

involves a subject matter of such complexity that new and improved theory and practice are constantly called for, it can be no more than a trade. Education without doubt affords the complexity of subject matter to justify status as a profession, but the extent and effectiveness of research leading to improved theory and practice leaves much to be desired. We have followed some blind alleys; we have sometimes permitted available techniques to dictate

the selection of problems for study; in brief, the shortcomings of our research efforts are great. But let us not discount the importance of this phase of our professional endeavor. In the long run success in this area is perhaps more vital than in any other in assuring the professional status of teaching. I feel confident that as curriculum workers we may most desirably give more attention to research during the next decade than we have during the past.

What Help Do Teachers Want? _____

VERNON L. REPLOGLE

Too frequently supervisors assume that teachers "need" certain kinds of help without any evidence that they actually do. Vernon L. Replogle, principal of the Central School in Wilmette, Illinois, went directly to teachers to determine what their concerns really are, and reports what he discovered.

THE DISTINCTIVE PURPOSE of supervision is to help change teacher behavior in ways that will provide children a better quality of learning experiences. If this be true, it follows that the supervision which improves teacher behavior most is the best supervision. How then does one proceed to supervise best? How does one secure maximum change in teacher behavior?

Research has furnished us considerable knowledge relative to motivation goals, learning principles, mental health, feelings, and the human personality. We are in possession of much more knowledge than we currently use.

For example, it has long been an accepted—though sparingly practiced—principle that to bring about behavior change in pupils one must begin with their problems, concerns, and tensions—and nowhere else. There is abundant evidence to show that those teachers who make the concerns and problems of boys and girls the beginning point in teaching and who continuously relate their teaching to pupil needs have less motivation trouble, maintain higher morale, and in the end attain more and better learnings than do those teachers who ignore the problems, concerns, and tensions of their pupils.

What Are the Concerns of Teachers?

Only of late have we begun to apply this fruitful principle to the field of supervision in order to attain a higher and more acceptable quality of leadership. But if we are to begin with the concerns and problems of teachers, we must quite obviously find out what things bother them, what problems cause them concern, what barriers to better teaching are most frustrating to them. There seems to be only one method of finding out. Fortunately it is an exceedingly simple one—asking them.

The writer went directly to teachers via questionnaires and conversations. Some help was obtained from articles by teachers which have appeared intermittently in publications the past few years. Over 300 teachers representing various forward-looking school systems in the Middle West were contacted. They were asked to express themselves frankly and fully in respect to two phases of supervision: the areas in which help was most desired, and the manner and atmosphere in which they wanted the requested help to be given.

The Teachers' Ideal Is High

Teachers were uniform in their insistence that he who supervises should first of all be a respecter of human personality and should be concerned with people, not things; that he should be someone who likes and understands both children and teachers; and one who puts final emphasis upon pupil behavior rather than on teacher performance. They want a supervisor who can take suggestions as well as give them

and thoroughly understands the subject or area supervised. They give high priority to the person who can provide group leadership and is able to weld a faculty into a productive working group. Teachers want to be given credit for the ability to do intelligent thinking; consequently they want to receive help in solving their own problems rather than in being told the answers. They plead for someone who can communicate on their own level and who can express his ideas in concrete, understandable terms.

And Furthermore

Teachers want someone whose aspiration level is sky borne yet sufficiently earthbound to permit him a degree of happiness to *begin* working with teachers on their current level regardless of where this level might be; they reject the impatient hyperthyroid, atomic type who is satisfied with nothing short of an immediate and thorough overhaul of teaching methods and a complete redesign of the teacher's personality.

They want a supervisor who is neither shackled nor coerced by a one track mind or method but who realizes that "many roads lead to Rome." They want to be helped by someone who has faith in them, someone who can make them feel secure and wanted. They ask that this help come from an individual who maintains a steady perspective and sees both teachers and pupils as human beings rather than as scholars only. In short, teachers are stubbornly persistent in insisting that their ideal supervisor shall be one who exemplifies the democratic personality, one who is sympathetic and sensitive to human values.

These are some, though not all, of the characteristics and competencies teachers say they want in those who supervise. Only after the teachers had made it unmistakably clear that supervision should be given in the spirit and manner prescribed above, were they willing to indicate the kinds of help and areas in which they wanted it most. Here responses were as varied as the personality, training, teaching assignment, and experience background of each teacher. A majority of responses did, however, show convergence and agreement on certain common areas in which they said their problems existed. There was general agreement that they wanted help in the following areas whether it be from a general curriculum consultant, a building principal, specialized consultants in art, music, dramatics, and the like, or an outside expert.

Teachers Want Help In:

1. *Improving teaching methods and techniques*—how introduce and teach a unit, lesson, or center-of-experience; how plan with pupils; where locate materials; what technique will work best.

2. *Utilizing some of the newly discovered principles of group dynamics*—how change the morale and behavior of groups; how get feeling of security and maximum participation; how make class groups more productive, to reach decisions, to evaluate their own working.

3. *Locating and utilizing community resources.*

4. *Providing for individual differences in a crowded classroom*—how work with a small group and at the same time keep other pupils profitably busy, how meet widely disparate abilities and interests in same class group.

5. *Handling pupil behavior, discipline cases*—how balance individual welfare with group welfare; how help the individ-

ual without harming group and vice-versa.

6. *Meeting needs of atypical pupils*—low I.Q., high I.Q., physically handicapped.

7. *Caring for the needs of the emotionally maladjusted*—how be more than sympathetic; how provide experiences and guidance that will contribute to emotional maturity.

