

One outcome of

Creative Supervision

PERHAPS the supervisor's greatest challenge comes in the principle, "supervision provides effective ways for the release of creative potentialities of the people involved, to the end that the maximum amount of growth and learning will take place."² In order to follow this principle, supervisors must strive for a climate in which creativity of thought and action may be inspired and released.

Democratic life in any field will develop creativity. Creative leadership in the long run is vitally necessary to the success of the democratic life. Supervision, in addition to providing opportunities for creative contribution, will deliberately seek latent talent, will deliberately manipulate the environment to provide settings for creative expression.³

Because a democratic climate, conducive to creativity, existed in her school in West Hartford, Connecticut, and because she was secure in the knowledge

that her principal and supervisors would encourage her action, the writer conducted the following activity, one tantalizing April morning.

A Spring Assignment

Through the windows of the sixth-grade classroom, the scarlet blossoms of the maples could be seen, playing hopscotch with the sunbeams. The robins triumphantly shouted their optimistic, "Cheer-up!" The smell of warm sunlight on newly turned earth crept into the nostrils of the teacher and the boys and girls pursuing their morning routine.

Suddenly, the teacher went to the chalkboard and wrote "Spring Is in the Air." The children read the words, relaxed in their seats, breathing, "It sure is!" as they gazed longingly out-of-doors.

"If we were to write on that topic, how could we make our essays alive for others?"

"Use an interesting beginning sentence," came one response.

"Use powerful nouns and verbs, and colorful adjectives and adverbs," answered another.

"Don't forget to make people see,

¹ When this experiment was conducted, the writer was sixth grade teacher in the Eric Norfeldt School, West Hartford, with David Duval, Principal.

² American Association of School Administrators. *The Superintendent as Instructional Leader*, 35th Yearbook. Washington, D. C.: the Association, a department of the National Education Association, 1957. p. 9.

³ William H. Burton and Leo J. Brueckner. *Supervision—A Social Process*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955. p. 84.

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hear, feel and smell the things that you are observing," admonished a third.

"Remember, too," added the teacher, "that kinesthetic words, words that we seem to feel in our very muscles, the fibers of our being, create very powerful images in the reader's imagination."

"Oh, yes. You mean 'rolled down the hill' would make one feel more than just 'went down the hill.'"

"Exactly. Is there anything else to remember in writing an essay?"

"Don't drag your ideas out. Build to a point, and then finish off fast with a bang-up ending sentence," contributed Mel.

"Fine. Now, this morning we are going to try an experiment. Will you five," the teacher said, naming two boys and three girls, "take your papers and pencils with you out-of-doors? Go anywhere you'd like on the playground; write down ideas that come to you on the topic 'Spring Is in the Air'; and return to the classroom at the end of half an hour."

The five very happily left the room, and went to the spacious playground. No need to ask the principal's permission. This was a permissive school.

"Meanwhile," the teacher addressed the remaining pupils, "let's see if we can, through our imaginations, project ourselves outdoors, writing down our thoughts and feelings."

For half an hour an occasional sigh, the clicking of the clock, the scratch of pencils indicated that the children were writing.

At the end of 30 minutes, the five adventurers returned. Everyone eagerly awaited the reading of the results. The teacher offered to read for the children if they preferred. Many papers were handed to her, others retained for personal reading.

Before she had read more than a paper or two, the teacher realized that something rare and very remarkable had occurred. The pupils themselves listened intently, commenting, "That's beautiful! I can tell that that person was out of doors, I feel as if I were there, too!"

Or, "I didn't know that what I wrote would sound like that!"

Or, "How does the writer use words so beautifully?"

Almost without exception the children could identify the papers written out-doors. A few of the pupils writing from indoors were able successfully to project themselves outside, but in general their results seemed more prosaic.

To illustrate, some of the writings, with excerpts from others, are included here.

Jack, writing from indoors, expressed himself briefly:

You feel lazy from the fresh air of Spring. All around you flowers and plants are getting up from their long winter's sleep. Everything around you feels and smells fresh and clean. You feel that God made Spring just for you.

Contrast this with excerpts from Bruce's offering written out-of-doors:

On a cool, brisk day I went out. All of God's creatures were just waking up. The robins, back from the South, were singing their light, happy, cheerful song. The daffodils were opening with their pretty yellow petals and sweet fragrance. The sun was high and bright in the sky, while the clouds drifted loosely around. I smelled the lovely scent of the flowers awakening, the grass still scented with the morning dew. . . .

Going over to a lovely maple, I carved an "X" on its bark. I put my hand under the "X" and the cool sap dripped on my hand.

As I started to walk through the woods, I saw a mountain spring gurgling and

chuckling with great delight. I bounded along the edge, jumping over rocks and fallen trees, doing rolls in the soft grass, till I fell in some fragrant moss. I just lay happy and gleeful with Spring. . . .

I raced over to the pond. There I ripped off my shoes and stepped into the water. It gave a cool, tingling feeling that ran through my body. I sloshed around for awhile. A bass jumped at a fly, and looped into the water. . . .

Oh, yes! Spring is here: you can see it, hear it, smell it, and touch it. Spring is lovely!

This from a boy who earlier in the year had had difficulty in expressing himself in writing! The children noted his appeal to the senses: "clouds drifted loosely around"; "cool sap dripped on my hand"; "still scented with morning dew." They spoke about the effect of the verbs, "bounded," "gurgling and chuckling," "raced," "ripped," "sloshed," and "looped."

Meanwhile, indoors, Margaret, with poetic imagination, was writing:

Spring is time to have fun,
To hear the bugs and frogs at night,
To see the bright sun.
But is Spring really in the air?
The thought came clear to my mind.
Are the birds really singing?
Is the grass the greenest green?
It looks to me as though—yes, the
buds are coming out!
Is this a dream, or is Spring really in
the air?

The children felt the wonder in the lines—a young mystic seemed to be reaching out toward intangible beauty.

Carol, too, with ability to project herself far beyond the walls of the classroom wrote almost in blank verse:

Spring! The word echoed through the hills, into the sky, down the valley.

"Spring is here! Spring is here!" That is

the message the brook babbles, the song the birds sing.

In the cool spring breeze, the trees sway gracefully. Along the ground, sprouts begin to shoot up. Young things. Live things.

All alive.

The faint odor of early spring flowers floats and steals upon you without warning.

Far off in the distance—sounds—sounds of animals, children, and sounds of insects. Insects buzzing, insects chirping. Sounds. Live sounds. All alive.

But now, a new sound. The sound of rain. Rain keeps these things alive. Rain keeps Spring alive. Spring is here.

The children noted the power of the beginning line; the effective tying together of the thoughts at the end.

Following the readings the class discussed the things that had made the writings effective, concluding that writing is more powerful when the author is close to his topic, sharing his true feelings with his reader.

Kilpatrick stated the philosophy of today regarding creativity when he said, "Can the gifted alone create? I say, 'No' . . . Everyone of you, every child that you have, in my opinion, is capable of creation, and in fact does create every day. A creative act is an act which represents for the creator a new thought, a new idea, a new solution, a new analysis or a new synthesis. Creation is found wherever learning is found. Whenever an individual now has a way of reacting which a little while ago he did not have, I wish to say that an act of creation has intervened."

Supervision has gradually moved from the improvement of instruction to the improvement of learning. More than ever in America today there is need to awaken and stimulate the creative potentialities of all, to the end that optimum growth and learning will take place.

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