

Teacher-Advisers Work with Adolescents

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This article is contributed by Leonard D. Haertter, director of the John Burroughs School in Clayton, St. Louis County, Missouri.

EDUCATIONAL administrators are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for a well-developed program of guidance so that each pupil may be helped to develop his potentialities fully and to become an effective member of a richer and freer society. No longer is a program of studies, set up to be mastered, adequate to meet the needs of children. Schools must assume that they are educating whole persons and not minds alone. Attention must, therefore, be given to the emotional, social, moral, and physical development of children as well as to their intellectual growth.

Since any member of the staff may find himself counseling a pupil, guidance will be successful only if the attitude of the whole faculty is one of interest in the individual and his problems. In too many instances, teachers have been so interested in teaching subjects that they have had little time for thought about the pupil and his needs. As a result, guidance has been confined to the so-called problem cases and has seldom gone beyond the "trouble shooter" stage.

General concern, however, is not enough. What is needed is an effective program of guidance for all children. This calls for a sufficient number of well-trained counselors, skilled in observing children and in using what has been observed for the discovery of

needs and interests. Time must be provided so that children can be observed under normal circumstances and in a variety of situations. Potential difficulties should be noted when it is relatively easy to deal with them. The work of the good adviser parallels closely the work of the doctor of preventative medicine. Such doctors are interested in keeping their patients well rather than in helping them recover from an illness. So, too, should the adviser be concerned with helping boys and girls to remain healthy, happy, purposeful beings.

Teacher-Advisers Provide an Answer

Ideally, these advisers should be members of the general faculty. They should be relieved of enough of their teaching duties to carry out effectively their guidance duties. This means, of course, that the faculty must be enlarged to provide the staff which such a program requires.

The classroom teacher as a pupil adviser is a very logical choice. *Good teachers* have the qualities of *good advisers*. They are concerned with the growth of the whole child and use their particular field of learning to promote such growth. They are familiar with and in sympathy with the general purposes of the school. Their personality, character, scholar-

ship, teaching ability, knowledge of the psychology of learning, and day-by-day association with children under many varied circumstances qualifies them to deal in an understanding way with children. They are trained to observe accurately, to analyze findings carefully, and to act constructively on the basis of facts at hand.

Such teachers can readily be trained to undertake the specific duties of an adviser. Moreover, they will be better teachers because of this further experience. The greatest benefit comes from the fact that these advisers carry over to their teaching an interest in the individual pupil which improves their teaching and their pupil relationships generally.

A Secondary School Program

Such is the philosophy on which the guidance program at the John Burroughs School is based. This secondary school is a co-educational, private, country day school. It includes grades seven through twelve; and its enrollment, limited to three hundred twenty-four pupils, is equally divided between boys and girls.

The faculty of the John Burroughs School numbers twenty-eight full-time teachers and six part-time teachers. Twenty-six teachers are directly connected with the guidance program. There is a chairman of guidance, a school psychologist, and twenty-four principal and assistant advisers—all classroom teachers.

Each adviser devotes about one hour a day to guidance work, sponsors a school activity, and teaches sixteen fifty-minute periods each week with an average total load of eighty-five pupils.

Over a period of years the number of classes for teachers has been reduced from five to four, the meeting time of classes from five to four times a week, and the total pupil load of a teacher from about one hundred five to eighty-five pupils. In this way teachers have been freed from some of their teaching duties to make them available for advisory work. During this period of years the school staff has been increased from twenty-two full-time teachers and four part-time teachers to its present size, while the enrollment remained deliberately constant.

Individual Roles Define the Program

The responsibilities of the various teachers connected with this guidance program indicate its nature.

The chairman of guidance works in close cooperation with the director of the school in coordinating the entire program. He calls and presides at meetings of the advisory staff and has certain specific duties. He is responsible for planning vocational meetings for pupils and for assisting the school librarian in gathering suitable materials about vocations and vocational opportunities. He gives general direction to the program, but does not confer directly with pupils.

The school psychologist administers the various reading, aptitude, and vocational preference tests and makes the results available to the advisers. One of her chief duties is to assist advisers in the study of pupils with major difficulties. In such cases the pupil is brought to the attention of the psychologist by the adviser, a complete study is worked out, and recommendations

for action are made. In anticipation of such work the psychologist regularly visits classes, activities, and advisory groups in order to become familiar with the nature of pupil experiences, pupil and teacher relationships, and pupil problems.

The psychologist also helps the adviser in interpreting the results of tests and in conferring with pupils about them, assists the librarian in gathering materials about vocations, and helps with the in-service training of advisers.

The adviser has direct responsibility for the day-by-day work of counseling pupils. There is one adviser and one assistant adviser for each group of twenty-seven pupils, called the advisory group. There are two advisory groups in each grade, one for boys and one for girls, forming a total of twelve such groups in the school.

Data Comes from Varied Sources

Advisers and their assistants obtain information about pupils from a number of sources. Test records, group contacts, and conferences with boys and girls are included in these.

