs to analyze his daily routine to see if he is performing jobs which can be done with profit by others. Many of the things an administrator does could be handled just as well, if not better, by others and would provide excellent learning opportunities for them. Good group planning, which will free the administrator to give more attention to the over-all organizational and instructional problems of teachers in planning the development of policies, is involved.

Bringing Group Process into Operation

The role of the administrator has changed. He must now be a person who has a good grasp of the total educational process. He must see the total situation of which he is a part. The skill of a social engineer is necessary. It demands a person who can bring the group processes into full operation. His success

will be dependent upon the establishment and maintenance of wholesome human relations. Responsibilities will need to be delegated. Authority will need to be transferred on numerous occasions to the group. Careful planning and utilizing of resources, both within the staff and the community, are essential. Understanding human motives, drives, desires, and needs is imperative. Measuring up to the role of a desirable administrator will necessitate using all the abilities, techniques, and understanding essential to good teaching.

Insuring the Action Follow-Up

After the values of the group processes are accepted, or if the superintendent wishes to take some next advances, he will be faced with two interrelated steps. One involves the establishment of an action program which is essential if any results are to be attained; the other has to do with the evolving of a staff organization which will channel cooperative interaction so that the best intelligence among all concerned will give an action program desirable direction.

An action program implies an approach which is applicable to any level of socialization. Acceptable techniques, once established, strengthen teacher-pupil-parent-patron planning and influence better learning.

As a specific example, take such a problem as, How can we make our community a better place to live? The following steps will illustrate the process involved in a program of action:

Study the total situation. The children and their needs; health conditions, housing, and safety; home conditions; economic conditions; present services to youth and adults.

Write down and analyze needs or problems. List specific problems and needs in relationship to the total situation studied.

List steps or action to be taken to bring the desired results. Define problems and delegate individuals to study and make recommendations; list materials needed; steps to be taken; etc.

Record changes as a result of group study and action.

Evaluate results and take inventory of next steps to be taken.

The following interrelated specifics are involved in the process of such an action program:

- Group desire and willingness to work for improvements
- Sensitivity and an awareness of surrounding conditions
- An understanding of desirable objectives to be realized
- Ability to study and analyze situations, conditions for problems, issues, conflicts, or tensions which exist in the setting that need changing or correction
- Ability to gather ideas, data, and suggestions which offer solutions or better practices
- Ability to weigh values in terms of worthwhile goals in the light of the local setting
- Ability to arrive at conclusions which hold promise of gaining the results desired.

To this point action has been only of a deliberative nature. To get constructive achievements we must move further.

Proposals for action need to be made which are in harmony with the findings of group study; the formulation of a plan is essential

The ability to share the plan with everyone concerned is important—plans should always represent the thinking of all who are involved, if possible

In order to bring results, the plan must be carried through

Changes as a result of carrying out the plan should be noted and recorded

Provision needs to be made for evaluating results. From this stems renewed study and action in terms of additional problems to be solved.

A successful action program is dependent upon the wise use of effective techniques planned to serve specific purposes. Means of achieving results, which have been found helpful in bringing desirable changes in many programs, include:

- Group planning
- Day-to-day and month-to-month planning
- Purposeful staff meetings
- Workshops
- Demonstrations followed with conferences
- Case conferences
- Inter-visitation and conferences
- Exchange teachers
- Master teachers in specific spots where most needed by the group
- Putting staff members on twelve-month contracts
- Teacher excursions and field trips
- Committee responsibilities
- Experimentation and research
- Bulletins and handbooks
- Committee reports
- Central bureau of instructional materials
- Summer study groups attending school together to work on delegated problems
- Consultative services
- Travel
- Individual conferences
- Pre-term work conferences with follow-up
- Professional meetings and conferences
- Organized work and study conferences.

All these phases of the process may be successively realized by a careful study of personnel and by evoking from each his best contributions, getting all ideas before the whole cooperating group for consideration and possible action. In the course of this the leader-administrator, by one technique or another, seeks to integrate the wisdom

and energies of the group. To some degree he will have to guide and direct, but never to the extent of reducing or checking the creative energy of his co-workers.

