

Editorials

Leadership Is the Key

Robert R. Leeper

Alexander Frazier, in his volume, *Adventuring, Mastering, Associating*, states as the central challenge to school people: "All children have an equal right to profit fully from a broadly based school program."¹ He identifies several victims of our present procedures in schooling: children who are taught too little, those who may be overtaught, those who are mistaught, and those who are not taught some things at all. He then examines some of the forces that seem traditionally to support inequality in education. Finally, he stresses some of the new insights and resources that can help school people do a better job of meeting the central challenge of providing an equal rights education for all learners.

In the struggle to bring together the insights and resources at the point of need, there is one indispensable tool: that of leadership. At whatever level, with whatever audience, the essential ingredient of leadership must be supplied or the "inequalities" in opportunities will not be alleviated.

Leadership is the key to a more applicable and enhancing educational experience for all. What is the source of leadership? Does this function spring forth spontaneously? Or is it provided as a result of meticulous planning in a setting that is both supportive of and conducive to a community of effort for the good of all?

Leadership is the key to projecting "a broadly based school program" by which all children—and all learners—will have an equal right to an education that is worthy of our finest aspirations.

When we review the many possible reasons for the allegiance that so many persons show toward our association, the one that seems central is: a shared interest in improving the skills and objectives of leadership. There is much appeal to persons at all levels of schooling in the idea of *leadership as function*, rather than *leadership as*

a status or administrative role. This is a central tenet of ASCD, and is now, as it has been through the years, a drawing card that attracts new members. This tenet also cements the bond between the long-time member and the organization that dares build its major platform upon this premise of leadership in pursuit of, and in support of "a broadly based school program."

Issues for 1977-78

In line with its long-time commitment to bring together the insights and the resources at the point of need, the Association presents the following issues of its journal for 1977-78. The themes and the content of these issues are based on the needs, interests, and concerns of ASCD members as identified and refined by the Publications Committee and the staff of the Association.

- "New Challenges to Instructional Curricular Leadership" is the theme of this present issue. It grows out of a very noticeable phenomenon today that in all areas of our society leaders seem to be less accepted, less honored, and less supported. Americans seem suspicious of all authority and all exercise of power and influence. Yet without a considerable degree of influence, power, and authority, leadership is impossible.

In schools, principals, supervisors, department chairpersons, and others in middle management roles experience the problems of leadership more keenly, probably, than teachers or superintendents, since they are in the middle of the battles for and about leadership. This present issue explores the problems and dilemmas facing persons in traditional leadership roles in schools and

¹ Alexander Frazier. *Adventuring, Mastering, Associating: New Strategies for Teaching Children*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1976, p. 3.

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offers suggestions on how to cope with these new pressures and demands.

• "Competencies as the Aim of Education" is the topic for November. This is an important discussion and one that should be examined from a theoretical as well as a practical standpoint.

States and school districts in many parts of the country have established, or plan to establish, lists of competencies expected of students—often in connection with graduation requirements. One reason is that members of the public suspect that many students are poorly educated. Some educators want to identify competencies because they sense an opportunity to clarify what elements of education should be imposed on students and which should be self-chosen. Writers for this issue will need to examine, for example, whether there is indeed an inescapable contradiction between competencies and compassion.

• "Near Future Imperatives" is the theme for December. We consider this an important topic both from the standpoint of survival and also for any effect that education can have upon the quality of life in our time and for the future that presses upon us.

In the recent past it was common for educators to talk about planning curriculum and program changes for implementation five years in the future. Textbooks were adopted for five years, local census data provided five years advance information for predicting enrollment, school mileage notes were usually for five years, and school boards were more predictable. All these stabilizing elements and many others are at present less likely to be found in the typical school-community planning situations. We believe that a dynamic new set of factors has emerged. These factors are, in many cases, detrimental to creative curriculum planning. Three to five years is a more realistic planning span.

