

# Guidance—Province of Every School Person?

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The program described in this article is based on the assumption that guidance is the responsibility of every school person — and particularly a responsibility of the teacher in a core program.

**T**HE THESIS of this article is that guidance is the province of every school person and, further, that guidance must function as an integral part of curriculum development if progress toward adequate educational goals is to be made.

In the past decade, and especially since World War II, tremendous interest has been manifested in guidance in our public school system. Today in many states most high schools have a certain part of the school program with the label, "guidance." Not all schools use the term in the same sense, but the tendency is toward increased, rather than decreased utilization of guidance services, the extent of utilization determined by the philosophy of education or guidance of each individual school involved. It would seem that most public schools should re-evaluate their philosophy and consider guidance the province of every school person rather than the responsibility of a single person specifically designated as a guidance specialist.

Authorities in the fields of education and of guidance seem to be in rather close agreement in defining the term, "guidance." The following statements may help to substantiate this point:

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"There is often a real danger that the tendency to isolate guidance activities will succeed, despite the fact that the guidance program serves best when it is identified with the welfare of other school activities."<sup>1</sup>

"It is the fundamental belief of the authors . . . that the effectiveness of any guidance program depends, in large measure, upon the performance of the teacher."<sup>2</sup>

Harold Alberty, writing on curriculum development in the secondary school, has the following to say about guidance and education:

"We conclude that the definitions of modern guidance and education are essentially the same. Why has it been necessary for the guidance agencies, and the curriculum, which in the modern school embraces all student activities carried on under the direction of the school, to exist side by side as separate entities? The answer is to be found in the character of the traditional high school curriculum."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Alberty further states:

"As the high-school curriculum is re-organized to meet the needs of youth

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by Clifford E. Erickson, *A Basic Text for Guidance Workers* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Philip W. L. Cox, John Carr Duff, and Marie McNamara, *Basic Principles of Guidance* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Harold Alberty, *Reorganizing the High School Curriculum* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 379.

in the modern world, the need for elaborate guidance programs with a separate staff tends to disappear. As the high-school curriculum is reorganized as indicated above, the role of the classroom teacher shifts from the imparting of subject matter to guiding group and individual learning activities."<sup>4</sup>

### Staff Members

Guidance concerns all members of the teaching and administrative staff. All members of the teaching and administrative staff have a direct contribution to make. In fact, no program can succeed unless every member does his utmost to make it a success. After all, a major tenet of democracy is that every person should share in the decisions which affect him.

The principal should be a key person in giving impetus to the organization. He should encourage the installation of guidance plans and procedures, lend his support to this effort and continually help to evaluate the program so that it may be improved. The classroom teacher, and particularly if this happens to be a core teacher, should be the most instrumental person in carrying it out. The guidance specialist should be the main resource and referral person. He should be charged with the responsibility of the in-service training of teachers in guidance functions, placement, follow-up, individual inventory and special testing. The specialist should also help to identify the needs, problems and interests of students to use as a basis for selecting curriculum content.

It seems logical that we consider the teacher and especially the core teacher



as being in a most effective position for guidance work, in consideration of the fact that he (a) knows the child best; (b) spends most time with the child in effecting changed behavior; (c) has more contacts with the home; and (d) is the person with whom the child feels most secure.

The core teacher should take responsibility to see that goals set up are problem centered. He should encourage cooperative planning of goals and ways to achieve and evaluate these. The block of time scheduled for core classes also gives the core teacher a better chance to know students as individuals.

Parents, too, can play a significant role in helping school personnel to understand their children and to help identify areas that need emphasis. This, too, is a guidance function.

### A High School Program

A guidance program has been in operation in the Frederick Sasser High School for two years. A core program has been operating in our junior high school since 1947, but has not been considered an important part of guidance. This was not done intentionally by the personnel involved, but was due to the lack of a philosophy of education which would bring the two together in a harmonious way. As a result of a recom-

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 394.

mentation made by a visiting committee working with the faculty during a Middle States Evaluation, we decided to test the core hypothesis in the senior high school. We started out with the following concept of core: The content of a core program is based upon broad pre-planned problem areas which take as their focal point the psychological and societal needs, problems and interests of adolescents in our culture.

We scrutinized several instruments to enable us to determine the most significant problems confronting our senior high school students. We finally decided to use the *Mooney Problem Check Lists (Form H)* as our major instrument.<sup>5</sup> The usefulness of the *Problem Check Lists* approach lies in its economy for appraising the major concerns of a group and for bringing into the open the problems of each individual student in the group.<sup>6</sup> Problems in the *Check List (Form H)* are categorized as follows: (1) health and physical development; (2) finances, living conditions and employment; (3) social and recreational activities; (4) social psychological relations; (5) courtship, sex and marriage; (6) home and family; (7) morals and religion; (8) adjustment to school works; (9) the future: vocational and educational; (10) curriculum and teaching procedures; and (11) personal psychological relations.

