

## A Team Approach to Supervision

IN Marin County, California, in the San Jose School District, we are trying to discover how the many facets and functions of supervision shift and change. We also want to see how people primarily assigned to a number of different positions can work together best to fulfill these roles and tasks. A variety of personnel is seen as making up a supervisory team. This article describes one such team functioning in the district and includes: a classroom teacher (Robert Garmston), a curriculum coordinator (Robin Briscoe), a resource teacher (Joan Bauer), a superintendent (Ralph Giovanniello), a principal (Fred Newton).

Before we hear from each of these persons, let us take a moment to recall an old idea—a supervisor is a supervisor is a supervisor. In our work we try to deal with the high charge of negative feelings attached to this ghost word. Do titles make a difference? If so, what are we *doing* to dispel this ghost? How can

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**The Team: Joan Bauer, Resource Teacher; Robin Briscoe, Curriculum Coordinator; Ralph Giovanniello, Superintendent; Robert Garmston, Classroom Teacher; and Fred Newton, Principal—all of San Jose School District, Marin County, California.**

a positive approach to cooperative work become an actuality?

### Sharing Avoids Shifting

In the San Jose School District, the supervisory functions are conceived as belonging to all members of the team. The focus is centered upon, "Which team members can do this job most effectively?" and "How can we work together for the best interests of both children and staff?" Sharing responsibility helps minimize the shifting of responsibility.

### A missing link?

One important idea in the team approach is to have mutually acceptable focuses and ground rules for discussions. Helpful talk is deeply embedded in trust. The supervisory interaction is an end product as well as a beginning. This is particularly true where day to day contact is impossible. What can help clear away the barriers that so often block useful communication? One of the major links, too often the missing link, is *children*. It may be obvious, but team members need to share the responsibility for and mutually concern themselves di-

rectly with the needs of the children. It is essential for all members of the team to teach—to help children learn and to be perceived as teachers of children. This mutual concern with children provides a basis for us to help each other learn. It is also vital for the teacher/supervisor to be (and to be visible as) a lifelong learner.

#### *Team members act and interact*

If the following supervisory functions described by individual team members can be thought of as shared, rotating and overlapping, the dynamic nature of team functioning can be felt. Each team member will talk about one or more aspects of work with which he is vitally concerned.

#### *Trust, support, stimulation— The superintendent speaks*

The superintendent's roles are important whether a district encourages the "I'll see you in the office to discuss my observation" or the supervisory concept which originates with self-supervision and gradually ripples out to encompass other personnel in a relationship of cooperative supervision.

Cooperative supervision can be achieved through the development of inner security, pride and a sense of belonging on the part of all staff members. These feelings are obviously predicated on individuals' actual accomplishments, the working conditions, the mutual respect generated, and a willingness of the schools and community to test new instructional concepts, practices and programs. Arriving at the important feeling of belonging is not automatic. It is hard work; it is volunteering; it is an insistence upon as well as an invitation to staff involvement in decision-making; it is "If

you want others to do it, do it yourself"; it is courage and patience.

We, in the district, direct our energy toward these ends. The means we use are varied. To cite one example, we have recently opened a district and community museum, perhaps the first of its kind in California, to display student and teacher accomplishments.

But isn't cooperative supervision more than pride and belonging? Of course it is! Staff stimulation and support are also important keys to the concept. When we are understood and supported, we are receptive to self investment and to improved supervisory techniques. Also we need stimulation and freedom to initiate the new programs and ideas which seem to hold great potential for improvement.

In our district, support for teachers comes through respect for individuals and their ideas, duty-free lunch periods, resource teacher programs, a district concern for class loads, work loads, teaching environment and a host of other considerations. Whenever possible I, too, teach classes so that I can know children and teachers better. Cooperative supervision works. It needs the support of all staff members, especially the support of the superintendent.

#### *Respect for individual worth, encouraging creativity—*

#### *Words from a resource teacher<sup>1</sup>*

Creativity is many things to many people. To some, the creative process is as natural as breathing. Others eye it wistfully without realizing that they too have the ability to produce something of them-

<sup>1</sup> Resource teacher—an experienced, highly skillful and effective teacher assigned to a school or schools to develop and employ a multitude of ways in improving the curriculum; thus a teacher with supervisory functions affecting individual schools and the district as a whole.

selves from which they will derive satisfaction.

In my role as a resource teacher probably my most important function is encouragement. Sometimes this comes through recognizing creativity. Other times I am able to nurture creativity in a number of ways. Really listening is often the greatest encouragement of all.

The whole process is contagious. One class tells a story and I write it down. Everyone may not be a direct contributor, but through listening each one becomes a part of the creative process. One of my favorite memories concerns a quiet first grade boy who had contributed just one line to a story written in a highly verbal first and second grade group. This group-story was written, put into book form, illustrated, and sent home. David's mother read it aloud many times. Every time she got to David's line he would stop her and announce proudly, "I wrote that!"

Basing efforts upon a broad concept of creativity brings numerous results within a year. In some classes it is a book which is bound and taken home. Sometimes it is a story written on chart paper and put in the library where everyone can read it. It may be a conservation poster in the multi-use room or a tape recording of a class played by the children for their parents at PTA meeting. It is a mural in the office. It is a song written and sung by a class. Best of all it is a lovely warm-glowing feeling inside the individual when he says with pride, "I wrote that line."

