

Supervision's Goal

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What is the goal of supervision? The author of this article defines it as follows: "As much expertness in what we *ought* to do as in what we *must*."

IN THE long hour before we fall asleep, on the occasional night when the PTA coffee has been stronger than usual, what we think about is not the young person whose training was for business subjects and who may be doing heaven knows what to her third grade. It's not even the "old" teacher, whose strange new behavior, despite the two mornings this week we have spent with her, may be . . . No, these problems may cause us to come awake in the night with a start. But in the long hour before we fall asleep, it is the things we should be doing and yet are not that cause us to run over the way we spend our days.

We think then about the total educational program. It ought to be more than a program of order and boundaries. That program—how much time we spend just to maintain it! And we recall what it was like five years ago or ten. We think of what it could be. For if any group in education knows what a good program looks like or could look like, we are the group, we supervisors and those of us who work closely enough with supervisors to identify ourselves with them. If any group is likely to know what it takes to build and maintain and extend a good program, we are it. If any group as a whole outside the actual classroom can be said to care about what goes on in the classroom, we can. We really care.

No wonder we toss and turn, during that long hour.

Working with New Teachers

Should we be unusually wakeful, we may begin about this point in our self-searching to wonder what happens to new teachers once they become "old." Such responsive hearts and faces . . . and then, when we find time to look in upon them, after they have been assured employment and we have turned to still newer teachers, we find . . . We think in general about the work we do with teachers. Of course, we know that our work should include more than orientation *to* a program.

But we will say this for ourselves, our plan of inducting new teachers is one we will put up against any in the State. After they've worked with us for a year or two, new teachers feel pretty secure. We try to keep our procedures from getting cut and dried; we try to keep alive the freshness new teachers may bring with them. And yet, so many of these teachers, even the most responsive, become "old" teachers too soon and tired "old" teachers at that.

Just the same, our orientation program is outstanding. So are the methods we use to evaluate and select new

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teaching materials. As for the testing program, we know how our children are doing in almost everything that can be tested. They do all right, too; our educational program is nothing of which we need be ashamed. When we think of the work we've put in on arithmetic and spelling . . . or perhaps science and reading . . . or social studies . . . or even handwriting. Other people in the State send for our bulletins. We serve on all the committees. We even write textbooks.

There can be no question about our present expertness. We may properly comfort ourselves, during a sleepless hour, by recalling the many things we have to do and how well we have learned to do them. But there are other things we feel we ought to do. These are the things we worry about, when we have time to worry.

How we would ever find time to do anything more . . . or how we could convince the administration that we should take on new duties . . . so much stands in the way. The things we now do and do well are those we are expected to do. Some other things might come outside the area of expectation. Added personnel might be required. Also, we might not know very well how to go about taking on new duties.

As a matter of fact, if we have gained real clarity in our self-examination, we do come to this conclusion: *Were we already as expert in some of the things we know we ought to do as we are in the ones we are expected to do, we would probably find time for them.* We wouldn't stop to wonder whether we could convince somebody else that we ought to do them. We would just go

ahead and demonstrate what our added expertness would mean for the teaching of children.

We would and of course we do, as we move ahead from the established expectations for supervisors into some of the areas where in most school situations we still operate by our own choice—we would mark out the tasks at which we need to acquire greater skills and set about acquiring them.

We Need To Know . . .

Collectively, we have now had enough experience to know what these tasks are and something about what it takes to become expert in their performance. In the notes to follow, an attempt will be made to review what it is that we are generally feeling we still need to learn in supervision.

. . . How Teachers Profit through Experience

First of all, we know we need to learn a lot more about *how experienced teachers profit from their day-to-day experience to become better teachers.* Despite our neglect, many if not most teachers do become increasingly effective. If we knew more about what is involved in this on-the-job growth, we would be better able to relate ourselves to the process.

Teachers are forever testing out their guesses . . . framing hunches and acting on them . . . making observations . . . drawing inferences . . . and coming up with conclusions of some kind. Teachers are learning all the time, finding ways that work better for them and their children. However, "old" teachers learn differently than new teachers. Unlike new teachers, they don't expect to be told or shown. Always seeking

something that suits them better, experienced teachers have meanwhile to act on ways they have found that do work pretty well for them. They know how to do so many things so well; they, too, are already expert. Moreover, they know that their improvements have come from relying upon their experience and testing still further their present insights—knowing that improvement has to come out of the situation, not be borrowed from somebody else's way of working with children.

As we increase our understanding of experienced teachers and how they grow, we will know that we have to locate their concerns and make these concerns ours. We will know that we must use the process of growth to which teachers are committed in the classroom, instead of trying, as sometimes we may have tried, to make our concerns theirs . . . instead of trying to get experienced teachers to adapt themselves to our tested ways of working—with new teachers.



