

Coordinating Leadership in Resource Use

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WHAT is the role of the resource person in the instruction of young people? This is the basic question that will be considered here. It is the author's belief that individuals in communities have a significant role to play in complementing and supplementing the work of classroom teachers. Space will permit the listing of only five reasons; others that perhaps could and should be listed will have to be left to the imagination of readers. All evidence seems to indicate that these are timely issues. Critics of education would go further to say that the coordination of school experience with life experience is long overdue.

1. Teaching by resource people usually is considered an adjunct to a school program, not a contribution to be coordinated with all other teaching and learning. The typical attitude has been to let parents and citizens teach their way and we likewise shall instruct children by our preferred style.

That teaching by laymen may result in better, more meaningful experiences, better acquisition of knowledge, better development of skills, better mastery of learning, seldom is recognized by a school staff. True, administrators and teachers have been mindful that children have been learning from resource

people in the community, yet rarely have they tried to adjust these learnings harmoniously with experiences that occur inside the school.

2. Teachers are not reaching at least 25 percent of children in schools today with their present methods of instruction. Not only do facts substantiate this number of failures, but other children also may be learning little, even though receiving passing grades. Really, only a limited number of administrators and teachers are working closely with adults jointly to further an instructional program, at least a well-designed plan.

A still larger number of schools are not sharing instructional duties with adults at all—in any way, shape, or form.

3. Motivation for learning does not, in the main, stem from teachers. Motivation in large part comes from fathers, mothers, siblings, peer associates, and significant others—significant others in addition to those listed. True, a few teachers have motivated youngsters to greatness, but not many. Public schools generally do not have well-organized

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plans for improving upon and furthering the motivation that comes more or less naturally from some nonprofessionals.

4. Educational institutions still have the problem of transfer of training. Often what is studied in school is not remembered because it is academic knowledge rather than meaningful knowledge. Subject matter seldom is mastered until it is effectively used. Teachers really need resource people in communities to help pupils make application of what they have been taught to real situations in life. Research shows clearly that knowledge and skills tend to fade away quickly unless they get reinforcement from genuine, down-to-earth situations outside the school. Plans for tying in classroom teaching with the reinforcement of teaching by citizens in the community are rarely found.

5. Professional personnel may not instruct youngsters in some situations as effectively as laymen. This statement may shock some educators; yet it is a truth that should be recognized. In no way is this a denigration of teaching. Some laymen have more empathy with young people than do many certified teachers. Laymen have an added advantage in that they usually work with students on a one-to-one basis, while regular teachers more often than not work with 25 or 30 at one time.

The writer can point out several illustrations of practices that relate, in part, to the five issues listed. This is not, of course, an exhaustive list. Numerous other examples could be found functioning in school systems across the nation.

Coordinating School and Community Experience

● Ira Gordon's program at the University of Florida prepares mothers to teach other mothers how to give appropriate instruction to their two-, three-, and four-year-old children. These parent-teachers first receive instruction at the University, then they go to the homes to teach mothers. All the homes represent low income families.

The program has been operating for a number of years.

● At the Human Resources Center in Pontiac, Michigan, mothers are given instruction on child care and possible enrichment experiences that could be provided for children. At the same time, other persons at the center give appropriate instruction to these mothers' preschool youngsters.

● Mrs. Sandra Epps from the Martin Luther King School in Flint, Michigan, acts as a liaison person between teachers in the school and mothers in the home. She carries constructive messages to mothers showing how they can give reinforcement of classroom teaching in the home. Also she takes messages back to teachers from mothers, pointing out unique things teachers might do for their children.

Sharing Instruction with Adults

● At two Michigan schools, the Gundry School in Flint and the Averill School in Lansing, youngsters in the lower elementary grades are taken out of their reading classes from time to time and are given individual drill on learning skills—visual, vocabulary, verbal, listening, comprehension, and writing. In addition to the regular teacher, paraprofessionals are used—student teachers, laymen, and older children—to teach the younger children.

● Differentiated staffing is used in the Averill School in Lansing, Michigan. A cluster leader administers the work of regular teachers and paraprofessionals. Here is the organizational design:

1. The principal should have no more than 15 cluster leaders reporting to him.
2. Cluster leaders should be responsible for the administration, supervision, and evaluation of learning.
3. No more than 15 persons should report to the cluster leaders.
4. The principal should exercise appropriate educational leadership with the cluster leaders.
5. Principals should spend as much time

working in the field as they spend in their school building.

6. Paraprofessionals should be used when they can perform a task as well as teachers.

7. Appropriate instruction should be given to paraprofessionals before they are permitted to teach or assist youngsters with learning.

8. Each youngster should have identification with some one teacher more than with all other teachers.

9. The main focus in the elementary school should be on the mastery of learning skills, not on the mastery of identical content.

Motivation for Learning

● At Wilmette, Illinois, the public library has promised to entertain first and second grade children with a puppet show if they successfully read and report on a total of 30 library books by the first of August. Children have responded to this encouragement with mounting zeal. Each child can read at his own best speed and choose the books that are of interest to him.

● High school pupils in Okemos, Michigan, have worked on an educational project entitled "Environmental Quality." Sharing thinking with public officials, including legislators from the state capital, has been a highly motivating and rewarding experience.

● A number of years ago, members of the Rotary Club in O'Fallon, Illinois, served as counselors to high school boys on an individual basis. The program was named a Career Guidance Program. The boys attached themselves to a professional person of their choice with the thought of possibly entering that profession at a later date. The adults took great interest and pride in their protégés. Likewise the young men were proud to be associated with such significant leaders in the community.

● Eugene McFadden, a Mott Intern from Michigan State University, directed a project for the Pierson Elementary School in Flint, Michigan, entitled "Insights into the World of Work." He took boys and girls on field trips to see business and industry in its

day-by-day operation. Many of these children had never been to a bank, to a large department store, to an industrial plant, or to many of the other places that they visited. This gave them insight into and understanding of the possible vocations or professions that they might enter later on in their lives.

Transfer of Training

● At Hamady House in Flint, Michigan, girls from different ethnic groups live for a two-week period in this palatial residence under the directorship of highly skilled lay leaders. These girls come to understand themselves and others better, and to appreciate their community much more fully than they would without such experience.

● Home economics and agriculture departments in public schools have for many years had projects in the homes and on the farms of their respective students. Why could not other departments in the school make applicative use of their subject matter content through appropriate projects in the community?

Laymen Can Be Effective Teachers

● Big Brothers are an excellent example of laymen giving very effective guidance to young people. This is an organization of men who become intimate companions of fatherless boys.

● Artist teachers, such as music teachers, have taught young pupils and their teachers simultaneously. Both students and teachers have been highly motivated by such a process.

● Internships in commercial concerns and professional offices by high school students have been an excellent example of ways in which adults can contribute to the growth and learning of young people.

Many and varied resources and resource persons have been used to educate people since the dawn of civilization. The problem now is still that of properly connecting academic with experiential knowledge. □

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