

## OVERVIEW

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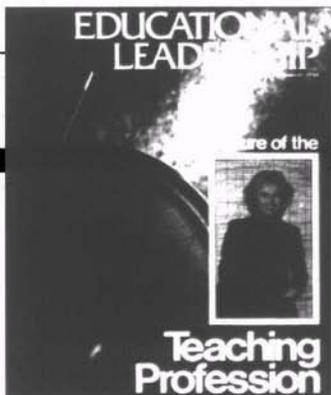
### SHOULD ADMINISTRATORS HELP EMPOWER TEACHERS?

In schools across the country, life goes on as usual, but in some of them, teachers are talking about career incentives and differentiated responsibilities. More and more districts are experimenting with site-based management plans intended to give maximum discretion to faculties at the local school level.

These developments, advocated in a pair of reports issued in 1986 (Holmes Group, Carnegie Task Force), are vigorously supported by both major teacher unions. Does that mean supervisors should be suspicious? Yes, says Gene Geisert (p. 56), professor at St. John's University in New York City and former superintendent of the New Orleans schools. Geisert thinks that some of the concessions made by superintendents and boards in the early days of collective bargaining have actually impaired the quality of education. We must not, he warns, accede now to another grab for power by teacher unions.

Most of the authors in this issue see the matter differently. Linda Darling-Hammond (p. 4) traces two competing trends in policies affecting teachers. One is based on the idea that teachers need not be experts, because their task is to follow prescribed rules. The opposite view assumes that, because students are not standardized and teaching is not routine, teachers must be knowledgeable. If this latter view outstrips the other in the years ahead, she predicts greater professionalization, with differentiated roles and collective decision making.

I agree with Geisert that leaders should insist that any new professional prerogatives go to those who most deserve them, but I believe that efforts to restructure school systems, as in Rochester, New York (p. 48), are consist-



The past is prologue, or is it? We are now accumulating the knowledge base necessary for teaching to become a true profession, and we have the possibility within reach to work together to attain that stature.

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tent with that goal. The reasons were spelled out persuasively in the Carnegie Report: (1) The changing nature of the school population, combined with higher expectations for student performance,

requires more highly skilled teachers. (2) Teaching is not now an attractive occupation to many of our most talented young people. (3) Factors that will in the long run attract people to the profession include good working conditions, the opportunity for higher pay and other rewards, some control over use of one's time, and opportunities for interaction with colleagues.

Principals and supervisors do not have full control over these things, but they can either resist changes or help bring them about. They do not have to wait for external agencies to act; they can demonstrate their convictions by the way they interact with teachers. They can provide leadership opportunities to outstanding staff members willing to assume them. They can redesign communication patterns so that teachers feel part of a professional unit that extends beyond their own classrooms. For those who endure the daily pressures of schools as they are, the first requirement is a vision of what schools can yet become and of the fully professional role teachers should fill. □

#### References

- Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. (1986). *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy.
- Holmes Group. (1986). *Tomorrow's Teachers*. East Lansing, Mich.: The Holmes Group, Inc.

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