A PLAN OF ORGANIZATION

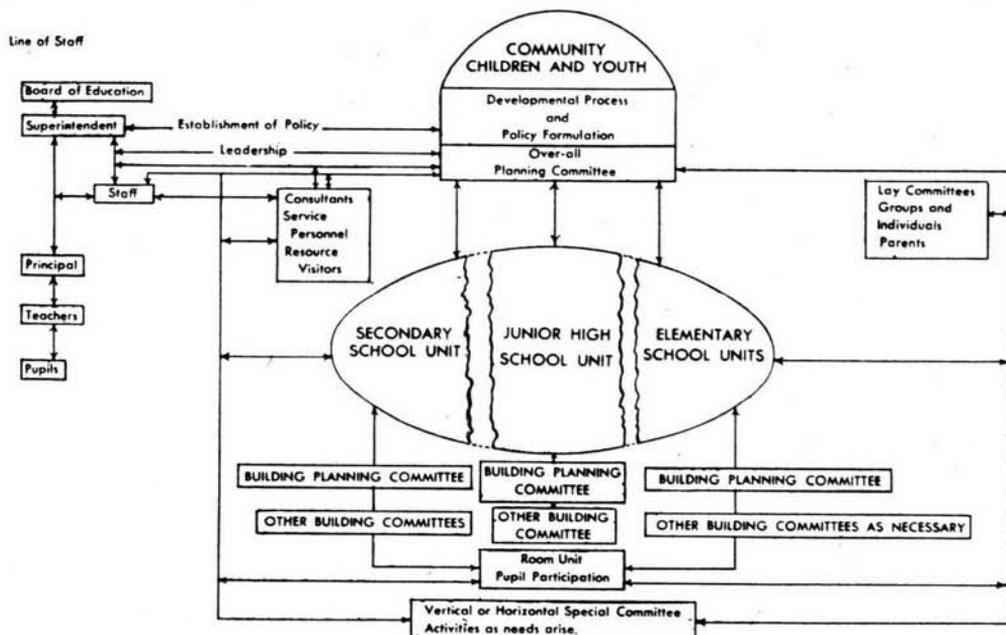
The accompanying chart will illustrate a suggestive organization for a progressing school program. It is applicable to both smaller and larger systems for purposes of general policy-making and cooperative action, but not for taking care of minor administrative details. It is not given as "the" organization, but as a suggested framework that may stimulate others to evaluate their own type of organization for purposes of arriving at a more effective means of improving their own local program for children and youth.

Focusing on the Child

The concern for children and youth is the focus of any organizational plan. The individual schools, where the children are known, will be the key centers in any planning of the instructional program. Experiences which will influence their lives will go on inside the walls of the individual classrooms as well as within the individual school units. These are the natural groupings which can make possible the most desirable experiences with children. Here teachers, parents, and pupils can work on mutual ground.

It is suggested that each school unit should have its own planning committee, selected by the staff itself. The principal serves on the committee as an ex officio member. Provisions should be made so that each school unit can pro-

ORGANIZATION FOR STAFF, LAY, PUPIL, AND CONSULTANT PARTICIPATION



vide other committees as need arises. It is desirable that parents, pupils, and consultative personnel participate at this point, as well as in other group relationships. Room units will also play a part in the sharing of ideas and practices or in meeting problems involved in the development of the individual school program.

Planning for Coordination

Most of the members of the over-all planning and coordinating committee will be representatives from the individual schools. In small systems the chairmen of the planning committees in the individual schools could serve. In larger systems one other additional person could be selected to participate as a regular member of the over-all group. Three or four principals might serve in rotating succession while the others act as *ex officio* members. The central office staff will serve in an advisory and leadership capacity, as will the superintendent.

The body should elect its own chairman as well as a recording secretary. Parents and lay groups should be represented as well as students. Secretarial help could be furnished from the central office, thus relieving the chairman and secretary of a great deal of detail in assembling materials, getting out minutes, and arranging the agenda for succeeding meetings.

The function of the over-all committee is to receive and discuss all ideas and recommendations from individuals, staff groups, or committees. It can delegate responsibilities to committees or set up additional groups for study, experimentation, or special planning. It

will receive all suggestions and give approval to all plans which emanate from any source. It is also permissible for this body to initiate plans to be submitted to the several other committees for their discussion and approval.

After the over-all committee passes on a plan, recommendations are sent to the individual school staffs for their consideration. In staff meetings the individual schools will pass on recommendations and communicate thinking in the matter back to the group.

After all school staffs communicate, recommendations on the matter are passed on to the superintendent in writing for presentation to the school board. Before the board is called upon to act, principals, teachers, many parents, and pupils will have participated in the decision. This means that most of those concerned will know and understand what is involved.

