

Staff Development Needs of Department Heads

Frances Weaver and Jeffrey Gordon

High school department heads need inservice education in human relations, planning, and staff selection and supervision.

Principals of secondary schools, overloaded with administrative tasks, have traditionally relied upon subject matter department heads for instructional leadership. Duties assigned to department heads, however, cover a wide range of responsibilities, many of which are more administrative than academic.

In a survey of secondary social studies department heads in suburban Cook, Lake, and DuPage counties in Illinois, Berrier¹ reported that all 57 respondents participated in employment interviews, developed curriculum guides and materials, conducted department meetings, and managed department funds. Over 90 percent of them were responsible for classroom visits leading to written teacher appraisals, for teacher assignments and schedules, and for selection of instructional materials. Other tasks reported less frequently were student teacher assignments and supervision, articulation with junior high schools and colleges, and orientation of substitute teachers.

The question of relationship between competencies and responsibilities was raised by Sergiovanni.² He developed a self-evaluation checklist of competencies adapted from task descriptions listed by Harris and King and by McCleary and McIntyre. He organized a set of 30 tasks into four leadership categories: education, supervisory, organizational, and administrative. These categories were logically conceived without benefit of factor analysis.

We decided to ask a group of department heads (a) What responsibilities they believed were

most important in their jobs; and (b) What responsibilities they considered themselves most competent to fulfill. We could then determine the importance/competence gap; that is, the areas in which department heads thought they needed the most help.

Our Research

Seventy-six secondary department heads drawn from three sources were given 30 task cards. On each card was a task department heads do, as identified by Sergiovanni. The department heads were told to sort the cards into five piles twice, once by importance to their job and the other by how competent they personally perceived themselves to be with respect to the topic on the card. Two scores were then computed for each task: an importance rating (1 = low importance, 5 = high importance) and a competency rating (1 = low competency, 5 = high competency). The data were factor analyzed into six broad areas.

Results

Of the six general areas of tasks, the department heads selected Human Relations, Educa-

¹G. Galin Berrier. "What Does the Department Chairman Do?" *Clearing House* 48:432-36; 1974.

²Thomas Sergiovanni. *Handbook for Effective Department Leadership*, Boston Pub. 1977. p. 14.

tional Planning, and Staff Management, as most important to their job function. They also identified those areas as the ones they were least competent in. Furthermore, the difference between importance and competence was greatest in the same three areas. (See Figure 1.)

Staff Development Recommendations

On the basis of these results, we believe that the following outline would be appropriate for inservice programs for department heads. The tasks listed in each area are the same ones the department heads said they need to learn more about.

- Human Relations

1. *Setting Instructional Goals*—Being able to lead groups of parents, citizens, specialized personnel, teachers, and pupils through a series of discussions, presentations, training sessions, and other experiences to produce a report showing some of the more important instructional goals on which there is agreement.

2. *Team Building*—Knowing about and being able to employ procedures for establishing organizational goals, clarifying roles, planning, and otherwise providing structure in order for individuals to relate to each other in cooperative and supporting ways.

3. *Resolving Conflict*—Knowing about and being able to work through conflict situations with students, parents, teachers, and others related to school activity involving role conflict, value conflict, goal conflict, and interpersonal conflict.

4. *Assigning Personnel*—Knowing about and being able to analyze the needs, expectations, and composition of existing staff groups in various units, and, based on that analysis, being able to prepare and justify recommendations for assigning and reassigning staff members.

5. *Bringing About Change*—Knowing about and being able to build a change strategy that takes into account human factors helping or hindering change, level of acceptance needed from teachers for successful implementation, and a realistic appraisal of the amount and kind of influence one has as a change facilitator.

"The time has come to provide meaningful inservice programs for department heads. We believe that careful consideration of the areas outlined here can result in inservice experiences that department heads will recognize as relevant and useful in performing their duties."

6. *Revising Existing Structures*—Proposing carefully reasoned or research-supported changes, which may include changes in assignments, in the use of staff time, in the required reporting patterns, or in the allocation of resources.