The adviser has full access to the school files, which reveal past academic achievement (together with the comments of teachers about the pupil), his record on reading and aptitude tests, his participation in school activities and athletics, information about his health, his special interests, and his work experience.

Each adviser and assistant meet daily with the members of their group for a period of thirty minutes. Here the children are observed and information is gathered about them as they discuss matters, plan parties, and develop as-

sembly programs. When no discussion takes place the group studies, and work habits are noted.

A private conference is held with each pupil about twice a year. These conferences vary in length and deal with a variety of matters such as the academic record, participation in school activities, use of leisure time, personal problems, study habits, friends, volunteer summer work, choice of college, and vocational interests.

The adviser arranges a conference about twice each year with parents of each pupil. The parent receives a full report of the pupil's experience in the school and adds to the information which the adviser has. Study habits, hobbies, relationship with members of the family, social activities, family interests, personal and summer experiences are discussed.

A variety of other sources provide information which is useful. Often the adviser will have members of the advisory group in class. The adviser may be the sponsor of a school activity in which members of this advisory group participate, the coach of a school team, or a member of a luncheon group. All such situations are excellent for observing children in a variety of circumstances.

Total Growth Is the Emphasis

Advisers assume direct responsibility for various aspects of pupil growth. Observation of and acquaintance with the total range of a youngster's learning experience make for more effective guidance.

Academic experience

The adviser plans the best possible program of studies for and with each

member of his group. These programs are decided upon in the spring for the following school year. They are a reflection of such things as pupil interests and needs, past and present academic experience, native and reading ability, vocational interest, and college preference.

The adviser is kept fully informed of the progress of the pupil's work and receives a formal report every four weeks from the teachers of each pupil. These reports indicate the quality of work being done and comment upon study habits, contribution to class discussion, appearance of written work, and work done beyond course requirements.

These reports are used in pupil and parent conferences, in arranging pupil-teacher conferences, and in planning for extra teacher assistance. They may indicate the desirability of a change of program or they may indicate that some additional school activity should be encouraged.

Social development

The adviser is prepared to help each member of his group achieve a happy school experience. This means that the pupil should have friends, be secure, have a feeling of belonging to the group, and be respected by his schoolmates. To help achieve these ends the adviser is on the alert to help the pupil make friends, to give him security through achievement, to give him a feeling of belonging by giving him responsibility and experience in working with others, and to help him become a respected member of the group through the development of his particular abilities.

Effort is made to divide responsibility for various activities among all

the members of the group and to keep any one pupil from being involved in too many things. The advisory period is a clearing house, a place to report what is being done, to establish good personal relationships and respect for each other, and to use the entire resources of the school for the development of the potentialities of each child.

The advisers of a given grade also plan two or three social parties each school year with the members of the grade. In the lower grades these parties are held in the late afternoon, and in the upper grades in the early evening. The advisers attend these parties and assist boys and girls in having a happy and valuable social experience. Opportunity is given for observing children under normal conditions and of learning the social development each needs most.

Participation in activities

One period of each school day is set aside for participation in such activities as glee club, orchestra, dramatics, publications, fine arts, practical arts, photography, rifle practice, Junior Red Cross, and Junior Academy of Science. The adviser encourages and assists each member of his group to elect one activity each day. Later, if an activity is to be changed, the adviser is consulted and approval is secured for any contemplated change.

Citizenship development

The advisory group is the town council, the training ground for good citizens. The school is organized to give pupils a share in the responsibility for operating the school for the best interests of pupils and teachers.

These responsibilities are discussed and agreed upon in the legislative assembly, the student council, the student court, and the advisory group. The advisory group then initiates legislation and continues the discussion formally begun in the legislative assembly. Recommendations are made to the student council, the student court, and the social committee.

Responsibility is also assumed in a wider sense. Children do volunteer work in hospitals and charitable institutions on Saturdays and during the summer. Each group contributes through school campaigns to welfare funds and carries on projects of assistance to local groups. For the past two years each grade has adopted a European orphan, which requires contributing a fixed sum of money each month, writing letters, and

sending clothes and school supplies.

Better Teaching Results

It is important to note again that a program of guidance is effective to the degree that all members of the school staff are interested in the individual and his problems. But general concern, while a necessary condition, is not alone sufficient for a good guidance program. A well-organized staff of advisers is necessary to carry out the detailed duties of such work. These advisers should be chosen from the best teachers of the faculty, and relieved of enough teaching responsibility to carry on the work effectively. If such a program is followed, not only will the work of advising pupils have promise of success, but the teachers who engage in such work will become better teachers.

A Guidance Program without Specialists

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This article, based on the experience of the teachers in the public schools of Salina, Kansas, is written by Estelle Bonner, a teacher in Phillips School.

LONG BEFORE Roger Babson designated Kansas as a part of the Magic Circle of the United States, the schools of Salina had begun the work of guiding their pupils toward sane, honest, practical, happy living. Not only have the Salina schools wished to make their

children conscious of their industrial and agricultural legacy, but they also have planned very consistently to give their pupils the desire to use their own talents and abilities in proving that clean, helpful, orderly living is truly happy living.

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