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The teacher in the school of tomorrow will have a variety of roles. One of the more important will be that of diagnostician. Perceptive assistance for the teacher as diagnostician is available from the school psychologist, the social caseworker, the guidance worker, and the reading clinician. The services of all district personnel should be utilized. The professional personnel in the school should allow more time for the teacher as a person, as a reading teacher, as a facilitator, and as an interpreter of the behavior of children. Cross-discipline synthesis is necessary. (Author/BS)

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DISTRICT PERSONNEL AND THE SUCCESSFUL READING PROGRAM

Introduction

The topic for discussion presupposes that we agree basically about the results of the successful reading program. Each listener will have his own list of criteria for evaluating a reading program to determine the degree of success established, but generally the following would be included in some manner:

1. The achievement of scores on regularly administered standardized reading tests ranging in the vicinity of the national norms commensurate with the intellectual level of the student body.
2. An increasing number of students admitted to prestige colleges able to complete their education successfully.
3. An increasing number of students receiving scholarships.
4. An increase in library usage, reference materials, etc.
5. An increase in the sale of reading materials, including newspapers, in the community.
6. The evidence of a wide-range of reading interests among graduates.
7. A decreasing number of drop-outs.

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If we were to look at the reading program diagnostically, we would be interested in the degree of development, content area performance, flexibility of procedures, speeds of reading, study skills, and skill in critical reading as well as the amount of reading. It is the premise of the writer that when district personnel are utilized wisely and creatively, they have a direct, salutary effect on the reading program.

District Personnel

District personnel in each school system will vary in number, in autonomy, in type and effectiveness. The number of personnel will be influenced by the philosophy of the administration and the realities of the budget. The amount of autonomy will be determined by the degree of training and skill attained by the individuals working in each professional role and the effectiveness of the leadership. The types of personnel included in a district seems to be determined, at least partially, by the experience of the central office staff. If the experience with school social workers has been seen as productive then emphasis usually is given the school social work program. The same is true for corrective reading personnel, psychologists, guidance personnel, curriculum workers, special education personnel, speech therapists, and even librarians. Therefore, the services rendered by the district personnel of each school system will be influenced by the emphases given the individual services and the interpretation of their respective roles.

Some overlapping of responsibilities among the services usually occurs. Unless the leadership prevails and is able to iron out role definitions and responsibility limitations, time and energy are dissipated in defending positions.

When lines of communication are kept open a team spirit develops to the enhancement of all participants. The team which keeps its collective eye on the needs of the teacher and child enables positive change to occur in the classroom.

Some friction will be eliminated when the classroom teacher is recognized as a responsible professional person who needs assistance in providing a better climate for all children. As the teacher understands more about his own dynamics and the meaning of the behavior of the student, his diagnostic abilities will be increased. Instead of viewing teachers as a group of the uninitiated who must continue to live in a state of semi-darkness, more time devoted to skillful sharing of the pertinent knowledge of each discipline will enable the teacher to grow in self-understanding and in his ability to promote a more optimal learning situation for students. Every child will benefit from a more perceptive teacher and this in turn will help the deviant child. A more effective use of district personnel in assisting teachers to become more able teachers of all children as well as children with problems is the focus of this paper.

Use of Specialized Assistance

Specialists with knowledge of growth and development of learners at various levels of maturity have been employed over the years in ever increasing numbers to assist in diagnosing and planning instructional programs for the child with problems. The well-trained psychologist investigates intellectual, sociological and personality factors of a child identified by the teacher as not progressing academically or causing trouble in some way. Although teachers are more aware today

and see the need for referring the withdrawn child, this child often is not helped until real damage has occurred.

When the psychologist reports his findings to the teacher, more often than not the response has been: "That's just what I thought." The teacher usually expresses some degree of disappointment at the lack of specific help in providing for the child. The psychologist may have taken as long as three hours to gather the information, two hours or more writing the diagnosis and another three hours conferring with teacher, principal and parent. If the school system has a multi-disciplinary staffing procedure, a conference may ensue including as many as ten additional professional persons from the school and community all of whom have had some contact with the student or his family. This time-consuming analysis and staffing procedure will continue to be necessary for the hardcore students and for some children in serious difficulty. However, the numbers of cases seem to be appearing faster than the requisite staff to handle them.

Each special service department should ask themselves, "Have we done all we can to make the school experience as profitable an experience as possible for the child? Have all the preventative measures been taken? Have we used as wisely as possible the time and skill of our specialized staff?"

At the present time too often the psychologist tests; the teacher treats; and there is all too little common ground between them. With all of the attempts at communication, there is still a great deal of misunderstanding.

