

From Our Readers

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The editor of Educational Leadership welcomes readers' letters of comment—whether these be serious in tone or written in the tongue-in-cheek manner of the following communication from Jane Sherrod, consultant in elementary education for J. C. Winston Company, Pasadena, California.

Six Ways To Avoid a Supervisor

DEAR EDITOR: To some teachers, supervision still has a connotation of "snoopervision." Many persons view the "curriculum worker," the "field assistant," the "assistant teacher," etc., as the supervisor by another name who smells just as sweet. All too often teachers are quite correct in this estimate, for ratings, merits, tenures and salary increments in many systems even today may rest upon the blessings of the person carrying the black notebook filled with comments to be placed upon the administrator's desk. One traditional supervisory technique is classroom visitation. It is of this situation that I write and of the survival techniques which teachers have developed in fending off such observation.

Teachers learn survival rapidly—survival of "body and soul"—and it is in tribute to them that I describe what I have observed and faithfully recorded as "Six Ways To Avoid a Supervisor."

• Number I—The *Did-You-Want-To-See-Me?* Technique.

This technique can best be used by the teacher who has had some years of experience with the "eyeball" control of her class. It is also helpful if she is able to lift one eyebrow singly. (This technique should not be practiced by anyone having a small or weak voice since the entire effect upon the supervisor must be one of immediate and frightening power.)

As the supervisor enters the room, the teacher should then apply simultaneously the three elements: (a) eyeball bluff, (b) raised eyebrow (one), and (c) the full-voiced statement, "DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME?" If well executed, this should stop the advance of all types of supervisors, each of whom will retreat with a remark appropriate to his or her type, such as, "I'll see you later," "nothing important—just dropped in," "needed your help," etc.

• Number II—The *We-Were-Just-Going-Out-for-Games* Technique.

As a method of escaping the supervisor, this is helpful for the teacher because it does not require the definite physical talents and, for many, will have a much smoother feel about it. It involves merely the statement as the supervisor enters the room that it is now game time and the herding of the children out of the room. It will prove too over a period of time to have charmingly devastating results on the supervisor. An empty classroom has such a lonely feel about it. (This is not recommended to be used with the principal, however, for he MAY remember the class schedule.)

• Number III—The *We-Were-Just-Going-To-Hear-a-Story* Technique.

This is an approved technique to be used by the teacher who reads well and who can hold the attention of her class with no fears that discipline problems

will arise. It is important to know whose attention span is the longer—the supervisor's or the children's. This technique consists of grabbing a large volume and reading.

In most cases the class will not prove as impatient as the supervisor who, as a rule, will tip-toe out at the end of approximately twenty minutes. A gracious note here is for the teacher to smile and nod at the out-going guest. (Caution: do not stop the flow of reading, for he or she *might* come back!)

• Number IV—The *We-Want-You-To-Know-What-We-Are-Doing* Technique.

In many respects this has the characteristics of the above-mentioned in that it is based on the lack of staying-power and attention span of the supervisor. It does require two things: (a) an interesting activity in line with the interests of the supervisor and (b) a capable child (or children) who with the teacher's aid, prompting and additions, can, as in Method Number II, outlast the supervisor without interfering with the teaching.

As this technique operates the teacher asks the children to explain to Mr. X or Miss Z what the mural, the books, the clay work, etc., are all about—ad infinitum.

• Number V—The *Won't-You-Help-Johnny?* Technique.

This method has great merit, particularly in handling the supervisor who is concerned with individual differences and is also effective if the hall, library or principal's office is sufficiently free for the teacher to suggest that the su-

supervisor and the child work **THERE**. (Note: the farther away, the better!)

• Number VI—The *Won't-You-Take-Over-the-Class?* Technique.

This is to be used at any time and requires no special props, such as a long book, a trained child or a free room. When the supervisor opens the door, the teacher should beam first, come close to the supervisor, and then in a stage whisper so that all the class can hear, invite her or him to teach the lesson. Experience seems to show that he or she will do one of three things but with only one outcome: (a) she will decline to teach, scrape up some reason for seeing the teacher, and retreat, (b) she will teach the lesson to the amusement of you and the class, or (c) she will insist that "you go ahead." In any event, the suggestion, the graciousness of the teacher to "share" and the eyes of the children will protect the teacher from evaluation. This technique is particularly helpful in future conferences of the teacher with the principal because the situation can be cited as evidence of the teacher's wanting to know how to do the lesson correctly.

These methods employed by teachers are not restricted to any one school system or section of our country. They are methods that are well-nigh universal, tried and tested. Any similarity between these techniques and those used by teachers living or dead is not coincidental—but certainly human. — *Jane Sherrod*, consultant in elementary education, J. C. Winston Company, Pasadena, California.



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