

A System Prepares Leaders

... in an administrative training program.

IN the summer of 1959 administrative personnel of the Roanoke City Public Schools faced an interesting challenge. The citizens of this city of almost 100,000 had approved an \$8 million school bond issue to relieve the overcrowded conditions of its schools.

All school personnel had been actively involved in designing an instructional program for the new schools. Space requirements for the instructional activities arising from the belief that the school plant can aid in individualizing instruction had led teachers, supervisory personnel, administrators, and the school board in making two major decisions concerning types of school buildings. These decisions were to build two senior high schools for 1200 pupils each, designed on the "school-within-a-school" concept, and to build seven small community elementary schools having from 8 to 14 classrooms.

As plans for the instructional program developed and as the radically different school plants were being designed by architects, school personnel became increasingly aware of the vital role which

would be played by the educational leaders in each of the new schools. Effective leadership of these individuals would be a major factor in bringing together the advantages of the large comprehensive secondary school of 1200 pupils with the individualization of instruction possible in the three small units of 400 pupils each.

Many questions were asked concerning what experiences these educational leaders should have. Other questions were asked since the role of the administrator in the proposed new schools would certainly vary from the role of administrators in traditionally designed buildings.

What percent of time should be spent in administrative responsibilities and what percent in supervising instruction? Should these educational leaders teach part time? What about their guidance function? What about the role of the educational leader in the small elementary schools? Would changes anticipated in the new schools cause change in all schools?

From discussions centering around these and many other questions concerning effective educational leadership, there emerged the awareness that there were now present among Roanoke teachers

Frisby D. Smith is Director of Instruction, Roanoke City Public Schools, Roanoke, Virginia.

outstanding individuals who had already demonstrated educational leadership. Many of these teachers with potential leadership ability had already completed state requirements for administrative and supervisory positions and held the master's degree. Others were taking graduate courses at the University of Virginia and other institutions of higher learning to qualify for such positions.

With the active support of the school board a two-year in-service educational leadership program for teachers was inaugurated in the fall of 1959. This program was launched cooperatively by the administrative and supervisory personnel of the Roanoke school system and staff members of the School of Education, University of Virginia.

E. W. Rushton, Superintendent of Schools, announced the new program. He stated that its purpose was "To provide Roanoke with a number of well trained potential leaders to meet the ever increasing demand for administrators at all levels of school operation."

In another bulletin, Dr. Rushton stated that the Administrative Training Program was "part of a long range program designed to give an opportunity for promotion and advancement to Roanoke teachers."

There was an enthusiastic response from teachers. More than 75 were recommended by their principals for the program. Through a screening process, to maintain balance among all instructional levels, 50 teachers were chosen as participants. It was emphasized with each teacher that completion of the two-year program would not assure anyone an administrative position. It was pointed out that this was an opportunity for a number of people to gain experience which should prove valuable to teachers while helping them to gain experience

which should assist them in qualifying for administrative positions.

The basic tentative outline for the two-year program for participants who held a master's degree was as follows:

Fall 1959—Orientation to the Roanoke City Schools

Spring 1960—Seminar built around administrative problems identified during the orientation program

Summer 1960—Study session for selected participants to discuss the "school-within-a-school" concept

Fall 1960—Continuation of seminar offered in the spring with special emphasis on human relations

Spring 1961—Internship—Selected administrative experience under the guidance of administrative personnel of the Roanoke City Public Schools.

The orientation meetings were held over a ten-week period. These were two-hour meetings and each participant was expected to spend at least one hour per week studying such facts as location of schools, enrollment, and school publications.

The following general outline was used in this initial phase:

First week—Introduction of program and participants

Second week—The instructional program

Third week—Continuation of the instructional program

Fourth week—Educational planning

Fifth week—The Personnel Division

Sixth week—Continuation of the Personnel Division

Seventh week—Financing the schools

Eighth week—Business management

Ninth week—Guidance

Tenth week—Maintenance and operation of school plant.

Each meeting was conducted by members of the local administrative and supervisory staff most concerned with the particular topic. For example, the Super-

intendent of Schools and the Chairman of the Roanoke City School Board cooperated with George Holmes, Coordinator of the Administrative Training Program and staff member of the University of Virginia, to present the first program. The Director of Instruction and other members of the instructional staff conducted the second and third meetings. Before the ten-week period was over, the participants had heard presentations from all major divisions of the school system and had discussed some of the educational problems in each of these areas.

