

Women in Education

NANCY S. OLSON

Equity Requires Renewed Commitment

As part of its task, ASCD's Women's Leadership Project developed a position paper on women in educational leadership. Presented here are the paper's statement of cultural heritage related to equity, ASCD's position regarding equity, and the project members' beliefs, which serve as a foundation for actions they recommend for ASCD:

Our Cultural Heritage. Democracy and human rights are values that are supported in our society in principle, if not always in practice. We have moved from a government by landowners and slave owners toward a government with voting rights for all men and women and a constitution that declares the equal rights of individuals regardless of race or religion. Many in our society have come to accept the value of a measure of cultural pluralism. We have become aware that "different" is not "undesirable" or "deficient." However, the direction in which our country is moving at the present time seems inimical to the gains we have made in the struggle against discrimination. The current climate requires reassessments and additional commitments from us.

As educational leaders we have a special responsibility; we influence the future leaders of our country. In order to have a better awareness of the complexity of our tasks, we must each keep in touch with developments and changes in our society and the world. As a minimum, we must be aware that:

1. The peoples of the world are truly interdependent.
2. We live in a pluralistic society.
3. Sexism, racism, and ageism are reflected in our institutions and our language; they are difficult to eradicate.
4. Maximum use of the human re-

sources in our society has not been realized.

ASCD's Position Regarding Equity. The Association has often been in the forefront in support of actions designed to develop the human potential of all individuals. This organization has supported education that is multicultural, serves the needs of all learners, and provides a balanced curriculum. ASCD has also spoken out for equal rights and minority concerns. In line with these commitments, and because the current environment has become less favorable to all equity issues, the Women's Leadership Project believes that ASCD, as an organization of educational leaders has a special responsibility. ASCD must move even more visibly and aggressively in support of full equity in our schools and society.

Women in Educational Leadership. By providing leadership that influences staff development and curriculum, ASCD can help to bring about changes that, in the long run, will aid men and women in contributing fully.

We believe that women can be effective educational leaders and that women should be given equal access to educational leadership positions and to inservice and preservice preparation for those positions. Women educational leaders have a special role to play. They provide models of possibility to young women. Their roles and actions help validate women's experience of the world. Women in leadership roles can expand the perceptions and agendas of decision-making groups. They can encourage new awareness of stereotyping, the first step in bringing about change. They can monitor educational decisions that may

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be discriminatory in their impact. They can support and advise other women who aspire to and/or hold leadership positions.

We believe that educational leaders should critically evaluate curriculum materials and teaching methods for evidence of sex stereotyping and discrimination. They can help teachers become aware that schools as institutions reinforce sexism through their employment patterns and the "hidden curriculum" in the school's organization and activities. Teachers need help in teaching children to think critically and to evaluate the information they receive through the mass media and in textbooks. Educators have a significant role to play in influencing the perceptions of young people about the world and their futures. We all need to be more aware of the sexism and racism in our society.

Some ways that ASCD could strengthen and demonstrate its commitment to equity for women are:

1. Make a clear statement reiterating its support of equity and education for equity in the form of a resolution to be voted upon.
2. Review the role of women and minorities in ASCD's national office and in state affiliates and report its findings to the membership.
3. Establish a mechanism to promote and coordinate activities to further equity by working with ASCD state units, and with other national professional organizations.
4. Call upon all national educational organizations to stand and be counted in terms of policy commitment to equity, visible attention to equity issues in all publications and in all programs, and equity in the representation of elected leadership.
5. Provide leadership in awakening educators around the country to the

need for equity in educational institutions and in curriculum by initiating appropriate curriculum institutes, publishing articles in *Educational Leadership*, and publishing special monographs.

6. Act as the catalyst to organize a national movement, such as an invitational convention or other forum which will have enough visibility and enough clout to focus national and even international attention on equity as it relates to women in educational leadership. Such a convention could result in a set of "Cardinal Principles" of equity, which could be used as referents to prick the collective conscience from

time to time as needed and refocus scattered efforts and weakened resolve.

The ASCD Women's Leadership Project:

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Equity Project Emerges

To carry on the work begun by ASCD's 1982 Women's Leadership Project, an independent Women's Equity Project Committee is actively planning meetings and other events for ASCD's Annual Conference next March in New York. Send your suggestions to Barbara Pavan, Department of Educational Administration, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122.

If you would like to receive copies of the Equity Project's newsletter, contact Phyllis E. Robinson, 1367 Joliet St., Detroit, MI 48207.

Supervision Abstracts

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What Causes Poor Performance?

In several field studies and a major laboratory study, Mitchell and Kalb¹ found that supervisors with experience in the task they were supervising tended to attribute poor performance to the environment. Inexperienced supervisors, on the other hand, blamed the individual subordinate for the difficulty. In general, explanations involving internal causes were more common than those pointing to external causes.

While these researchers stress the need for broader research than their study of proofreaders, bankers, and military personnel, they note that their results have some important practical implications for all supervisors. Their findings suggest that experience may make the supervisor more aware of external causes of poor performance such as a disruptive environment. Such information may lead to more accurate diagnoses of causes of poor performance, which consequently may lead to appropriate actions for improvement.

Administrators Are Key to Effective Supervision

Taking a dim view of current supervision, V. L. Schonberger² notes "an overall dissatisfaction with the inefficiency and lack of usefulness of present supervisory practices." He advocates a more analytical approach stressing

awareness of teaching behavior and urges supervisors and administrators to support one another. As specific examples of a more personal and productive approach to supervision for instructional improvement he cites Cogan, Sergiovanni, and Weller.

Schonberger says the administrator is the key to bringing about the required change and must act as the catalyst. Specifically, supervision must be thought of in terms of collaboration and consultation. The administrator is advised to encourage interpersonal contacts, collective goal setting, and open lines of communication between teachers and supervisors.

A Systems Approach to Supervision

Stressing that classroom-based instructional programs for supervision are inadequate, Dennis Borinstein³ advocates a systems approach designed to maintain interpersonal skills on the job. The training program described by Borinstein uses custom-designed videotapes and practice sessions.

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Steps involved in the process include meeting with representatives of the group participating in the training, identifying critical skills, working through skill modules using videotapes that include role plays of effective use of the chosen skills, and skill practice sessions.

Borinstein's program is based on five principles that are crucial for success:

- Maintain self-esteem while maintaining standards
- Be specific about behavior
- Manage the consequences of behavior
- Communicate effectively
- Organize for results.

The training program and principles must be adapted to meet every organization's problems and situations. Borinstein notes that his approach leads to improvement for supervisors as well as supervisees.

¹T. R. Mitchell, and L. S. Kalb, "Effects of Job Experience on Supervisor Attributions for a Subordinate's Poor Performance," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, April 1982, pp. 181-188.

²V. L. Schonberger, "Effective Supervision: Coordinational Improvement of Instructional Activities of Professional Colleagues," *Education*, Winter 1982, pp. 129-131.

³D. Borinstein, "A Systematic Approach to Increasing Supervisory Skills," *Supervisory Management*, June 1982, pp. 35-39.

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