

# WHEN THE COUNSELOR WORKS WITH THE TEACHER

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WHEN the counselor and the teacher work together, one basic factor, the objectives of the school, needs both recognition and definition as the basis for their professional relationship. Therefore, common agreements need to be reached as to desirable outcomes of the educational process in a given situation.

## **Instructional Groups**

While it may be maintained that the stated purposes of the school and the guidance function are mutually supportive, if not held in common, the means by which those purposes are achieved are not always viewed with comparable unity. This disparity would seem to stem, in part, from the one-to-one pupil relationship established in the guidance office as compared with the thirty-to-one relationship established in the classroom.

Since the school is a social system that directly reflects the characteristics of its larger societal setting, the classroom well might seem to be a place closer to the functional demands made

upon children. The guidance process, however, has an institutional frame of reference and must also operate in terms of the larger societal framework by means of the school as a social institution. Therefore, while no disparity is warranted, the implication of the thirty-to-one or the one-to-one relationship is a factor that needs to be resolved when the teacher and the counselor sit down to work together in terms of the common goals of the school.

It is within the characteristics and dynamics of any instructional group that the union of individual needs and institutional goals takes place. The instructional group, when recognized as a major teaching resource, constitutes a comparable union between the work of the teacher and of the counselor. The basis for that position lies in the relationship between the group characteristics with their attendant interaction and the learning process. Recognition of that relationship defines a major operational base for counselors and teachers. The counselor is the key source of data that will enable each instructional

group to be formed on a common basis by which pupils will learn effectively when grouped together.

### **Guidelines for Instructional Groups**

Guidelines are discernible for counselors and teachers in structuring instructional groups from the guidance viewpoint. Six elements can be identified that interact to formulate a basis for such action:

1. *The identification of pupil needs that will characterize the resulting group of pupils.* Such needs stem generally from the purposes of the school, from the specific objectives of the grade or age level, and from the subject area involved. They have to be defined in terms of behavioral goals and constitute the criteria for individual pupil need definition. At this point, mass data normally found in cumulative records and cumulative folders can be used by teachers and counselors to institute the initial screening for group composition. How valid will be the need identification at this point will be determined by the validity of the data collected and their interpretation.

2. *An analysis of the major variables which influence the act of learning by each individual pupil before including or excluding him from a given group.* It is a truism to state that individuals make up groups. Inclusion or exclusion of a pupil from a given group demands the highest degree of professional judgment by both counselors and teachers. Data required to arrive at this decision must be of such an order as to make possible the identification of the need status of each pupil. And the interpre-

tation of those data will be equally demanding. Interrelationships among the needs identified among individual pupils demand equal recognition; it cannot be assumed that pupils with common needs will learn best when put together.

3. *A projection of expected behavior after the group has been organized.* A major purpose in building instructional groups is the prediction of broad behaviors in order to make possible long-range instructional planning on the part of the teacher. Such prediction is not only necessary in planning for the group but in evaluating the techniques used in structuring the group.

4. *The development of flexibility in utilizing the grouping process.* Follow-up studies of any planned instructional group is a necessity for two reasons: first, to evaluate the placement of each individual pupil, and second, to identify the point where a pupil's needs have been met and where new needs possibly are emerging. How flexibility can be utilized, however, without presenting a threat to a pupil in his peer relationships is a problem that needs considerable analysis in terms of the pupil himself and the group as a whole.

5. *The matching of teacher personal and professional skills to the identified needs and dynamics within the instructional group.* By organizing instructional groups, problems of teaching are not necessarily made simpler and less demanding. Planned grouping makes possible new and predictive problems and hence, the matching of a teacher's personal characteristics and professional skills is essential to the effective utilization of the grouping process. So

essential is this factor that it can be rated as important as the structuring of the group itself.

