

## Does Supervision Pay?

**In work with teachers, administrators, parents and community agencies, the supervisor's services render a rich return for the investment involved.**

AMONG educators the answer to the question posed in the title is an emphatic yes. They need no persuasion that educational leadership, as exemplified in the supervisor, pays rich dividends. Nevertheless, since the question continues to be asked by serious-minded and well-meaning citizens, it is well on occasion to organize one's information and appraise one's feelings in terms of acknowledged purposes and demonstrable results.

In answering this question, some have countered with other questions: Have you ever taught in a school in which there was no supervisor? Did you sense a lack of coordination and a hopeless feeling of working independently? Were there times when a word of encouragement, a bit of advice, or the opportunity to share one's ideas would have saved a situation? Did you ever need someone who could help you isolate purposes, gain perspective, evaluate results, and give you a genuinely objective look at yourself?

Others, primarily administrators, willingly admit that supervision often provides spark which gives quality to instruction within their units. How else, they add, would teachers develop their greatest potentialities while on the job, since superintendents and principals so

often are absorbed in the details of buildings, budgets, athletics, buses, personnel relations, and outside interests in the community?

Budget-minded board members and legislators often are amazed when they come to understand the purposes underlying supervision and when they hear teachers analyze its positive features. They frequently ask why someone has not explained these facts to them before. Similarly, taxpayers throughout the community, many of them well-acquainted with the advantages of industrial supervision and training programs, are frequently eager to do their part in providing better education by boosting every possibility for supervision in the schools. Over and over for such individuals the reasoning goes this way: "Supervision is definitely worthwhile. We simply couldn't go wrong!"

### In the Classroom

In reality, there are relatively few individuals who doubt the economic or professional wisdom of adequate supervision in the schools. There are many, however, who hesitate to initiate programs of supervision until they are thoroughly aware of how this specialized service pays for itself in education of improved quality. As this concept is ac-

cepted, there remains little opportunity for disagreeing on the economic advantages of the conduct of well-planned supervision.

Supervision in the hands of energetic, well-prepared individuals who are continuing to grow does pay for itself in many ways. Teachers privileged to work with supervisors almost invariably attest to the feeling of security which comes about as a result of increased organization and unity. The teachers come to recognize the basic purposes of supervision and realize that they are respected not only as individuals but as important members of the total group. Then it is that their fullest powers for teaching and professional growth are released. The climate most conducive to learning in the classroom—a warm, friendly relationship between teacher and pupils—is the same climate most conducive to unrestricted growth among teachers. There must be feelings of general acceptance, respect and willingness to grow among supervisors and teachers if supervision is to pay its richest dividends. A threat-free atmosphere makes the difference between supervision whose dividends are high and supervision whose returns are nonexistent.

Supervision pays for itself primarily in the improvement of instruction which actually goes on in the classroom. Teachers who sense their acceptance as leaders within the school are at once more stable, healthier, happier and more determined to do a good job than otherwise. The most important aspect of such a situation is the fact that this stability, this happiness, and this determination are so

quickly contagious among pupils in the classroom. Fortunately, these feelings overflow the classroom and somehow become reflected in better parent-teacher communication.

Instruction takes on added quality when supervisors and teachers together study the ways in which learning best takes place; when individual differences are analyzed in terms of the possibilities of each pupil; when marking and promotion policies are carefully reviewed in terms of improvements; when instructional materials and equipment are cooperatively selected; and when teaching techniques and methods of evaluation are frequently analyzed. This type of cooperative planning between supervisor and teachers, characterized by mutual respect and a willingness to share, frequently results in cooperative planning and sharing within the classroom itself. When teacher purposes and pupil purposes begin to coincide—as a result of teacher-pupil planning and sharing—instruction attains levels of excellence which suggest the undeniable benefits of educational leadership as exemplified in the supervisor.

The leadership function of the supervisor is implicit in much that has been written. It may be advisable to analyze this function more in order to appreciate its full significance. The supervisor, more than anyone else on the educational staff, is likely to be aware of implications of educational research, trends in teaching, promising practices, and up-to-date materials. Such information, when shared effectively, makes a real difference in classroom instruction. Acquiring such information and perfecting skills in sharing it is definitely a characteristic of educational leadership which is readily rewarding to teachers and, in turn, to pupils.

