
Overview

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Encouragement and Caution

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Plenty of factors make for disharmony in schools these days, but there is a lot of teamwork nonetheless. For example, many school districts are developing closer ties with the private sector.

It is encouraging to see others besides educators accept responsibility for educating future generations. Schools can teach knowledge but they can't, without assistance, teach responsibility or initiative. Consequently, educators must not turn their backs when someone shows interest in working with young people—especially someone with organization, money and skill. In many communities across the U.S., that "someone" turns out to be a corporation that, under certain conditions, is willing to share its resources in a collaborative effort with the school system.

Most educators probably approach these alliances with caution. They don't like to lose control over programs for which they feel responsible. More important, they may sense a difference in point of view.

Business people are accustomed to thinking in "bottom line" terms. In return for their investment, they may hope to sell more products, take a tax write-off, recruit and train prospective employees efficiently—or they may just want a better community in which to do business, which is as close to altruism as one can ask.

School people, on the other hand, have inherited a tradition of dedicated service to others. That doesn't mean educators are completely unselfish, but for them the bottom line is supposed to be the long-term welfare of individuals.

Because business-initiated projects can be self-serving, educators are right to look proposed gift horses carefully in the mouth. They should not accede, for example, to programs designed to make students better near-future employees at the cost of lowering their horizons or restricting their options.

Still, the disparity in outlook between educators and others may be mostly

illusory. Former school people I have talked with who now work with corporations say schools and businesses are surprisingly similar. Many corporate executives are deeply committed to quality education. Typical of the positive programs they have helped establish is Indianapolis's "Partners in Progress," described in this issue by Janean Gilbert.

On another aspect of teamwork, Kathleen Hogan aims her lance at team management, claiming that idealistic administrators who dream of a local version of the Round Table may end up as modern King Arthurs, friendless and betrayed. Gene Geisert, former superintendent of the New Orleans Public Schools, acknowledges the hazards but defends the management team concept.

Stanley Cherim writes on another issue. Having served on both sides of the negotiating table, Cherim condemns the destructiveness of the adversary system and appeals for new forms of communication to replace collective bargaining in education. He claims that deception and demagoguery, inherent in present arrangements, breed permanent distrust and make concerted action next to impossible.

On still another theme, H. Dickson Corbett reports his research showing that successful change is more likely in schools where teachers are more interdependent. That idea is supported by Bruce Joyce, who teams with Michael McKibbin to describe types of teachers they have encountered ("omnivores," "passive consumers," and so on) in the course of a series of interviews. Noting that school social systems range from "energizing" to "depressant," Joyce and McKibbin explore the relationship between "Teacher Growth States and School Environments."

Most of us probably agree that teamwork can pay dividends in high morale and better learning. The success stories in this issue point the way to more of it. **EL**

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