6. *The evaluation of pupil development in terms of identified pupil needs.* From the very purpose of organizing groups of pupils in terms of identified needs stems the fact that evaluation of pupil achievement and development must rest upon the purposes established for structuring the group. Structured groups of pupils, when based on needs, are organized to formulate a base for the instructional process. Evaluation of instruction under these conditions can be carried out only in relation to the identified pupil needs and in terms of behavioral goals which come from those needs. By grouping for instruction, the basis for evaluation is defined.

The guidance approach to grouping utilizes the group itself as a planned resource for learning. In so doing, it builds the instructional group on the basis of individual pupil needs and, in terms of the instructional process, it facilitates teaching procedures by making possible meaningful pupil goals. The data required to build such groups focus on both the individual pupil and the resulting group. In this sense, the individual and the group are planned to be mutually supportive. And in a much larger sense, a related degree of mutual support will develop between the teacher and the counselor as they work together to bring about such structured groups.

### **Implications for Interaction**

Inherent in the application of the guidance viewpoint in building instructional groups are the opportunities for counselor interaction with the basic

elements of the school program within its organizational setting. Seven of these elements can be identified:

1. *The stated or unstated goals of the school.* While goal statement falls within the leadership area of the school administrator with teacher involvement, a periodic examination of those goals for the school as a whole, for each grade or age level, and for each subject area is a necessity if instructional groups are to be purpose-oriented and need-based. The analysis of the interaction between the school purposes and pupils' needs is fundamental to the formation of instructional groups.

2. *The assigning of teachers insuring their maximum effectiveness.* This element also falls within the area of a principal's decision making. The counselor, however, in reporting the predicted behaviors of the instructional groups, supplies a major source of data to help the principal make a proper decision from the alternatives he has. Nor do the implications stop at the assignment of the current staff. Equal implications are evident for the recruitment of staff replacements.

3. *The in-service education program.* If teachers are to join with counselors in building and in working with instructional groups, a working knowledge of the kinds of data needed is necessary. While this is obvious in terms of the process itself, it has even greater import in terms of the communication process that will need common perceptions on the part of teachers and counselors as they work together.

4. *The pupil counseling program.* As counselors work with individual pupils in a school setting based on structured

groups, a basic resource is added—the utilization of the group itself with its defined characteristics. This is a distinct advantage since the group characteristics are known and can be utilized in terms of the adjustment problems of the individual pupils.

5. *The evaluation procedures designed to test the effectiveness of the guidance program.* Guidance program evaluation is, at its best, a tenuous process. With the formulation of structured groups, the "guidance viewpoint" will characterize in large measure the school organization and the defined operational purposes. Hence, a more precise basis for evaluation of the guidance techniques employed and their effectiveness will be realized.

6. *The program for curriculum development.* The relationship between guidance and curriculum has long been recognized. With instructional groups based on needs of pupils, this relationship can be brought into sharper focus and curriculum development can be more closely applied to the needs of pupils and through those needs to the stated purposes of the school. Thus, provision can be made for the effective establishment of the means-end factor of curriculum development.

7. *The kinds of instructional resources and materials needed.* Since the operative curriculum, in structured groups, directly reflects the needs of pupils, it follows that the kinds of instructional resources and materials

needed to implement the curriculum will be more sharply defined. This is made evident when it is recalled that the evaluation of the instructional process will be based on the needs approach cited above.

The concept of structured groups started with the identification of pupil needs, worked its way through the assignment of teachers, and came to rest in the act of evaluation. When working with teachers, counselors, by the fact of their assignment, are concerned with all three factors. The common institutional frame of reference that binds counselors and teachers together is brought into focus by the stated- or unstated-goals of the school. Satisfaction in their mutual efforts can come about only when such efforts are mutually supportive. And this is made possible with the development of structured instructional groups.

Yet all of this is dependent upon the administrative leadership that will make possible a school organization that will be productive in terms of meeting the needs of pupils—needs that stem from the interaction of the pupil with his physical and cultural environments. Since the school itself is a social system, the utilization of its subgroups designed in terms of member needs seems warranted. When this is realized, the unity between purpose and organization will begin to emerge with increased effectiveness of the inter-related professional staff. ☞



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