

Educating Supervisors in Changing Concepts

A systematic program now prepares the new supervisor to make use of changing concepts in supervision.

TODAY'S concepts of educational supervision are characterized by such phrases as *clarifying values, changing attitudes, balancing the curriculum, creative teaching, action research, sharing leadership, providing security, fostering good relationships, and changing perceptions.*

These topics or phrases indicate new roles and new tasks for the supervisor. They point to a need for greater understandings of and deeper insights into the principles of supervision. They call for particular competencies and skills in working with individuals and groups.

Educating for Supervision

It is the purpose of this article to indicate some suggestions for educating supervisors in the light of these changing concepts, these new roles, these needed understandings and competencies. The "case" of Sara Jackson is presented. It is hoped that Sara's experiences may provide some useful clues for colleges, universities and agencies interested in developing new programs or in strengthening

existing programs for educating supervisors.

Sara Is Invited To Apply for Study in Supervision

During the fall of 1957 Sara received a letter from the Division of Supervision at City-State University. The letter stated that Sara had been recommended as a prospective supervisor and invited her to submit an application for study in supervision to a Committee on the Recruitment and Selection of Supervisors. Enclosed with the letter were application forms and bulletins which described the work of the supervisor and the program for educating supervisors.

Sara was flattered, frustrated and frightened! She had many questions: Who recommended me? Can I do the job? Would I be happy to give up classroom teaching? Won't I miss the children? Will teachers see me as a supervisor? Where would I work? Sara talked with her friends, her principal and her supervisor about the letter and the questions it raised. She learned that her principal, Mark Jenkins, had received an inquiry from the committee and had recommended her.

Mark showed Sara the following letter he had received from the committee:

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It is necessary that the person you recommend have at least a five-year professional teachers' certificate. The candidate must have had at least three years of teaching experience and must have demonstrated his ability to do effective teaching.

He must like people. He must have evidenced his ability as a leader of children and adults. He must have proven that he can get along well with children, fellow teachers, and people of the community.

He must have evidenced interest in growing professionally. Has he been active in the in-service program of the school and the school system? Does he seek opportunities to attend district, state, regional and national conferences?

He must have a rather high degree of emotional stability. He must be able to get along with persons whose opinions, beliefs and values are different from his own.

He must be young in spirit and in physical stamina. Chronological age is not too important but "about thirty" seems to be a desirable age.

Sara was even more frightened after reading these qualifications. But with the encouragement of Mark Jenkins, her principal, and Ruth Wilson, her supervisor, she sent in her application for study in supervision.

Sara Is Accepted for Study in Supervision

Soon after Sara's application was received she was visited by a member of the Recruitment and Selection Committee. This visit with Sara had a three-fold purpose: (a) To answer any questions Sara might have about the work of the supervisor. (b) To describe the study-work-study program at City-State that would help her to prepare for this work. (c) To help the committee to secure additional information concerning the recommendation it should make to Sara.

Mark's recommendation, a letter from Ruth, the recommendation of the com-

mittee member who visited Sara, and the information on her application helped the committee to decide that Sara was a good "risk" for supervision, and, equally as important, that supervision was a good "risk" for Sara. Her application was accepted and she was invited to begin her study in supervision in June at City-State University.

Ruth Helps Sara Get Ready for Supervision

Ruth helped Sara to begin preparation for supervision. She encouraged Sara to accept leadership responsibilities in school and community committees, to serve as resource person to teachers in other schools in the system, and to participate in meetings with other supervisors.

Sara also helped Ruth with such activities as preparing for committee meetings and planning conferences, gathering and preparing materials for the monthly newsletter, and arranging exhibits of materials for curriculum committees. It was almost as if Sara were Ruth's assistant.

Sara had many opportunities to observe that the qualifications of supervisors as spelled out in the letter to Mark, were essential to success in supervision. These experiences had helped her to identify some of the competencies she would need to develop and some understandings of people she would need to acquire. These experiences gave her self-confidence too. In the spring she accepted a supervisory position in Johnson City for the following year. Sara had learned that she could complete the first phase of the study-work-study program in one full summer at City-State University and be ready for the second phase when she went to Johnson City in September.

*Sara Begins Her Study,
Summer 1958*

Sara spent the entire summer at City-State. For the first part of the summer she was enrolled in a workshop for school leaders. Included in the group were persons preparing themselves to work as supervisors, counselors, principals, curriculum directors, supervising teachers, and visiting teachers. These people had several characteristics in common: (a) Each person was preparing himself for a new leadership position in the school. (b) The responsibilities of each leadership position were closely related to those of each of the other positions. (c) Each person's position would involve him as a member of a leadership team with persons in each of these positions in the local school system.

Sara's "home base" in the workshop was with 15 other prospective supervisors and their advisor. She usually spent about two hours each day with this group. In these sessions the supervisors worked on those concerns which were particularly related to learning and doing the job of supervision. They studied basic principles of supervision, basic teaching and learning processes, and basic principles of human development and behavior. They discussed applications of these principles and concerned themselves with learning ways of fostering good relationships, of reducing tension and threat, and of providing good learning opportunities for teachers.

