

Trends

Supervision

CARL D. GLICKMAN AND MARY GAYLE ROGERS

State of Direct Supervisory Services

What is the state of direct supervisory services requested by and delivered to teachers, and what is the degree of teacher satisfaction with those services? A recent study, partially funded by ASCD's Effective Supervisor project, attempted to answer those questions by surveying 595 teachers in elementary, middle, and secondary schools in 15 school districts in 12 states. The results are, of course, limited to those 12 districts that volunteered to participate and to those teachers who agreed to complete the survey (595 out of 1,357). However, we did uncover some intriguing findings. Among many discoveries, we'd like to highlight a few.

First, direct supervisory services to help teachers improve instruction are available to the overwhelming majority of teachers (out of 27 services, all but 3 are available to over 50 percent

of teachers, yet teachers' use of the services is low; the mean percentage of teachers actively requesting services is only 17 percent. Second, teacher satisfaction with supervision services is, logically enough, related to the degree of match between request and receipt of service. But in almost all cases, teachers are satisfied with a low rate of request and receipt. What is happening here? It may be that in many schools there exists a tacit understanding among teachers and supervisors to the effect that "I won't ask for help and you won't give help, and we'll live happily together."

When we looked at in-group differences with particular services that teachers asked for and received, we gained further insight. The services least asked for and delivered to teachers were those that placed the greatest demands on teachers to *think* about instruction (in-class action research, demonstration teaching, and observa-

tion of other teachers). Yet those teachers who did request and receive those services had a *high* degree of satisfaction and perceived those services as contributing substantially to teaching effectiveness.

Another intra-group finding refutes conventional wisdom about elementary and secondary school teachers' receptivity to supervision. We found that secondary teachers prefer to receive *more* direct supervisory services to improve their classroom instruction than do elementary and middle school teachers. Furthermore, secondary teachers desire greater frequency of supervisory assistance with methodology, professional growth activities, and help in understanding students. Perhaps the departmental organization of high schools emphasizes content assistance to the exclusion of assistance with pedagogy. A new look at the selection of, preparation of, and time given to department heads functioning as classroom supervisors may be informative.

So what do we conclude? The results as a whole suggest, at the simplest level, that having services and personnel available for supervision does not ensure that teachers will request or receive that help. Perhaps it's more important for each school and district to determine the types of assistance that teachers need in their day-to-day work and then to prioritize ways to provide it. □

Authors' note: Readers interested in assessing direct supervisory services in a school or district may write to us at the addresses below to receive the instruments used in this study as well as a companion instrument developed by Jean Jones, Middle School Coordinator, Glynn County School District, Brunswick, Georgia.

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