We are aware that every group has many potential leaders in its ranks, and through the releasing of these latent leadership abilities lies the needed improvement in the areas in which we are vitally concerned. Gordon N. Mackenzie, professor of education, Teachers College, Columbia University, points the way toward releasing leaders to make for better teaching of better curriculums.

THERE IS PROBABLY no previous time in world history when as many individuals have been aware of our problems of living and as conscious of a threat to the continued existence of human life as we have known it. Yet, amidst the confusion and uncertainty as to how we may deal with our difficulties, there is a substantial basis for believing that a better life for all is within our grasp. Times such as these command the cooperative effort of all individuals and groups, almost regardless of their special purposes, to the end that we may not only save ourselves but find solutions which will result in greater happiness for all.

The potential role of the school in this uncertain but promising world scene is continuously being clarified and redefined. Lay citizens and professional educators, individually and cooperatively, are coming to see that the school can inhibit or facilitate the dynamic and realistic facing of these uncertain and promising times. However, the focal point of attention, in any inquiry as to what the school can do, is the curriculum. Viewing the school curriculum in terms of the hazards and the possibilities of life today, the need for leadership here, as in other areas of life, is at once clear.

Leadership, however, as this statement will attempt to point out, can come from any who will think clearly on major problems, and will help to release the leadership in others in solving these problems. The remainder of this statement will give attention to these two leadership factors.

Curriculum Leaders Must Take a Stand

If the curriculum provided by our schools is to meet the challenges of the emerging world situation, curriculum leaders need to think clearly on numerous persisting problems. There are five, however, on which clarity of position seems most essential, together with a calculated program to achieve the conditions desired. Two of these problems relate to values or goals of the school. Three involve the method or conditions by which these values are maintained. All five have been items of concern over a period of years. All five have a special current significance.

- Recognizing the worth of the individual. American education has long professed concern for the individual learner. The topic, "individual differences," has been one of the most common and most certain in courses in methodology. In recent years there has
been growing discussion of the democratic bases for this concern with individuals. Thus, adjustments in the time necessary for varying individuals to do set tasks have given way to adjustments in the tasks themselves and in the end products expected. In theory at least, teachers have respect for all individuals, capitalizing on the strengths of each, doing whatever it is within the teachers' power to do to help each learner attain the full potentialities of which he is capable.

Teachers and lay citizens are quite typically committed to seeking the full development of each individual. The integrity and full development of a democracy is recognized as being inseparably tied to the integrity and full development of its individual citizens. The public schools have proved their ability to contribute significantly to this end.

Yet, the task is not complete. Democratic living in the United States is still endangered because many children and youth are inadequately cared for. Many communities are unable or unwilling to employ teachers who are adequately trained and to give them the security and help which will make it possible for them to operate effectively. There are, of course, many children who never get to school or are forced out of school at an early age. Because of home background, economic level, or race, they may be denied the advantages of schooling. Further, many schools are not using our most advanced techniques for studying learners and working effectively with them. Related areas such as psychology, psychiatry, and medicine have additional aids for us if we will but use them.

**Improving the quality of social living.** The improvement of the common welfare is a long-accepted, if somewhat vague and general, goal in this country to which schools have been recognized as capable of making a contribution. In recent years, as the possibilities for making more specific the contribution of the schools to the general welfare or the quality of social living have been pointed out repeatedly, conflicts and differences of opinion have been sharpened. Some few teachers have not wanted to deal directly with the problems inherent in trying to improve the quality of living. Some lay citizens have not wanted the school to challenge existing values and ways of operating.

But the role of the school as an agent for the reinterpretation and clarification of democratic values has been increasingly accepted. The school as a potential agent for community betterment has been proven in numerous situations. The school as a force for world organization and peace is an oft expressed hope. The schools that have focused on the individual learner in the various social situations in which he is expected to function have appeared to be most successful. Those educational programs which have helped learners with the values, understandings, and skills involved in the major and persistent areas of concern give promise of being truly effective. Those school staffs which have involved adult citizens in setting goals and carrying thru the program have an important key for improving the quality of living.

