

# Creative Supervision for Living and Learning

**Supervision that is creative, constructive and alert fosters a high quality of living and learning in today's classrooms.**

**T**HERE HAVE always been evidences of creative supervision for living and learning. Each of us, I hope, can recall a creative supervisor—I mean someone with whom you have worked—a principal, a general or special supervisor. Then, too, we have all known the creative teacher, rare as are all artists, who, long before the introduction of research, spoke of, understood and worked with "the whole child."

Some of us were so fortunate as to have an artist teacher or supervisor to help us catch a wee bit of the vision of looking at children as individuals with different innate capacities, different backgrounds, different interests, needing love, affection, security, understanding, belongingness, contributing and getting the feeling of achievement—seeing each child or youth as a distinct personality. Today, the findings of research concerned with child growth and development simply emphasize again these same needs for children.

These findings have made it possible for all of us to understand children, to guide them in their interests and needs. Again research has helped us to know how children learn, what satisfactions they must have. By understanding "the know" of research, by using the

guiding principles, by evaluating the results of our working, we can more surely guarantee "the how" and be on our way to becoming more nearly a rare creative teacher.

But "the know" and "the how" are not enough—creativity demands freedom for growth. It flourishes only with freedom—freedom that carries with it responsibility.

Should these same underlying principles of child growth and development apply to adults?

It is well for us to remember that teachers and supervisors are people for whom the same philosophy which has been so successfully developed for children should also apply. They are the "whole grown up." They differ in ability, in training, in experiences, in background—yet, too often, we think of teachers only as a group. We expect teachers to have the same common understandings about children and youth, to have the same ability in teaching techniques: in

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other words we forget all about their differences. We want teachers to get all children and youth to achieve at the same rate, build the same skills, reach the same levels at the same time—forgetting all about the very important factor that maturity plays in children's and youth's growing up.

What happens to teachers when supervisory and administrative pressures standardize, formalize instruction? Teachers become frustrated, confused, unhappy, discouraged. Some leave the profession, and even advise others to avoid teaching as a career. Teachers of young children especially know that they must accept children where they are, must help them by taking plenty of time for each step in the child's development. They are fascinated as they watch children grow; and to help the child take the next steps is a thinking, a creative challenge. But all of this takes time; teachers cannot hurry the process. Does not this same idea work with adolescents?

We must ask ourselves: Is not teaching helping children and young people to grow in knowledge, in skills, in build-ings habits, attitudes and, while mastering these things, at the same time to learn to live together—to contribute, to appreciate one another, in this rapidly changing world?

Unfortunately, we have observed too many teachers who have lived through regimes of autocratic supervision—in-spectational, coercive, laissez faire. Not one of these types of leadership gives the teacher a feeling of security, freedom, opportunity and time to work out creatively with his group of children solutions to some of their problems. With such leadership, every aspect of school life was regimented. Teachers at stated periods must spend hours on

report cards, checking achievement levels that seldom can be interpreted by parents. Executive directives must be followed; regulations, procedures, curriculum—that they had no voice in making—must be observed. These authoritarian concepts prevent the teacher from exercising his creative ability, his initiative. He is not free; he cannot build within himself the feelings that come with creativity. Not having this joy himself, how can he help children catch the joy, the spirit of creativity? Creative experiences occur in all aspects of life. "All God's children have wings"—yet we, the grownups, do all we can to clip them.

### Creativity in Supervision

Creativity as applied in the field of supervision is comparatively recent, so there is hope ahead. Take the significant meanings of the following statement by L. Thomas Hopkins: "The creative individual—pupil, teacher, supervisor—must live in an environment where the climate of opinion is such as to support, encourage and stimulate him."

Dr. Ayer points out how creative teachers and supervisors can build together: "A constructive plan or program for the improvement of instruction is through the cooperative efforts in which there are opportunities for initiative, imagination, originality and experimentation."

We look to supervision to help us grow cooperatively, creatively. This is not easy for those who supervise. They need to be patient, friendly, cheerful, understanding—and they must like people. They need to know how to work with the uncooperative, the disagreeable, the immature as well as with the interested, successful and creative teachers. Supervisors must take all these in their stride.

