

A Point of View

The approach to any problem inevitably governs its solution. So it is in the field of guidance. The concept of guidance and its function in the total school program will condition classroom procedures, plans of organization, and personnel employed. The authors who introduce this issue give points of view from which those instituting or reorganizing guidance programs may proceed. The authors point to guidance as an integral and essential aspect of the school program; they focus attention on the learner; all point to the varied responsibilities of school personnel. The first treats generally the guidance program; the second treats the organization of a guidance program for the modern secondary school; and the third looks at the specific role of the classroom teacher.

What Is Guidance in the School Program?

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Courtesy Bloomfield (N. J.) Junior High School

WHAT DO YOU THINK is guidance in the school program? At first glance it may seem that this question is one that can be simply and briefly answered. Constant and varied contacts with teachers, administrators, supervisors, graduate students, and specialists in various phases of education, however, soon reveal the confusion and the differences of opinion prevalent concerning this question.

For some years many of the advocates of guidance have been divided into two camps. There are those who would make *guidance* synonymous with *education*, holding that all guidance is education and all education is guidance. Opposing this viewpoint are those who feel that such dilution of the term "guidance" destroys its meaning. They insist that guidance is a very specialized aspect of education to be carried on only by highly trained specialists who deal with the personal needs and adjustments of individual boys and girls when there are guidance problems to be solved.

It is possible to hold a third viewpoint which harmonizes these two positions and seems to meet the realities of school programs better than either of the more extreme views. Those who hold this third position recognize that education can be *good* only when it is permeated with a guidance viewpoint, yet they do not make education and guidance identical. They recognize that key persons in the guidance program of the school are classroom teachers and that guidance specialists are resource persons available to teachers and parents to help them in the guidance of boys and girls.

In an article published in EDUCATIONAL

LEADERSHIP two years ago (May, 1946), this author suggested that *guidance* may be broadly defined as *any planned experience or contact with individuals for the purpose of helping them to develop in certain directions*. Under this definition the specific function of the guidance program of a school is *the satisfactory mutual adjustment of the school and the individual child*. While specialists have important contributions to make to this process, its success rests ultimately upon the shoulders of each individual classroom teacher.

LOOKING AT OUR TERMINOLOGY Guidance and Education

Guidance is always addressed to the *individual* and is based upon recognition of *individual differences*. The term "education" is a more inclusive term. It is possible to have group instruction and even group learning without guidance. This is, in fact, all too common a practice in schools at all levels, and perhaps at the college level especially. In sound educational practice, however, guidance and instruction become inseparable functions. This viewpoint was stated a decade ago by Arthur J. Jones and Harold C. Hand.¹

Guidance is coming to be regarded as that inseparable aspect of the educational process that is peculiarly concerned with helping individuals to discover their needs, assess their potentialities, develop their life purposes, formulate plans of action in the services of these purposes, and proceed to their realization. The total teaching process involves both guidance and instruction as these terms have commonly been employed in the past and as inseparable functions. Neither can be

¹ National Society for the Study of Education. *Guidance in Educational Institutions*. Thirty-seventh Yearbook, Part I. Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Co., 1938.

delegated in any discrete manner to separate functionaries.

This assertion does not mean, however, that specialists such as counselors, school psychologists, mental hygienists, vocational specialists, and other workers mentioned elsewhere should be done away with. On the contrary, we shall see that more, not less, help of a specialized nature than we now have will be necessary if the functional needs of students are adequately to be met. It distinctly does mean, however, that the tasks of guiding and instructing cannot legitimately be made the respective responsibilities of separate groups of educational workers.

Guidance and Curriculum

Increasingly, guidance has become an integral part of the whole school system inseparable from any other important aspect of the school's educational program. Its inter-relationship with that program has become increasingly apparent as concepts of the curriculum have deepened and broadened.