**Maintaining freedom to learn.** Throughout our history as a nation, free
access to sources of information and contradictory ideas has been held as an ideal. The major battles to preserve this ideal have centered in the higher institutions. Elementary and secondary schools, especially if they concentrated on arithmetic, writing, and native and foreign languages, had little difficulty.

As school programs on the lower levels have come to include experiences with science and technology and to enter the controversial areas of values and social arrangements, there have naturally been some objections—often from well-meaning citizens. For example, immaturity of learners is given as a reason for denying children and youth an opportunity to consider, under the guidance of the school, problems which they face through the radio, the newspaper, and informal discussions of everyday life. Fear of those nations which deny their citizens freedom to learn seems to suggest to some that the same restrictions are needed here.

Fortunately, most educators and most laymen recognize that if prospective citizens are to attain their full potentialities, they need opportunities at all levels to apply their experience and background, under guidance, to the full range of problems which they encounter. Learners need experience testing their values in a variety of problem situations. This necessitates examining the pros and cons of various potential decisions, of examining the possible eventual outcome of each of several feasible courses of action. Value judgments need to be based not only on emotion but on sound reasoning and should be so developed that they will not be discarded lightly when competing values are advanced. Educators and lay citizens interested in education need, therefore, to give constant attention to the techniques for preventing individuals and small groups from:

- narrowing the range of problems to be considered in the school by forcing attention to certain limited topics or subjects
- excluding from consideration in the schools areas which small groups may not want to have considered
- restricting the instructional materials which schools can use.

The last two restrictive influences are probably the greatest today. For example, many of those who do not want the schools to encourage the development of communistic values would prohibit the study of Russia. Yet, this is a country we need to know more about. Such prohibitions would prevent the school from guiding the learner through an analysis of contrasts between democratic and communistic values in order that he may better implement and carry out his democratic views. Further, those who believe they can secure the ends they want through censorship, frequently single out individual periodicals, books, or films which are to be barred from the school.

Decisions such as these threaten the effectiveness of the total educational venture. Techniques are needed for selecting content and materials on the basis of educational criteria administered by representative groups of educators and lay citizens. These decisions are too important to the total population to be left to the dictates of organized and vocal minorities.

**Preserving a unified school.** One of the most thrilling and commendable
phases of the history of this nation centers in the efforts of the American people to establish, under their direct supervision and leadership, free and equal opportunities for education to all. Secularizing public education became an important factor in helping to create a means of public education and enlightenment which has not been equalled. Through giving freedom to those who wished to combine religion and education to develop their own schools, a public school system was established which became a powerful influence in producing good intergroup relations and widespread understanding of the variations among our people. The public school became a great force in the attainment of democratic values and the improvement of the quality of living.

There are those today who would reverse the decision on the secularization of schools and who are setting group against group through their demands for such measures as the use of school time for religious instruction or the use of public funds to support schools run and operated, not by the American people as a whole, but by various religions or other groups. If the schools are to continue to serve as agents of education for democratic living, it seems essential that unified schools be maintained. It is not implied that groups within the nation should be prohibited from setting up their own schools. However, it is important to have public schools, not fragmented by religious differences and which are controlled by the public which supports them, open to all.

Directing education toward goals.
For many years education, especially at the elementary and secondary levels, was regarded very largely as a process of memorization of facts or the mastery of a few skills of reading, writing, and computation. Especially within the past twenty-five years the schools have come to be regarded as having greater potentials.

Goals of education have come to be defined in terms of the kinds of persons needed for effective democratic living under present-day conditions. Questions have been raised as to the suitability of the old techniques and as to the adequacy of organizing all instruction in terms of the usual subjects. There has been much trial of a great variety of proposals for organizing instruction.

Experience with some of these proposed educational programs has been such as to give encouragement to those who have sought to organize instruction around problems and purposes of learners, recognizing continuously the necessity for working on problems and purposes which have long-time significance for the learner and for our total social living. If educational programs are to have full regard for the worth of individuals and to contribute most adequately to the general quality of living, curriculum workers must persist in the search for more adequate bases for organizing instruction and for selecting learning experiences which contribute directly to the goals of modern education.