Because creative supervision recognizes individual differences, the supervisor takes teachers where they are, appreciates their problems, tries to help by suggestions, by offering guidance. He does not order teachers to do his way; but by encouraging teachers to be free to experiment, to solve their problems, by giving them confidence to follow through, by furnishing them guidance and support, by giving advice when this is asked for—they help teachers grow. Creative supervision makes this an on-going process.

Then by observation, the supervisor has the rare opportunity, the rare privilege to learn from many teachers their different ways of working with children in helping them to grow. He gives these teachers due credit for this help and inspiration.

James L. Hymes, Jr. has written a challenging bulletin, *Teacher, Listen—the Children Speak*. It might just as well have the title, "Supervisor, Listen—the Teachers Speak." It seems to me the same philosophy applies. And, oh, what creative supervision might hear that would change much of the classroom activities that have been going on year in and year out! Many of these activities are years behind the actual life experiences of children and youth today.

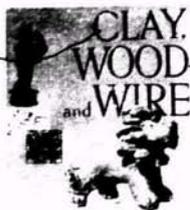
Curriculum research is pointing the way—let's stop, listen, and do something about its findings. Maybe we will come nearer to catching up with research—and thus no longer be fifty years behind in our practice.

When supervision is creative, the teacher has an opportunity to grow, has a part in determining criteria. The teacher then has a part in determining through experimentation, through doing, through collecting and organizing data, through evaluating the results of his

thinking, his efforts. He gains confidence as he follows through in situations in which he has had a voice, in which a part in the setup has given him an opportunity to use his initiative in a tensionless, permissive atmosphere. This learning becomes a part of the teacher. He is experiencing the feeling of becoming a growing person. He will want to take next steps.

When supervision is creative, the teacher is building, understanding, and using a sound philosophy: What is the school's role? What are the desired objectives of the school in our society? What are the needs of society? What basic principles of teaching and learning are fundamental if what we know about child growth and development is not violated? The teacher then sees the curriculum in terms of child needs, the child's maturity, the child's interests. He sees the curriculum as evolving and changing. He understands how to put into practice "the know" about children, how to help develop skills necessary to meet the needs of children. He learns how to do better those things he already does well.

When supervision is creative, the supervisor is not afraid to admit that he does not know. He sees his need for a rich background in many disciplines, not only for his own growth but so he can share these resources with others when they are needed and desired. He recognizes and uses group efforts. He realizes that best results are achieved when various people with different abilities contribute their best talents and energies. When a group works together on an experimental project, he helps to keep communication channels open, plans flexible, so that changes can easily be made as problems arise. He helps to find better ways of interpreting to the parents and



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the public what good education is. He uses lay resources and through participation he interprets what is significant in research findings to teachers, parents and lay citizens. He helps teachers to understand the necessity for keeping careful records, records that will show the areas of knowledge, the skills, habits, attitudes that are being built, evidence as to what is being learned and practiced, and proof that there are changes in behavior. Through surveys, the teacher, with the supervisor's help, discovers basic needs and interests.

Creative supervision should encourage each teacher to approach his activities, whatever these may be, with a feeling of freedom, but at the same time with a realization of the magnitude of his responsibility.

Creative supervision has pointed out many ways in which teachers, parents, youth, children, administrators and supervisors can work together in in-service programs. The experience of participating in workshops, conferences, discussion groups set up to study certain problems, builds self-confidence in sharing experiences and extends opportunities for leadership. The in-service program gives teachers an opportunity to continue their professional development, to look critically at themselves, to grow in appreciation of differences of opinion, to become more keenly aware of a few problems that our changing world civilization must face with the ever-shrinking of time and space.

I heard Lucy Gage, one of our great teachers, say, "Great teaching has always been associated with a personality—a personality that is capable of interpreting living realities—of opening new avenues of light and understanding—and of assisting men and women to use their own powers to the fullest degree."

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