Broadly conceived, the modern curriculum consists of those planned opportunities and guided experiences of pupils over which the school exercises major control. The curriculum is primarily based upon the needs, interests, and abilities which a group of children have in common. If one starts out to develop a curriculum for a third grade group of children, one bases it, in general, upon characteristics which are *common* to eight-year-old boys and girls. No two children, however, are exactly alike; each is a unique personality. In any average group of eight-year-old children, developmental levels will vary from that of six-year-olds to levels not usually achieved before the age of ten or over. Furthermore, this four- or five-year range may be found in an individual child. For example, a child may be eight years old chrono-

logically, physically as small as most six-year-olds, with a mental age of ten, and social-emotional levels of maturity ranging anywhere from six to ten. Moreover, such a youngster may be considered a "normal" boy or girl.

As soon as a teacher begins to implement a curriculum in a classroom, the individual *differences* among children begin to be revealed. To function, the curriculum must be adjusted to meet these differences. Thus the guidance program, based upon recognition of individual differences, begins to function. Every good classroom teacher inevitably *guides* children, as she recognizes the *individual* needs, capacities, abilities, and interests of each learner and strives for a mutual adjustment of child and curriculum.

IDENTIFYING GOOD GUIDANCE PROGRAMS

A good guidance program has two major aspects. The first is: *integrating mental hygiene principles and practices into the entire school program*. The function of the school cannot be separated from mental hygiene. The primary purpose of education is to help individuals become able to meet and to solve problems of living. Every individual must be able to adjust an ever-changing self to an ever-changing environment. *Education* is the basic discipline which society has set up for the training of individuals. It should receive all the assistance it can from psychology, psychiatry, and other disciplines.

The schools, however, remain the major institutions which society has established to prepare young people to cope successfully with the problems of life. Specialists whose fundamental

training is in the field of mental hygiene, whether they be called psychologists, psychiatrists, guidance workers, or by other professional designations, can be very helpful in guiding the school staff to insure that practices and procedures are conducive to mental health. But, in the last analysis, the mental hygiene program of any school depends primarily upon the mental health of each classroom teacher and the mental healthfulness of the climate which the teacher is able to establish for his own pupils.

The second major aspect of a good guidance program is: *the study of the individual child, with adjustment of the child to school and school to child*. This phase of the guidance program is almost unlimited in scope and potentialities. It involves thoughtful observation of each child, home contacts for every child, many and varied tests and measurements, and the careful recording of all such significant data in a cumulative individual record for each pupil. Limitations of space preclude the possibility of an adequate discussion of these potentialities here. The principles and general methods of this phase of guidance apply to all levels of education, from pre-school through college, but the procedures and practices used will, of necessity, vary for age levels and for specific school and community situations.

CLARIFYING THE VARIED ROLES

It is clear that a guidance program such as we have envisaged in this article involves the cooperation of school, home, and community—of administrators, supervisors, teachers, guidance specialists, and parents. What are the

respective roles of these groups in the guidance program of the school?

The first step in building a guidance program should be taken by the administrator. It consists of educating the community, the Board of Education, and the school staff to understand and want guidance. An in-service training program for teachers, either for the whole staff or for selected teachers who are especially interested in and qualified for guidance responsibilities, should be provided. For these purposes the services of the specialist are usually helpful. No school can build any program beyond community readiness to support that program.

Every good teacher guides children; every good school has guidance going on within it, whether so-called or not. Each school should build upon what it already has—integrating, extending, and enriching its guidance functions as rapidly as teachers and parents are prepared to carry the program forward. As the program develops, it is well to differentiate the functions of various groups in the program. The following suggestions may serve as guiding principles, although actual application of them may vary from place to place.

Administrators and Supervisors Open Doors

The guidance responsibilities of administrative and supervisory staff are:

- To provide an enlightened and cooperative teaching staff
- To select trained guidance personnel and provide in-service training when needed
- To cooperate with the guidance specialists or with those primarily responsible for guidance in outlining the total guidance program, including items such as testing and record system

- To secure cooperation of the staff for the guidance program
- To secure contacts with and cooperation of parents in the program
- To provide adequate physical space and equipment for carrying on guidance services
- To hold teacher loads down to levels which make it possible for teachers to perform their guidance functions
- To encourage continuous revision of the curriculum in the light of what the guidance program reveals
- To make school adjustments possible for the individual child.