The Leadership Base Must Be Broadened
If curriculum leadership is to be successful in improving and advancing the effectiveness of school programs, the leadership base must be broadened.
Thinking of curriculum leadership as consisting of those who are curriculum directors or supervisors is not an adequate approach to the problems of today and tomorrow. Attention might better be focused on all those who can actively foster the development of educational means more adequate for the needs of the present and emerging future. Thus, all status leaders such as supervisors, curriculum directors, principals, superintendents, chairmen of curriculum committees, and others who seek the betterment of education might well give major attention to the means for releasing leadership in others. At least two types of leadership are needed:

1. Leadership through making actual program changes—through providing more adequate experiences for learners
2. Leadership which will help improve the effectiveness of other individuals and groups in making program changes.

There is often a tendency to oversimplify the leadership problem by using the term “democratic” leadership to denote all that is good, and the term “autocratic” to suggest all that is bad. Sometimes the oversimplification takes the form of thinking of the democratic leader as one who takes the group where it wants to go.

Actually, leadership probably has several dimensions. Much is to be gained from trying to identify these dimensions or functions in order that they may be analyzed, clarified, and improved. In many respects, the task of releasing leadership in both of the areas mentioned above seems to be one of teaching and providing opportunities for practicing leadership. Certainly the exact task and method of functioning of the leader will vary from situation to situation. However, with the point of view just expressed, seven functions or dimensions of leadership which will help to release other leadership and thus broaden its base are presented.

**Contributing to unity.** Especially within the last fifty years, when the function and form of schooling have been changing rapidly, increased attention has been directed to the goals of education and to the various proposals for educational reform. In a period such as this it is exceedingly important to clarify goals and to secure unity of direction within individual educational programs, if the efforts of the participating workers are to be mutually supporting and consequently effective. Unity of direction within the profession is also necessary for national and world welfare as well as for the mental health and consequent contribution of the education profession as a group. The approach which those in positions of leadership have often made to the need indicated above has been one of ridiculing, shaming, threatening, and otherwise exhorting members of the profession to modify their goals.

The need for increased unity as to goals has by no means been met. It would appear that much more attention could well be given to helping groups clarify the values actually served by present practices and to suggesting procedures which, although related to present activities, would give more promise of attaining the goals now widely verbalized by many in the teaching profession. Considerations of values and the need for redirecting education should be so related to the experience of members of the profession that they

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can easily move forward from their present activities. The leader then might well serve to help individuals or a group to distill the values they accept and on which they wish to operate, having due regard for the need of stimulation as well as security giving.

**Enriching thinking.** Too often the democratic leader is defined as one who helps the group go where it wants to go. This can well be an appropriate function under certain conditions, but it is not adequate for all occasions. At other times the leader is regarded as one who should advance the new ideas and tell other individuals or the group what should be done.

The need for new ideas, new insights, and broadened understanding is always present. Hence, anyone who would accept leadership responsibility might well endeavor constantly to broaden his own outlook and help others to do likewise. It seems imperative, however, than any assistance given to others be in such relationship to their previous experiences and their goals that they are capable of assimilating it and using it in their on-going activities. Certainly the leadership function is not one of insisting or dictating. Neither is it one of simply drifting with or serving the group wishes. It involves providing stimulation in a meaningful and useful way so as to expand viewpoints now held.

**Aiding in the development of new skills.** People in status leadership positions often operate with such large groups that they find it difficult to give assistance on skills. Yet, skills are an essential for changes in practice. Often leaders resort to exhortation or to the verbal elaboration of values. Leadership in the development of new skills frequently comes from some associate or fellow worker whose activities may be observed.

As major modifications are sought in educational programs, attention to specific skills approximating new values and implementing new understandings becomes imperative. Those who are willing to provide leadership can well give increased attention to the development of skills necessary to the task foreseen. Some of these can certainly be taught through use in in-service programs if leaders will help interpret and give information about them. For example, skills in the evaluation of group process have undoubtedly been improved through the experience with this activity in conferences and other in-service activities of recent years.