7. *Policies and Procedures*—Knowing about and being able to establish a system of policies and procedures, linked to and justified by educational goals and purposes, which frees teachers to work more effectively and which sets high standards for that work.

- Educational Planning

1. *Building a Healthy Climate*—Knowing and being able to use models that identify organizational conditions important to the building of self-actualization in the staff and the satisfaction of ego needs of individuals.

2. *Making Decisions*—Knowing about and being able to apply decision-making models and problem-solving processes.

3. *Individual Planning*—Being able to assist teachers in establishing individual professional growth plans that include objectives for change in classroom practices, a schedule of experiences for continuous growth, criteria for interim and terminal evaluation, and a specified period for accomplishing the objectives.

Figure 1. Differences Between "Importance" and "Competence"

Task Area	Mean Difference
Human Relations	.38
Educational Planning	.26
Staffing Management	.31
Program Management	.01
Financial Management	-.58
Financial Planning	.07

FOR OPENERS...

two ASCD books take a comprehensive look at open education, in theory and in practice.



Open Education: Critique and Assessment
edited by Vincent R. Rogers and Bud Church
(611-75054, \$4.75)—describes the concept of openness, its British origins, and how cultural differences have determined the direction of open education in the United States. Case studies explore the successes and failures among open programs, including a lucid summary of research in the field.

Open Schools for Children by Alexander Frazier (611-17916, \$3.75)—provides a provocative exploration of the opportunities and problems in freeing space, structure, and curriculum, as well as how it will all add up in the long run.

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

No. of Copies

_____ **Open Education: Critique and Assessment**
(611-75054, \$4.75, 115 pp., 1975)

_____ **Open Schools for Children**
(611-17916, \$3.75, 94 pp., 1972)

Enclosed is my check payable to ASCD
Please bill me .

Postage and handling extra on all billed orders. All orders totaling \$10.00 or less must be prepaid by cash, check, or money order. Orders from institutions and businesses must be on an official purchase order form. Discounts on orders of the same title to a single address: 10-49 copies, 10%; 50 or more copies, 15%.

Return to:

**Association for Supervision and Curriculum
Development**
225 No. Washington St.
Alexandria, VA. 22314

4. *Program Planning*—Being able to plan the department's educational program in accordance with the available facilities and equipment.

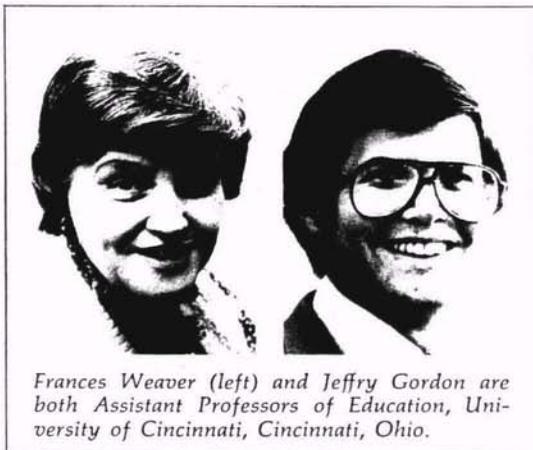
• **Staffing Management**

1. *Developing a Staffing Plan*—Describing essential staff positions to be filled, developing job descriptions for each, and specifying the competencies required of the individuals who will fill the positions.

2. *Recruiting and Selecting Personnel*—Knowing about and being able to engage in a variety of selective recruitment activities; securing a list of several possible applicants from various sources; systematically securing and validating relevant information on the applicants by conducting personal interviews, by checking with previous employers, and by using selection procedures; and preparing recommendations for filling vacancies with the applicants who will best fulfill job requirements.

3. *Supervising in a Clinical Mode*—Being able to lead the teacher through a clinical cycle using classroom observation data, nondirective feedback techniques, and various planning and inservice experiences to produce improved teacher behavior.

The time has come to provide meaningful inservice programs for department heads. We believe that careful consideration of the areas outlined here can result in inservice experiences that department heads will recognize as relevant and useful in performing their duties.



Frances Weaver (left) and Jeffrey Gordon are both Assistant Professors of Education, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Copyright © 1979 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.