Teachers Contact the Children

Teachers may contribute to the development of their pupils through four principal avenues—their own personalities, their attitudes toward and their relationships with their students, what they actually teach, and the adjustments they are able to help their pupils make. Their contributions will be facilitated if their guidance functions include responsibility for:

- Observation and study of children, for the purpose of understanding each child as an individual
- Record keeping—a cumulative folder for each pupil
- Individualization of instruction and treatment of the child (*based upon the two above*)
- Understanding of his own (*the teacher's*) and the pupil's mental health
- Cooperating fully with the organized guidance program
- Contacts and cooperation with parents
- Guiding the child toward recognized goals.

The Guidance Specialist— a Resource Person

As pointed out earlier, the guidance counselor is a resource person available to parents and teachers to help them in

guidance of children. The primary responsibilities of such specialists are:

To help plan and supervise the gathering of such facts as are essential to the understanding and guidance of each individual pupil in the school system—facts about his home and family background, developmental history, physical health, capacities, needs, interests, and achievement.

To help teachers use these facts (assembled in individual cumulative records), in solving their problems in the guidance of children, rather than to relieve teachers of these problems. In doing so, classroom observations, conferences with teachers, and the interviewing of parents jointly with teachers become an important part of the guidance counselor's work.

To assume direct responsibilities in the guidance of a child only when principals and teachers are unable to solve the child's problems. Intensive work with parents and with children themselves and cooperation with outside specialists or agencies carrying on special treatment of some such children constitute a major responsibility of the guidance counselor.

To interpret the mental hygiene and guidance program of the school to teachers and parents and to carry on a continuous program of education in these fields.

To analyze systematically, from time to time, the facts gathered and the results obtained in the adjustment of pupils, so that the mutual adjustment of school to pupil and pupil to school may improve as a continuously evolving process.

Parents Look to the Schools

Parents and teachers are the major guides of children, and it is essential that they have mutual understanding and cooperation if the needs of each child are to be met. The rapid growth of friendly parent-teacher conferences

as part of the school's guidance program evidences the growing recognition of the parent's role in the school guidance program. The school must know parents in order really to know its children.

Parents, too, are dependent upon the school for a full understanding of their children. They turn to the school for information as to their children's development in scholastic achievement, but that is only one area in which the school should serve as a source of guidance to parents. Fathers and mothers must look to the school as a major source of information concerning their child's reactions as a member of a group other than the family. From the school they should get considerable information about the child's physical and mental health, special interests and abilities, handicaps, and disabilities. To the school, also, they must look for much information on the child's developing character traits and habits of work.

Many parents do not have any real knowledge of child development or training; few parents have any agency other than the school to which they can naturally turn for help in these fields. The school should make every effort to meet parental needs for guidance as it develops trained personnel for its own guidance program.²

² Kawin, Ethel. *Early Childhood Education*. National Society for the Study of Education, Forty-sixth Yearbook, Part II, Chapter X. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947.

Pupils Develop Self-Guidance Skills

The role of the pupil himself in guidance obviously varies greatly according to his age. So great would be the differences between the role of a young child, that of a college student, and of all the developmental levels in between, that this topic cannot be dealt with in such an article as this. We can only point out that the ultimate purpose of all wise guidance is to develop an individual capable of guiding himself. We assume some capacity for self-understanding and self-direction in even the young child. We expect that his powers of self-understanding and self-direction will increase as he grows older and as we help him to discover his own needs, desires, and capacities and to learn to decide what he wants to do and how best to accomplish his purposes. A sound guidance program is organized to help each individual develop abilities to make choices and adjustments, taking on ever-increasing responsibilities for himself.

YOUTH LOOKS FOR GUIDANCE

Such a description of guidance in the school program cannot give a picture of what guidance means in the life of the individual young person, whether it be child or student at college level, for whom understanding and wise guidance are available from home and school. Education without guidance, it is generally accepted, is a futile procedure for children and young people.

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