**Helping to provide confidence and security.** In the past some individuals in leadership positions have assumed that it was one of their major functions to keep their coworkers on edge or keyed up. Others, who have not had to work too closely with a group, have used a technique of scorn, ridicule, and condemnation. This has been particularly characteristic of those in leadership positions who mount the public platform.

A recognition that the leadership role is essentially a teaching role in which the learning of others is to be encouraged, suggests the leader’s responsibility in helping to provide an environment favorable to learning. Certainly stimulation is needed, but it should be a positive stimulation to do things that seem important and worthwhile. Much at-
Attention is needed for developing a desire to do and confidence that the desired goals can be attained. This attitude can be secured partially at least through displaying a faith in people while revealing possible and appealing next steps. Leaders can often do much to remove the sources of disturbing fears and concerns relating to matters of salary, rating, living arrangements, human relations, and a host of other problems which may actually prevent the development of the high morale which is essential to curriculum improvement. He who will lead effectively will develop a peer relationship with his coworkers, taking them into his confidence and operating with their knowledge and understanding.

Helping define the limits of autonomy and interaction. Often leaders and the individuals and groups with which they work become frustrated and discouraged because of limitations on their activity which had not been anticipated in original planning. Independence or autonomy of action is assumed which is not in accord with facts. Individuals can perform a leadership service by helping individuals and groups to recognize imposed or necessary limits of autonomy or interaction with others as well as by helping to recognize areas in which autonomy or interaction might well be limited or increased. The momentary wishes of individuals or groups do not always indicate the immediate road to action and such wishes must often be blended with those of others.

Often the person in a status leadership position can be extremely helpful if he has skill in helping a group to understand the varying relationships in which he functions. His responsibility to a board of education, his membership in an administrative council, or his relationship with a superintendent may condition his leadership role with a group of teachers. The interpretation of these relationships, without using those of superior status as either alibis or whipping posts, seems important. Rather than placing blame on some individual or group for limitations on action, it seems important that a leader seek to broaden viewpoints relative to areas of common concern and to suggest means for constructively dealing with what may appear to be barriers to individual and group action.

Encouraging an experimental approach. Occasionally those who would lead toward curriculum improvement endeavor to do so by proposing a detailed new pattern of operation. This limits the contribution of individuals and groups immediately and over a longer period. Further, resistance to a specific proposal is often encountered from those who do not understand, who do not accept the specific idea, or who are unable to operate with satisfaction in relation to it.

Leaders might well focus more attention on encouraging an acceptance of the possible desirability of change and the search for a better way of meeting the problems and conditions which may be cooperatively identified as being worthy of attack. If individuals and groups come to accept an experimental approach to curriculum problems, a strong foundation is laid for continuous improvement and modifications in practice.
Providing opportunities for leadership. In presenting the above six functions or dimensions of leadership, there has been an assumption that any individual can, to some extent, provide leadership and serve the cause of education in a most needed and commendable manner if he will but take thought and determine how he can best help individuals and groups to move forward. The six proposals as to functions which the leader can perform are only suggestive. However, even these six will be of little value unless there is opportunity to practice them. Those who hold positions of status leadership can do much to explore these and other functions in cooperation with their coworkers. Others who are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to provide leadership can well try out their success in performing the functions suggested as well as try to locate others.

The Potentialities Are Here

Often, when leadership is needed, it is discouraging to find so few who are available. Only as many individuals have and use opportunities in increasingly broad areas will there be a supply of experienced, able leaders adequate to the schools' needs. Too often it is necessary to call upon individuals who have not tried their leadership abilities. They are then left to sink or swim because of inadequate assistance and guidance. Continuous attention by the total profession to releasing leadership, to broadening the base of leadership, to affording opportunities to give leadership, and to accepting opportunities to exert leadership holds promise for creating a more dynamic, more effective curriculum.