*Supervision leads to analysis  
and change in team teaching—  
As seen by the principal*

Evaluation, be it from the self or from some external source, is, at best, a risky

task. Often it is a lonely task; particularly when it reveals that things, "don't look too good." To evaluate or "measure," you really need some kind of yardstick. Often this yardstick is not available, or possibly it is just out of reach. To reach for it means an uncomfortable change in position. To actually grasp it may be like lifting an elephant. Yet, evaluation is an essential element of the teaching act and of the supervisory picture.

In the San Jose District's seventh and eighth grade school we have operated on the assumption that the most effective results of assessment can be obtained through a process of mutual evaluation with teachers working cooperatively. We have assumed that two teachers working together can do a more "effective" teaching job than can a teacher working in isolation.

This process of teaching in pairs began two years ago. Each pair of teachers, or dyad, was provided with a daily planning period. During this time members of the dyad could talk and plan together, meet with the principal or consult with other district resource persons and parents. Teachers working in some specialized areas such as art, music, physical education, and library were considered an extension of the basic dyad. They were available for consultation, for planning special opportunities, for helping groups of pupils and for evaluating pupil progress.

As each team began functioning we established a set of eight assumptions to assist in the evaluation of our own effectiveness. Our assumptions were cooperatively evaluated at the end of the first year in light of the criteria for teaching effectiveness. This was done through a questionnaire study, in which teachers reacted in relation to their year's work.

The empirical evidence gathered from the questionnaire study has indicated that teachers are evaluating the classroom program in relation to the criteria for teaching effectiveness. Further, the study has revealed that evaluation takes on new meaning for understanding and growth when it becomes a mutually shared process. Cooperative supervision is essential in a team teaching setup.

*Self supervision, a key to sharing resources—  
Some roles of the classroom teacher*

In the San Jose School District, teachers share in the responsibility for supervision. Along with the supervisory functions of evaluating and planning with the principal, other teachers, consultants, etc., each teacher is encouraged to add self-supervision to this process. Many of the qualities inherent in a self-supervising teacher serve also to make the person a resource to the rest of the school staff. I am thinking of my own predisposition toward increasing my awareness of the many levels of experience. This evaluative process or "self-supervision" is often followed by looking for ways to improve the learning situation. Many times this leads me to confront areas of shortcoming in myself. My efforts to meet these obstacles have led me to such devices as teaching my toughest curriculum area first thing in the morning or writing, carefully and succinctly, the purpose for a lesson to help me gain focus, or perhaps it is just reminding myself that I am in the low arc of my psychic cycle and to hang on and wait a couple of days before making any important decisions.

Each teacher develops for himself a set of operations or approaches to self-supervision. These may be contrivances, yet I believe they represent an attitude

beneficial to the beholder and his co-workers—an attitude of awareness and searching. They also help him see how effective learning opportunities may be expanded.

In attempting to analyze the factors which tend to make teachers resources to their staffs, at least two seem to be central. The first is an excitement and enthusiasm for current experiences and ideas with a contagious willingness to share these. The second factor, invaluable to the teacher who shares in the supervisory process through self-supervision, is a willingness actively to seek help—from books, from college classes, and most importantly from other staff members. The honest question, "How do you do . . . ?" seems reciprocal. As each person seeks to grow, he shares something of himself.

*Some aspects of coordination—  
As told by the curriculum coordinator*

*Getting to know you*

I consider it most important to help bring about an exchange of roles. Teaching classes, either cooperatively with teachers or teaching lessons in order to release teachers to act as consultants or to do demonstration teaching, is one way of working. It is extremely important to me to retain my identity as a teacher. Not only do I enjoy being with children and helping them learn, but the very fact of knowing *these* children, *here and now*, is a main key to successful conferencing and to encouraging action research and other forms of curriculum development. Believing that each person (child, educator, parent) is an important resource of feelings, ideas and skills leads to perceiving new ways of implementing change and improvement.

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About four years ago when the mathematics boom was beginning, Cuisenaire rods became available. This resource had potential not only for mathematics but for freeing the learners (including teachers) to make discoveries, to check their own work and creatively to develop their own ideas for patterns, system and order. Besides encouraging and arranging for staff members to attend workshops at the nearby Santa Rosa Center, our district was able to bring in the services of stimulating leadership to start the fires burning. As resources to the district, several principals, teachers, Philip Schneider<sup>2</sup> and myself (then, part-time curriculum consultant) set out to become continuing learners and thus to provide support for learning. Now these materials are a basic part of our mathematics program which is continuing to develop.

One coordinating idea is to be tried this year—having our major curriculum council groups meet at the same time and in one school. This plan encourages most of us to make choices and to put our efforts into one group in depth. It also allows some of us to be coordinating members and to sit in on a number of sessions to gather data or to act as consultants. Consultants from outside the district, such as Aubrey Haan,<sup>3</sup> from San Francisco State College, will be able to work more efficiently with these groups. Other teachers will be able to visit various groups to become better informed and/or to explore their own interests in membership.

<sup>2</sup> Philip W. Schneider—former district superintendent, now on special assignment with the San Francisco State College project in Monrovia, Liberia.

<sup>3</sup> Aubrey Haan—Chairman, Division of Education, San Francisco State College district consultant in learning theory, social studies, and group process.

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