The curriculum worker is aware of the new and pervasive elements that are present in this current school-community milieu. While all ele-

ments are not universally operative it is clear that a grasping of the reality of powerful new lines needed for effective response is extremely important.

• "Curriculum Evaluation: Uses, Misuses, Nonuses" is the theme for the January 1978 issue. We recognize that curriculum evaluation is a very complex concept. Many aspects or components can be identified. Some of these aspects have received much of our attention, while others are less explicitly recognized. A comprehensive examination of all aspects that should be involved in curriculum evaluation is needed and will be attempted in this issue.

The current practices of evaluation clearly have far-reaching impact upon schooling and all those involved. These relationships need to be clearly identified and examined by a variety of audiences. Equally important but perhaps less clearly understood is the impact of what we do not currently evaluate—for example, attitudes, appreciations, habits, generalizations. The January issue will attempt to look at these factors: (a) What is involved in a comprehensive evaluation of curriculum? (b) What are the current practices? (c) What is being omitted that ought to be included?

• "State/Federal Role in Curriculum Development" will be the focus for February. We believe this topic is singularly important at this time. The past twenty years have witnessed constant change in the status of state and federal initiative in curriculum development. First, the federal government, supplemented by private foundations and other sources, funded the disciplines approach in instruction in certain fields. This had a great impact on state programs. Then with decreasing support and some negative feedback, this approach became dissipated.

What is the picture today in this interplay of state and federal influences in curriculum development? What about the movement for reform in curriculum, especially at the high school level?

Just what, in actual terms, can be accomplished through legislative/financial support, whether state or federal, insofar as curriculum development is concerned? This issue will explore some of these matters.

- "Education of Judgment and Action: Personal and Civic" is the theme for March. The making of judgments is an inescapable and continuing human activity. Such judgments may focus upon issues about what one shall do in personal and social relationships or about what social or civic bodies shall do in the interest of the common good. The quality and adequacy of any such judgment may be enhanced through the acquisition of proficiency in the judgment-making process and in following up with action. Entailed in education directed toward this goal is the necessity of providing instructional opportunities that allow learners (a) to grasp the elements of the process and the pertinent information and standards relevant to the various types of judgments that can be made, and (b) to have the opportunity to engage in making practice-judgments until one is able habitually to make adequate, high quality judgments and to act upon them.

This issue will provide articles on a rationale for education of judgment, on issues related to this type of learning, on various schools of thought on how education of judgment shall proceed, on the current status of school practices and student competence in this area, on exemplary programs and/or instructional methods and their evaluation, and on how to obtain support for teaching judgment-making.

- "Youth Cultures: What Can We Learn?" is the theme projected for April. An especially glaring problem in education is the failure of school people to understand the cultures of today's young people. The importance of this problem is highlighted by the large numbers of alienated youngsters who become the outcasts of our society, frequently resorting to a life of crime, drug addiction, or both. While the activities of these

youngsters are highly publicized it is obvious that all young people are affected in varying ways by our lack of empathy with and understanding of the cultures of today's youth.

More often than not, adults in our schools are faced with student behavior that they are not prepared to cope with as well as indifferent responses to the strain of a typical school environment. The expectations of adults in the school are often at odds with those of the young people. In any case, it is important for educators to better understand the concerns, the life style, the interests, and the thinking of our young people if we are to meet the challenge of helping to improve their lives in a rapidly changing world.

- In May this journal will present another "non-theme" issue. Our experience with such an approach has brought considerable evidence of favorable reactions on the part of readers. From among the hundreds of manuscripts that are sent to us each year for reading and consideration a selected few will be organized and presented in the May issue. This open-ended approach utilized in the final issue for the year should help to bring the urgent issues and the most relevant commentaries together for the benefit of our readers.

Thus in as open a manner as we have been able to devise we have projected a series of issues of our journal for the furtherance of our insights and skills as school people committed to "a broadly based program in education."



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