

Teaching IS Leadership

TEACHERS are leaders. The very process of teaching is leadership at its highest level. Vision, creativity, knowledge, skill in human relations, organizational ability—these are basic requirements for the teacher.

There is much to challenge his leadership skills: the tremendous range of individual differences among the children and youth with whom he works; the variation in maturity levels; the need to work effectively not only with students but with professional colleagues, with parents and with the community.

That the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development should feature the teacher's role in educational leadership in this issue will come as no surprise. The concern of the Association for some time has been with curriculum leadership rather than with any particular leadership group (e.g., "supervisors and curriculum directors"). Not only has membership been cordially opened to such groups as students, teachers, administrators, parents and lay people concerned with educational leadership but a growing perspective on the interrelated operation of various types of leadership from these sources is developing. It may well be that the leadership role of the classroom teacher will emerge as a central concern, and that much of the leadership activity of other groups will be seen primarily as facilitating, implementing or supporting the teacher as he exerts creative leadership on the firing line.

Such a point of view is sharply challenged by facts of current practice. Elsewhere in this issue H. Gordon Hullfish, as

he examines the question, "Is ASCD a Force Affecting American Education?" finds that even today "teachers are involved in but small percentage in participative activities in which they share responsibility with status leaders for curriculum change."

It is the purpose of this issue of *Educational Leadership* to examine some of the aspects of the teacher's leadership job.

Sharing Leadership

The dynamic, living-and-learning operation within the classroom is a primary concern. How does a teacher, working with children and youth, serve to lead them as individuals and as group members through developmental and learning experiences that are significant? Verna Walters likens the process to the driving of an automobile, with teacher providing gasoline, a good battery, and a strong spark! Perhaps the teacher needs also to share his collection of road maps. It might even come to the point where teacher and learner find it necessary to build some new roads together!

John Kurtz, in his article, "Enabling Children To Achieve," places a most helpful and challenging emphasis on building a positive self-concept in the learner. Research shows that feelings of confidence, security and self-respect bear a strong relationship to achievement. A reasonable balance between success and disappointment is essential to continued learning. The enhancing of the learner's self-concept must be placed high among the skills of the teacher-leader.

A basic investigation of leadership be-

havior was conducted through the Ohio State Leadership Studies. Andrew Halpin draws implications from these studies for the teacher's leadership role. The reader will be intrigued by the two-dimensional analysis he presents. A high level of both "Consideration" and "Initiation of Structure" characterizes the behavior of the effective leader.

Bernard Lonsdale graphically illustrates some of the "knowing" and the "doing" that characterize good teaching. He raises a question as to how teachers learn to understand and assume such leadership roles. Personal experiences in group living that have been satisfying will determine in large measure the type of leadership to which each teacher subscribes. His own parents, early childhood teachers, college professors, present administrators, all may serve to condition his responses to the leadership opportunities offered by the classroom. It is important to note, however, that teachers have some voices in creating their *own* experiences. With a bit of vision as to how it *might* be done, with patience to work within and around limitations, through careful application of the steps in problem solving, a teacher can extend his understanding and skill with a leadership process that may have been demonstrated to him most inadequately!

Involving Parents

Important as is the leadership responsibility of the teacher in working directly with children and youth, there exist many other opportunities for him to exert educational leadership. I believe there can be no more effective means of involving parents in the school program than at the classroom level. The teacher can capitalize on the interest a parent has in his own child, the relative informality of small groups, and the oppor-

tunity to focus on the cooperative responsibility of parent and teacher. They are both concerned with working out a consistent, twenty-four-hour educational program for the child. PTA organizations, lay advisory committees, parent curriculum councils, each have important contributions to make. But that teacher who has leadership skills in working with parents is able to tap a rich reservoir of special skills and resources, helpful information and insights, and experiences that serve to give perspective.

Parents can and must be involved at all stages of curriculum development. They certainly have a stake in formulating *objectives*. They need to be more than informed about the plans and procedures for working toward the objectives—they may have invaluable suggestions to make. They can help in the day by day operation of the program by making available their resources, by supporting and supplementing school projects at home, and even, as Alberta Munkres points out in her "Sketch Number One," participating in actual classroom activities. Parents can and must share in the evaluation of this program in terms of the objectives they have assisted in defining. Teachers give leadership to this cooperative process.

Greater vision with regard to the contribution that public schools can make to preservice teacher education is being shown in all parts of the country. Student teachers are serving and learning in many heretofore uninvolved communities as teacher preparation institutions expand their programs.

The leadership opportunities afforded teachers in working with these less experienced but enthusiastic newcomers to the profession constitute a new challenge each year to an increasing group. Marjorie Kingsley stresses the importance of the *example* set by the supervising

teacher—his attitude toward children, toward parents, toward professional colleagues, toward the curriculum pattern of the school. A realistic awareness and acceptance by the teacher of his own strengths and weaknesses will help the student become more realistic about his own assets and liabilities.

Teaching is leadership. The teacher is

concerned with the growing edge of our society. This issue of *Educational Leadership* is a challenge to all those who are concerned with the improvement of the leadership behavior of teachers.

—ROBERT S. FOX, *director, University School, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; member of the ASCD Publications Committee.*

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