The second instrument was a questionnaire constructed especially for our own school situation and addressed to parents. This questionnaire explained

the specific purpose for initiating core in the senior high school and gave a list of needs confronting youth as developed in a set of problem areas appropriate for the core curriculum arranged by Lucile L. Lurry. It also asked parents to check, in the appropriate blank beside each need listed, exactly how they felt the school might go about helping the child meet that particular need. Parents could make use of a special key to state whether (1) they thought the school was more responsible for this need than any other agency such as home, church and community; (2) the school was responsible for helping the child meet this need but the home, church and community were also responsible; (3) the school had little or no responsibility in helping the child meet the need.

Before the instruments were administered, the students were oriented as to the effectiveness of a core program in the senior high school, the need for parent participation—all these being explained in detail with a question and answer period following. These sessions were led cooperatively by the principal, teachers and the guidance director. Each pre-senior high school core student submitted a questionnaire to his parents with full instructions as to how the parents were to help complete the form. Due to space limitation it is impossible to include the full questionnaire in this article. However, its major purposes were to help students: (a) learn how family living can make for happier individuals; (b) express their ideas more clearly to others, and to understand better the ideas of other people; (c) get the most out of school living; (d) learn responsibility

<sup>5</sup> See *Examiner Manual for the Mooney Problems Check Lists*. 1950 Revisions. The Psychological Corporation, 522 Fifth Avenue, New York 18, New York.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

in facing and helping to solve the social problems of our community, state and nation; (e) better to understand themselves.

The two instruments were tabulated and interpreted by the guidance department. The items on the *Problem Check Lists* were categorized according to specific instructions in the manual. All categories were then arranged in rank-order for each grade. Rank-order of major problems confronting grade ten may be summarized as follows: (1) personal and psychological problems; (2) courtship, sex and marriage; (3) home and family; (4) social psychological relationships; (5) social and recreational activities; (6) adjustment to school work; (7) finances, living conditions and employment; (8) morals and religion; (9) health and physical development; (10) curriculum and teaching procedures; (11) the future: vocational and educational.

Rank-order of major problems confronting grade eleven were: (1) curriculum and teaching procedure; (2) courtship, sex and marriage; (3) personal psychological problems; (4) adjustment to school work; (5) social psychological relations; (6) finances, living conditions and employment; (7) home and family; (8) health and physical development; (9) the future: vocational and educational; (10) social and recreational activities; (11) morals and religion.

Both groups of students were fairly heterogeneous; however, most of the students were from a typical rural culture. It is apparent that there is a wide discrepancy in problems between the two grades involved, but nevertheless, these may be handled well in a

core program, provided special problems are referred to the guidance office.

In summarizing results of the questionnaire submitted to the parents by both groups of students, we found that most parents felt that the school, home, church and community should be responsible for helping the student meet all needs stated. Only a small number of parents felt that any of these should be the school's main responsibility; and only a small number felt that the school has little or no responsibility in helping the student meet any stated need.

These data plus day-to-day observations of these students were used as the faculty determined a basic curricular structure for the senior high school core program. This structure was defined as problem areas. Learning units were to be derived through teacher-pupil planning.

The guidance director presented a summary of all problems to each core teacher together with resource material for use in each problem area. Core teachers are encouraged to discuss regularly with the guidance director their plans for learning experiences. The door of the guidance office is always open. A thorough understanding exists between the core teachers and the guidance director as regards cases of a referral nature. A special effort is made to attack the personal-social needs of these students at their existing maturity level. This we have found most difficult because of the lack of interesting reading materials in the areas at the level of our students. The guidance director has helped considerably in identifying reading needs of individual students by interpretation of test scores.

More realistic help in the reading area is being planned.

Core teachers are using teaching methods which might be termed group guidance. Students share in defining the goals of each learning unit and each student chooses, with teacher guidance, the best way for him and his group to achieve its goals. The ground-to-be-covered approach of the single textbook procedure has been abandoned for that of solving problems through a variety of resources in men, materials and techniques. Evaluation is becoming a concept in which students and teachers cooperate rather than one in which a grade or mark is given to the student by the teacher. Lines separating the school and the community are becoming less distinct. Students must leave the four walls of a classroom to collect data on community problems and ascertain community reaction to possible solutions.

Various interest inventories,<sup>7</sup> autobiographies and personal files developed by the core teachers and left in the classroom for ready reference aid us in

<sup>7</sup> *The Kuder Preference Record* (vocational-form CH) is one instrument used. Science Research Associates, 228 So. Wabash Avenue, Chicago 4, Illinois.

keeping the program close to the lives of individuals.

It should be mentioned that a program of this type easily takes care of the homeroom function at the various grade levels. Our school, heretofore, had operated homerooms on a traditional basis with little or no success in spite of much effort to plan effective programs. The flexibility of this program plus the time allotment helps to make the homeroom an integral part of school life.

We conclude that guidance is a province of all school people, realizing that each person or group of persons has a unique contribution or responsibility. A functional school program makes guidance an integral part of the curriculum. We have found in our school that the core organization promises most in bringing guidance into an integral relationship with the curriculum. We do not believe that we have completely solved our guidance problems in the Frederick Sasser High School. We do believe, however, that through the cooperative efforts of faculty, students and parents that we shall find more and better ways to make guidance function effectively.



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