8. *Enabling teachers to evaluate their own teaching competency*—what makes me a good teacher; what are my teaching liabilities; what are my assets.

9. *Using art and music to better advantage in the regular classroom situation*—how utilize the arts in general education.

10. *Relating the on-going activity (unit, center-of-experience, project) to the problems, concerns, and tensions of pupils*—how better meet needs and interests of pupils in current teaching situations.

11. *Using the current teaching situation to make more understandable the contemporary social realities (i.e. social problems and forces which characterize our society)*—how translate the problems and issues of modern society into teachable elements.

12. *Making better use of visual aids.*

13. *Locating and making available expert resources personnel as special problems arise*—who knows the answers to our problems and how can we get his help.

14. *Identifying and utilizing the possibilities of the current classroom activity (problem, unit, project, lesson) for purposes of clarifying, and enabling pupils better to understand democratic values, loyalties, and beliefs*—how enable pupils to identify, compare, and contrast authoritarian versus democratic values; how intellectualize democratic values.

15. *Constructing and building teaching units on problems and topics not found in basic textbooks (i.e., use of leisure time; consumer education; understanding one's self and others; United Nations; conservation; and making, choosing, and holding friends)*—how deviate from the textbook without getting lost.

These are the areas in which teachers

say they want help most. These are the pronouncements of a sizable group of thinking teachers who are at this moment influencing profoundly the lives of boys and girls in American classrooms. The results may be encouraging to some, discouraging to others, but they may be ignored only at the peril of effective supervision. The findings are hopeful in the sense that if teachers are given adequate help in areas in which they request it, a brighter day for education is on the way. They are discouraging in the sense that teachers are asking for help and seem to be blocked, at least partially, in so many areas crucial to good education.

These data hardly support the traditional thesis that teachers are unwilling to move and are resistant to education attuned to twentieth century living. It should be quickly pointed out, however, that the specific findings of this survey do not constitute a pat and closed answer to the kinds of help teachers desire from supervisors; it may only be said that they are valid indicators and clues to some of the problems moving across the center of the stage at this particular time.

A Different Brand of Supervision

Implications for supervision are not difficult to locate in the findings of this study. For example, supervision which takes into account human relationships and total growth can never be standardized in terms of graphs, charts, lesson plans, gadgets, and tricky techniques; effective supervision can take place only after we have gained the confidence, respect, and faith of those whom we wish to help. Supervisors need to become

better students of the human side of teachers; they had better throw away the gold braid authority usually attached to supervision and establish rapport on a person-to-person basis.

Maybe we need more informal coffee hours, more recreational activities, more opportunities for supervisors and teachers to get together for fun only, since people are ill disposed to accept help from anyone toward whom they do not have a kindly and warm feeling.

It is clear that the day for supervisors in the role of annoying secret agents, recording secretaries, vague theoreticians, and prescribing experts who demand regal subservience, is of the gloomy educational past. Teachers are asking for a different brand and a different quality of supervision. They want a kind of supervision that permits teachers to remain captains of their own souls, that makes it possible for them to respect themselves thoroughly, and gives them a feeling that they are in business for themselves—not for the supervisor.

We need to modernize our concept of supervision to give greater emphasis to community resources, psychological needs of children, current social problems, the underlying values of democracy, and exceptional pupils. We need to study the group process and have a working knowledge of group dynamics. Supervision must recognize the need for new and more useful types of teaching units appropriate for a society faced with complex social problems. Supervision must exchange its historic job of judging teachers for one of helping teachers develop skills in self-evaluation, in determining their own teaching competency. Nor can we, according to

the findings of this survey, evade the enduring problems of pupil discipline, teaching methods and techniques, and individual differences.

The Place to Begin

Perhaps the implication that stands out most clearly is found nowhere in the findings of this survey but in the approach itself. We need to be more concerned with implementing the principle and utilizing the process of tailor-

ing supervision to the problems of teachers. We must pin-point the trouble or friction areas, we must locate the blocks and problems which teachers face and give particularized help as needed. The supervisor who does not begin with the problems of teachers may find himself in the unenviable position of a leader without followers. Our concept of supervision and democratic leadership must become one and the same.

These Changes Helped _____

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This article is based on a study of ways of working and the curriculum being carried on by the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation, Teachers College, Columbia University. All three authors have been associated with this study. Ruth Cunningham is associate professor, Teachers College, and research associate of the Institute. Stanley Applegate, now executive officer, Communication Materials Center, Columbia University, and Pauline Hilliard, formerly Bureau of School Service, University of Kentucky and currently a student at Teachers College, have both been research assistants in this study.

"WHAT CHANGES in your school within the past three years have been most helpful to you for doing a better job of teaching?" Eight hundred fifty teachers in six school systems answered this question.

Omissions Tell a Story

Perhaps more significant than the answers of those who responded were the blanks left by those who had nothing to say. Forty-four percent (372 of the 850 teachers) could think of no change—no change at all—which, within three years, had been of help to them in carrying out their professional re-

sponsibilities. The easy explanation would have been to suggest that those who didn't respond were the "sore heads" and unadjusted individuals. This easy explanation had to be discarded when it was found that lack of responses clustered around certain schools. In several schools, one hundred percent of the teachers suggested helpful changes which had occurred; while in one school, eighty-four percent gave no response. Eighteen teachers (two percent) reported that there had been no helpful changes. Twelve of these eighteen teachers were in the school in which eighty-four percent gave no

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