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TEAM supervision unifies purposes and provides the support that is needed in broadening our ways of working.

. . . How To Use Opportunities for Growth

A second thing we need to learn, which follows upon the first, is *how to make the most of the opportunities for teacher growth that are already present in every school situation*. As we learn more about how experienced teachers profit from their day-to-day teaching, we will look for those aspects of the growth process of which more can be made.

Teachers learn from their study of children. Are we helping teachers make the most of all the information about children now available to them? Of the most rewarding of all sources of information, the teacher's own classroom observation? Of the information which previous teachers will have collected, precious, hard-bought understandings and feelings? Of information from parents, yet more precious and hard-won, and lifelong in the storing up? Of data which the nurse and school doctor are collecting? Of the insights possessed by social agencies and church workers and juvenile officers and attendance workers? In almost every situation, even the least organized and record-conscious, there is more information about children than most teachers have had the time or help to discover.

Teachers learn from evaluation of the learning they have expected of their children. Are the test results we have collected being fully used by teachers? Or are these results thought of as ours alone? Do teachers know what additional testing services are available to them? Have they had experience in using these? Are teachers

gaining increasing competence in devising their own instruments and in making their own observations? Are they having a chance to cooperate in setting up plans and sharing successes?

Teachers learn from clarifying purposes as they study children and evaluate learning. Are we sure that teachers feel free to follow through on redefined purposes? That the order and boundaries we have intended for their convenience have not become handicaps to their acting on their new insights? Do we make sure that these insights are given the dignity and attention they deserve and are shared as they prove to be better than the ones on which others, perhaps we ourselves, have been proposing that teachers act?

Teachers learn from trying out new materials or new approaches in terms of new purposes. Are we sure that the new materials we locate are made easily available? That we solicit the assistance of experienced teachers in trying these out? And that new approaches are recognized, valued and shared?

Teachers learn by comparing their experiences with those of other teachers. Do we do everything we can to make this comparison and the sharing upon which it rests freely available in each school? Among our schools and with neighboring school systems? Through educational magazines and books? And in study groups or workshops, as these are needed and requested?

. . . How To Provide Wider Services

Third, in addition to knowing more about making the most of the opportunities already present, we need to know *how to provide a wider range of*

services to teachers and how to provide time for the use of these services. As we work increasingly with experienced teachers, we find that we cannot ourselves provide all the needed services. Some of these can be arranged for by calling upon additional consultants from outside. However, we are finding that we can justify the inclusion on the full-time supervisory staff of specialists who will work directly with individual teachers and study groups—specialists in child growth and development, in the influence of the culture upon the child, in school-community relations, in guidance and testing and the like.

We are also pretty well agreed that if experienced teachers are to be helped to give more thought to the improvement of teaching, they should have time for it within the working day or year. As we try out ways of providing this time, either daily or in larger blocks, we will become increasingly ingenious in making sure that teachers are able to think of professional study as a part of their regular duties.

. . . How To Relate Ourselves to an Expanded Program

Finally, we know we need to learn *how to relate ourselves to the more varied activities of an expanded supervisory program.* Certainly if we are to take on new duties, we are going to have to share responsibility for leadership. Principals will need even greater encouragement to help teachers in their buildings. As they find opportunities to assume increased leadership, teachers themselves must be given genuine experience in what it takes to plan successfully with other adults. Functioning as teams, general and special super-

visors will have to map out common long-term goals and plan for efficient coverage. The total staff must work together to unify purposes, reduce overlapping and make every contact count.

In an expanded program, we are plainly going to put more focus on group work. The support that experienced teachers provide one another would justify this way of working, if nothing else did; but economy of time demands that we learn how to make group activity fully profitable. We need to know how a group operates and a good deal more. We have to define our roles in relationship to groups of many kinds in many phases of development.

Then, as supervisors trying to learn better how to do the things we think we should, we must find as much satisfaction in the successes we will have in new ways of working as we find now in our already established expertness. We have many present satisfactions. Teachers know who we are and what we can do. They know . . . and we know. Yet the satisfactions that will come to us—as we broaden our supervisory concerns to include an active interest in the growth of all teachers, and as we learn to relate ourselves successfully to that process of growth—these satisfactions will be very real, although perhaps somewhat different in nature.

The most important of these new satisfactions will be the assurance we can give ourselves when we do lie awake, on the occasional night when the PTA coffee has been overstimulating, that we are at work on *all* the things that count—both those we have always had to do and those we long since have known we should be doing.

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