Study Areas

The second semester of the Administrative Training Program was devoted to seminars or discussion groups. These were led by both the local personnel and faculty members of the University of Virginia. All topics centered upon local conditions. For example, the discussion group concerning high school administration considered the following topics in a two-hour session over a ten-week period:

- Scheduling
- Teacher Orientation
- Administration
- Supervision and Instruction
- Guidance
- Innovations in Curriculum and Instruction
- Activity and Student Organizations.

In addition to the seminar designed specifically for teachers interested in high school administration, there was another seminar led by faculty members of the University of Virginia designed to broaden understanding of public education on the state and national levels. Lectures were given on such topics as "State Support of Education," "Promising Practices in Elementary Education and Their Implication for the Principalship," and "Present Day American Society." These

lectures were followed by group discussion to relate the topics to the local school community.

In the Summer of 1960 a High School Study Session was held for the group studying the "school-within-a-school" concept. This study session met five hours a day for ten days. Two different topics were discussed each day. These discussions were led by a designated member of the group and each topic dealt with an area of the high school program in which the participants believed they needed more understanding and experience. The discussions were not theoretical; rather they dealt with the anticipated problems which would be faced by the administrators of the new schools. "Curriculum and Instructional Changes Needed for the New High Schools" was one topic. The topics in another session were even more specific—"The General Education Room, Its Use and the Orientation of Teachers to Its Use" and "The Discipline and Control of Students as Seen by the Head of the Unit School."

Evaluation

During the fall of 1960 all members of the Administrative Training Program participated in a seminar concerned with human relations in educational leadership. The group met for study and discussion two hours each week for ten weeks. Earl R. Boggs, now Head of the Department of Education, University of West Virginia, served as a special lecturer and consultant for this seminar. In this study of the characteristics of cooperative leadership, three major emphases emerged—basic human factors to be found in group members, basic human factors of successful leaders, and the leadership role in interpreting the school program to the community.

The final phase of the two-year Administrative Training Program was the work experience or internship phase. In a bulletin to each participant, Superintendent Rushon emphasized the importance of this phase of the program to the total experience:

Of all the forward looking activities of the Roanoke City School System, none has greater local and national significance than our Administrative Training Program. At this point we have every reason to be proud of what we have achieved. To each of you I express my appreciation and the appreciation of the School Board for your abiding interest and wonderful spirit of cooperation.

Next semester we shall embark upon a new, and perhaps the most difficult, phase of our current program. This phase will get down to the "brass tacks" of giving a selected group of prospective administrators a close look at the day by day operation of individual schools and the system as a whole. This will be a real experiment, but we know we have the people who can make this venture a success. . . .

In brief, principals and members of the central administrative staff will serve as instructors for the program. Trainees will be scheduled to visit with instructors for specified periods of time to learn from those who actually are carrying on the administration of the school system.

Each participant spent at least one hour per day working with an administrator. This internship lasted six weeks and each participant worked with six different administrators. In addition, the participants spent at least one full day working with a principal. Throughout the internship, emphasis was placed upon providing the participants with a variety of experiences.

At the beginning of the 1961-62 school year, 17 members of the first Administrative Training Program had been placed in leadership positions in the Roanoke

schools. The six deans of the new high schools had been participants as had the two directors of activities of these schools. One senior high school principal and two junior high school principals had been members of the group. Six of the elementary administrators had also been participants.

Upon completion of the first Administrative Training Class, another group of 30 teachers began a similar two-year program in the second Administrative Training Program. These teachers are now starting their second year in this leadership experience.

The success of the first training program can be measured by the success of the individual educational leader. As administrative and supervisory positions have become available, additional numbers of program participants have been appointed to these positions. At the beginning of the 1962-63 school year, 24 leadership positions in the Roanoke schools were held by former teachers who were in the Administrative Training Program. In addition, five participants had accepted leadership positions in other school divisions.

In the written evaluations by participants, many stated they believed this experience would be valuable to all classroom teachers. They believed this in-service program had helped them become more effective teachers as a result of having a deeper understanding of all phases of the school system. From this there has developed a feeling of pride within all teachers because they and their colleagues have been given an opportunity for advancement within the school system.

The Administrative Training Program in Roanoke has illustrated that a local school division can provide an effective in-service program for school leaders.

Copyright © 1962 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.