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The leadership function of the supervisor is increasingly in evidence in the area of curriculum improvement. Throughout the nation, at local and state levels, efforts to improve the total school program are often spearheaded by supervisors. These persons have broad knowledge of subject matter, understanding of children and youth, skill in teaching, and ability to work with others and are qualified in a special manner to see the whole picture clearly and somewhat objectively. Renewed emphasis on quality education demands educational leaders, such as supervisors, whose vision is based on sound knowledge, keen appreciation for cooperative planning, and a sensitivity to the needs of students, teachers and others in the community. Supervisors who are able to serve as curriculum advisers pay for themselves in countless ways, some of which are immediately evident, others which, through faith, are observable over the years as students become effective adult leaders in solving their own problems and those of the larger community.

### In the Community

As a liaison person the supervisor has numerous opportunities to work understandingly with superintendents, principals, special supervisors, and other community personnel. In this capacity the supervisor may at times help interpret policies to a particular individual or group. In view of the supervisor's excellent background of preparation and experience, and in view of the responsibilities inherent in his position, who else is more competent to understand the total educational situation in a community and its relation to total community progress? Working closely with principals and teachers, the supervisor can be of tremendous help to each group as interpreter, coordinator, and instructional

leader. Less closely, but in many effective ways, the supervisor can also serve as a liaison person with the superintendent, members of the board of education, parent-teacher organizations, civic groups, and professional groups within the area. As an educational liaison officer the supervisor has all these opportunities for realistic service.

If communities throughout the nation supervision pays for itself in another very specific way—the way of public relations. Much of good public relations is effective interpretation. Through civic and professional organizations the educational supervisor has opportunities to share his knowledge, opinions and ideas for improving the school program; and at the same time, and quite frequently of more importance, he has opportunities to listen to the ideas of others. By working closely with other agencies of communication, such as the press, radio and television, the supervisor again has unlimited possibilities for improving understandings and appreciations which ultimately eventuate in an improved educational program. As the supervisor works cooperatively with school patrons, he again can render services as information officer, public relations officer, curriculum adviser, and general consultant.

Appreciation for supervision, which has increased over the years, is now at its height. Teachers who understand the purposes and possibilities of supervision are eager to avail themselves of this service; superintendents and principals, realizing the advantages of supervision as a means of improving instruction, are increasingly depending on supervisors as their directors of instruction; and the general public is gradually becoming acquainted with the positive values which can result through adequate supervision.

What kind of person can best give the assistance which teachers need most? For each of us the catalog of characteristics would vary; yet, with few exceptions, the list would include such fundamentals as these:

Successful teaching experience

Friendliness, pleasantness and ability to get along with others

Sensitivity to the dignity and worth of every parent, teacher and pupil

An awareness of the manner in which learning best takes place—among teachers as well as pupils

A proper perspective of self in relation to others; an easy sense of humor

An awareness of research, materials and techniques in the area of instruction which seem worth while

An awareness of the inter-relationships among subject areas and of possibilities for bringing about desirable correlations

An awareness of the world of science, politics, economics, government and creative expression

A willingness to plan and evaluate cooperatively

A desire to grow in personal worth and social responsibility.

Does *any* individual possess such an array of desirable attributes? We believe that many supervisors throughout the country are endowed with just such knowledge, experience and personal qualifications. We must not, however, become complacent, because to do so would constitute the risk between constant growth among teachers and continuing frustration. For this reason, qualifications for supervisors should forever include those which are the envy of every professional teacher. Supervisors, as has been emphasized throughout the years, must be superior in many respects if teachers are ever to attain their maximum maturity in personal and professional relations and if ever they are to teach with the kind of zeal and security which cause a desire to learn to become readily contagious.

Does supervision pay for itself? There seems to be only one answer to this question as teachers, administrators and parents in ever larger numbers attest to the improvements which daily occur when supervisors are given opportunity to exercise their leadership abilities.

### Dilemma of a Status Leader

*He Can't* — *but* — *He Must*

Be aggressive

Sell ideas

Dominate

Control

Force program

Question what is being done

Threaten

Accept mediocre program

Be alert and eager

Have many creative ideas

Keep things moving

Supply help as needed

Insure improvement

Get people to evaluate present program

Challenge

Support people who need help.

—KIMBALL WILES, *professor of education and assistant dean, College of Education, University of Florida*

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