The supervisors worked at these tasks in the "home base" group by:

Reading and discussing the professional literature on principles and practices of supervision, teaching, and human behavior

Evaluating the procedures used by supervisors as observed in slides, filmstrips and movies

Visiting supervisors, administrators, class-

room teachers, and other school personnel to meet with the group and present points of view about supervision

Visiting supervisors in on-the-job situations and observing them at work

Reading and hearing reports of action research done by supervisors and other school leaders

Identifying and clarifying the psychological and sociological principles underlying basic principles of supervision

Identifying problems facing the schools and determining the supervisor's role in dealing with the problems.

These experiences helped Sara and the other supervisors to see their role in the process of improving the total learning environment for children, youth and adults. They recognized that in order to carry out this role effectively they must develop skills of group leadership, they must become effective resource persons, they must develop research skills, and they must become "specialists" in identifying and dealing with the personal and professional problems of individual teachers.

For another block of time each day Sara had opportunities to work with other school leaders in securing information about problems of common interest. Interest groups were organized to study such problems as initiating a school-wide counseling program, developing an individualized reading program, and stimulating professional study.

These interest groups not only provided information about the selected problem but provided opportunities for persons from all groups to determine their own roles in working with the problem in the local school system. For example, an interest group dealing with initiating a system-wide testing program studied the values and limitations of tests, the selection and administration of tests, and the interpretation and use of

test data. They then "spelled out" the responsibilities of each school leader in this across-the-board task.

Sara also worked with a third group—a team made up of one person from each leadership group. These five or six people attempted to envision how such a team might work together at home. Each person identified one or more problems from the school situation in which he would be working. Others in the group helped him to see how this problem might be viewed by the other leaders and what their reactions to working at the problem might be. Each person in the workshop had a chance to help a supervisor, a counselor, a principal, a curriculum director, a supervising teacher, and a visiting teacher "see a problem as he saw it."

Sara did not spend all of the workshop day in the groups described above. She had many opportunities for conferences with her advisor, other supervisors, other members of the workshop staff, and other faculty members of City-State. She had time for library reading, for preparing reports, and for studying materials about the schools where she would be working next year.

The other prospective supervisors participated in a seminar in supervision during the second period of the summer session. Emphasis in the seminar was on application of the principles of supervision, teaching, and human development to the particular situation in which each person would be working.

Sara spent a week in the Johnson City School System to secure firsthand knowledge of the programs, plans and problems of the schools. She visited each school, met the principals and many of the teachers. She attended several community activities and met many parents and children. She visited some of the community agencies and met with some

of the civic groups. These contacts, and the information which they provided, helped Sara to plan for her work in terms of "real" situations.

The supervisors visited the State Department of Education. They became familiar with the services provided by the department, met the consultants who were available to work with them, and learned ways the supervisors could assist the department with state-wide activities and services.

Throughout the summer Sara was developing and clarifying her beliefs about the purposes and procedures of supervision. Before leaving City-State she prepared a plan of action for herself which described the ways she hoped to work in Johnson City. The advisors and other supervisors helped her to examine her beliefs and to test the proposals for working toward them.

Sara left City-State in mid-August with enthusiasm and self-confidence. She knew that she would face many frustrating situations, but she also knew that many people were readily available to help her. Her advisor from City-State would visit her frequently. Her "big-sister" in the adjoining school system would give help, encouragement, and moral support as needed. The superintendent and principals had given her a warm welcome when she went for visits to Johnson City and good relationships were already established with them. The personnel from the State Department of Education had promised their services. How could she fail to be successful when so many persons were supporting her?

Sara Participates in an Internship

The second phase of Sara's preparation for supervision is being done as she participates in a year of internship. She is

employed as a full-time supervisor in Johnson City and is enrolled at City-State University for the internship.

During the internship Sara's advisor visits her at least once each month. On these visits the advisor helps Sara with her personal concerns, helps her to evaluate her supervisory activities, and guides her in planning new learning experiences for herself. The advisor also serves as resource person in conferences with Sara and other school leaders in Johnson City.

Sara keeps a diary of her supervisory activities and sends a copy of it to her advisor each week. This keeps the advisor in close touch with the happenings in Johnson City. The advisor writes frequently to Sara—after each visit, when something in the diary needs a reply, or when it seems that Sara needs encouragement or help. Telephone calls are made on occasion by supervisor or advisor.

In the fall quarter all of the supervisors participating in the internship met for a three-day conference. This conference provided for sharing of supervisory experiences and materials and for studying problems of common concern to the supervisors. Leaders for the conference were the supervisors themselves. The advisors, other college staff persons, and consultants from the State Department of Education served as resource persons during this meeting.

As this story is written Sara is looking forward to a second conference. A third

one will be held in late spring. This third conference will deal largely with determining the progress and status of supervisors in terms of their understandings, skills, and competencies in the major supervisory functions described earlier in this story. These "findings" will help Sara and her advisor to determine the content of the third phase of her study in supervision—her study at City-State next summer.

During next school year Sara's on-the-job study will be concentrated on an action research project. She and the school people in Johnson City will probably agree upon a problem of common concern before this school year is over. Sara will then develop plans for the research study while she is at City-State next summer and be ready to give leadership and direction to the study during next year.

In the summer of 1960, assuming that all has gone well, Sara will receive a sixth year diploma, designating her as a "Specialist in Supervision."

Of course the "case" of Sara Jackson is a hypothetical one. However, it incorporates the research and the most promising practices to be found in the education of supervisors. The principles and program design were selected from the research of Scott, Swearingen, Franseth, Cox, the Southern States Work Conference, and from existing programs in West Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia and Florida.

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