Action under such an organization can be initiated from any source—pupils, lay people, committees, principals, consultants, superintendent, central staff members, and teachers. Channels of participation and communication must be open to all. Ideas can flow through many channels. Final acceptance should rest in the hands of the entire staff.

Under such an organization the central administrative and supervisory staff serves as resource persons to the planning committees on all levels, to the individual staff groups, classroom groups, and to all the committees. Provisions should also be made for the use of outside consultants. Consideration should be given to key leaders from

time to time so that they will not have special work piled on top of an already crowded schedule. Some type of relief from regular duties is possible through a variety of means.

Understanding the Individual Role

The best results will be achieved only when every person involved understands the role he is to play. It is important that the framework of operation be clearly understood by all.

The superintendent opens the avenues

The superintendent has a vital role to play. It is his job to see that there is a good integration of administrative practices and instruction. It will be necessary for him to open the avenues which will make possible complete coordination and cooperation. He should be a firm believer in the democratic processes, and have confidence that all of the personnel can make a contribution if given the opportunity. He should be interested in seeing others achieve success. Recognition should be given where it is most deserved.

As the chief administrative officer he should present the results of group effort to the Board and the public, as well as make possible wide lay participation in all activities. This individual should be able to gain real satisfaction from the achievements of co-workers. Leadership should not be dependent upon a title, but upon abilities individuals possess.

Cooperative effort can not develop in any but a democratic climate. The one big task will be to bring about an atmosphere that is cooperative, informal, permissive, and friendly.

Supervisors grease the wheels

The director of instruction and curriculum or supervisors, because they often hold the potential position of leadership, should possess certain qualities that enable them to play their role well. Such a position of responsibility calls for a person who can sit down with others and help them arrive at intelligent decisions.

Leaders in instruction and curriculum need the personal qualities which attract others because of a feeling of mutual confidence. They should understand human growth and development and be able to help others gain understanding in this area.

They should understand the social economic conditions of the community and the purpose of education in a democracy and help others gain these same understandings. They should also have clearly in mind what constitutes a desirable school program, and enable others to reach like clearness of concept. In line with this they need understanding of how such a program might be realized, and lead others to adopt suitable procedures.

They need to be familiar with desirable instructional materials and resources that can help teachers in their work and an understanding of in-service practices which will contribute to the professional growth of all the personnel.

Principals provide environments for group living

The principal also has a vital role to play. Since the most effective curriculum changes will be brought about on the individual school level, he is in a strategic position of leadership. His

attitude, desire, and ability will be key factors in the success of any type of program. Cooperative curriculum development can never be realized without his full support and continued effort to have his staff take an effective part. A principal can short circuit any plan or can limit the potentialities of every member of his staff.

Under the proposed type of organization, the principal will have to be willing to arrive at decisions in terms of the collective accent of his staff. He will have to be willing to delegate some responsibilities which many principals have always held as their sacred prerogatives. There can never be system-wide cooperative action unless it springs from the same type of action on the individual school level. The principal should have most of the personal qualities and professional competencies of the supervisor. He should be able to utilize all the help possible for himself and his staff. He needs to have an interest in all the curriculum activities of his staff members, and make sure that they have the benefits of the total staff in arriving at the best thinking possible.

Teachers have new responsibilities

Teachers working in this type of organization will be assuming responsibilities often relegated to others. It will mean the building of values and the sharing of ideas which have seldom

been called from teachers in the past. It will mean putting forth greater effort in developing understanding of others. It will mean developing respect for co-workers that will elevate action to the level of real professional integrity. Thus, in fact, and thus only, can a professional outlook and sense of full professional responsibility be developed.

Pupils and parents play a part

Pupils, parents, and other lay people will also have a role to play under such a plan of operation. All concerned should be brought in to participate in the development of the program. As participation is extended, those who are called in will need to know the part they are expected to play and the objectives to be realized. It may even be found that as others participate, the objectives will be modified in terms of better group thinking.

Cooperative Action for Results

It should be apparent that organization is very important and that not just any kind of organization will do. On the other hand, no particular pattern should be so sacred that it is not subject to study and modifications in terms of local conditions and of realizing specific objectives set out to be achieved. Cooperative group action, however, is the only process by which we can be assured of the best, long-time results.



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