The Teacher of Tomorrow

Even a cursory glance at the educational scene requires a close examination of the use of professional time. The explosion of knowledge is proceeding at such a rate that it has been estimated that between 1968 and 1975 the pace will have accelerated to the extent that knowledge will be doubling every thirty days. The teacher of tomorrow will inevitably become more of a specialist. Helping him to become the best teacher possible should be one of the goals of our specialized staff from other disciplines. One of the real dangers of automation such as Individualized Programmed Instruction is that the teachers are failing to find satisfying new roles in which they facilitate learning. The multi-disciplinary staff can help teachers develop new roles and develop new skills which automated instruction cannot match. Teachers should then be better prepared to accept new theory and media of instruction.

The classroom teacher is already something of a specialist who modifies behavior and differentiates curriculum in terms of individual variations in the learner. Certainly, one area in which it is predicted that the classroom teacher will become more proficient is diagnosis. In addition to serving as the manager of the learning environment, the teacher will have to become expert in selecting resources of many kinds, a specialist in methodology (Montessori, inductive, discovery) a curriculum maker, an innovator and an evaluator. If she is serving as a member of a team she may also be an organizer, leader, coordinator, or supervisor.

It will be possible to eliminate some of the present duties and chores of the classroom teacher in order that time may be devoted to potentially more rewarding tasks. The typical teacher of the future will spend a very small part of his time providing information. As the use of television, video tapes, film strips, tape recorders motion pictures are added to the curriculum, analyses should be made of the process of communication, the processes by which people learn and make decisions and the processes which are motivation building. As devices for the transmission of knowledge are created which release part of the teacher energies for observation and diagnosis, she must somehow be taught the requisite skills of analysis and the interpretation of the resultant information. One possibility for the realignment of time usage might be to increase the amount of time spent in conferences in which attention is paid to both the affective and cognitive concomitants of the learning process.

Improving the Teaching-learning Situation

There are many ways in which skilled personnel can help the teacher concentrate on the knowledge in-take of her students and the psychological well-being of her students rather than teacher out-put. Teachers can be helped to become aware of prominent symptoms of sensory-motor, psychological, and perceptual or conceptual deficits which serve to inhibit learning. What better source of help is there anywhere than in well-trained school psychologists, social workers and guidance people?

Filling the Gap Between Theory and Practice

These specialized personnel bring resources from their disciplines and research which can bring new light to bear on the teaching-learning

process and in turn can learn from the teachers about programming curriculum and improving instructional operations. A program for professional improvement with which specialized personnel could work in varying capacities might take many forms; such as: interdisciplinary seminars, supervised practicum of the less technical tools, short internships, and simulated materials sessions.

Building Awareness

In order for the teacher to become more aware of the symptoms of stress, the teacher may need to have someone to talk to herself. Such a service has been made available to teachers in a few systems already and fewer ego-damaging incidents will occur when the services of a professional are available for teachers.

Many teachers need to be helped with the listening act. They have not learned to listen to either verbal or non-verbal signals. The non-verbal language is at least as potent as the oral language in the amount of information available to those who have the eye and hearts to interpret it.

This process need not be a one-way street. Psychologists need to learn more about teaching so that they can prescribe for the instruction of the child with a problem as well as to categorize him.

Cross-discipline Synthesis:

It would seem that just as the role of the teacher is changing, the role of the helping professions in the schools will need to change to be of increased value. In addition to diverting more of their time to working with teachers, there is another need which a small number of gifted people should fill.

Due to the constantly increasing knowledge about the learning processes, it is important that a few people attempt cross-discipline synthesis to interpret findings for the rest of us. These specialists would assist us in utilizing existing knowledge while they searched continually and systemically for new information and sources. They would search educational and psychological fields for theories, models and systems intended to induce and enhance learning. Others would examine the findings of such fields as medicine, optometry and biochemistry for discoveries having a direct bearing on the learning process. A few scholars should be subsidized by school systems or foundations to the extent that they are able to fully synthesize at least one additional discipline for interpretive purposes. Much valuable information seems to lie dormant in professional archives for lack of an interpretation of the peripheral significance for educative purposes.

Summary

The teacher of the school of tomorrow will have a variety of roles to fill. One of the more important will be that of diagnostician. In order to become more diagnostic, teachers are going to need assistance. Perceptive assistance is available from the well-trained school psychologists, social caseworker, guidance worker and reading clinicians. The helping professions in the schools should shift their emphasis to include more time for the teacher as a person, as a reading teacher, as a facilitator, and as an interpreter of the behavior of children.