

## THE PLACE OF SUPERVISION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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The other day I took my car to a garage to have some repairs made. I found upon inquiry that one department was responsible for all work necessary on the repairs of the engine and another department responsible for the corrections of all electrical equipment such as battery charging, wiring, and lighting. What was true of this particular automobile plant is true of many other well managed concerns in all parts where the automobile industry is carried on in a profitable way.

A friend of mine is employed as a Farm Loan inspector for one of our large insurance companies. He was not chosen by chance—he had training and experience which fitted him to correctly evaluate real estate. Bankers and others interested in land values for one reason or other accept his judgment—few questions are asked because he knows his job. This is not an arrangement which is at all unique. Similar ones are found the world over in a well managed business.

These two illustrations let us think of, as expert direction or supervision of business. Those of us who have commercial dealings, I feel, will agree that it is necessary to have such direction. What place, then, should this sort of an arrangement have in a school program?

Most of the larger school systems and many of the smaller ones have on their instructional staffs people designated as supervisors. This is a comparatively recent arrangement. The reason for it no doubt being so many subjects must now be included in a school program that the average teacher is not trained to handle all of them. Where in the year 1775 *Reading, Spelling, Writing, Arithmetic*, and *Bible* constituted the curriculum; now, even the Elementary School program has in it twenty or more topics that demand attention. In this paper I cannot take up the case of justifying the need of special supervisors. What I hope to accomplish is to emphasize the need for expert direction by *someone* without necessarily increasing the cost of instruction.

Some time ago an inquiry was made into the attitude on the direction of new and inexperienced teachers. The inquiry embraced representative schools of 36 different states, those having

over 200 teachers, 50 to 200 teachers and less than 50 teachers. Replies indicated that an attempt was made to give expert direction in 90% of the larger schools, 71% the medium sized schools, and 40% of the smaller schools. 70 schools reported no provision in expert direction but of that number 68 expressed the need for it.

The study further indicated the reaction as to where Superintendents felt supervision was most necessary. In the elementary grades (1 to 8) inclusive, 50% of the replies specified that help was most needed in grades 1, 2, 7 and 8, and in the freshmen and senior year of the High School. With reference to subject matter, the replies showed that supervision was needed most in Geography, History, Language and English in both grades and high school. There was almost unanimous opinion in that arithmetic in the grades and mathematics in High School can be taught most easily without expert direction. This may mean that in teaching an exact science where results can be quite readily measured and checked, less direction is necessary. The suggestion seems to be carried out in the arrangement of the newer texts in arithmetic.

In the school system which I represent an attempt has been made this year to rather carefully check the results of pupil progress. In our lower grades, kindergarten, grades 1, 2 and 3, the work is under the direction of a special supervisor. If our measuring of results is an indication, and I have reason to think it is, then expert direction is needed in all grades. We feel that we have as good teachers in our upper grades as we have in our lower grades but there seemed to be a much larger variation in what was accomplished in the different subjects in grades 7 and 8 than in grades 1, 2 and 3.

Where then is supervision necessary? There is but one reply and that is *everywhere*. This does not mean more school costs, in fact it may lessen the cost of education. It does mean more care in choosing our teachers. It means that we demand teachers trained for a specific job, not merely that they have 30, 60 or 100 college hours on their transcript. Most necessary of all it means that we must choose more wisely our principals and supervisors, especially the principals.

If expert direction in education is a necessity, and I believe the average tax-payer and patron will agree that it is, then we must look in the main for that direction to come from the head of each individual school. This does not mean that co-ordination

of the various schools in a system shall be ignored. It simply stresses the need of initiative and skill on the part of those immediately responsible for the instruction of pupils in the various school districts.

There are two ways open to correct whatever defects are found in our system of supervision. The first way is to more carefully choose the persons who are to occupy the principals' position. We must, if choosing an elementary school principal, insist on his knowledge of elementary school instruction. There are too many applicants for executive positions who, on the strength of having completed four years of college work, feel they are full-fledged administrators. They may be able to tactfully handle patrons, maintain a type of discipline, look after the clerical duties required by way of reports and records yet be totally ignorant of the real need of the school, namely that of supervision of instruction. Teachers, pupils and patrons will welcome selection of the principals who are experts in directing class-room activities. Naturally, with this it is assumed that personal qualities and character have their proper place.

The second way to secure better direction is to demand that the people who are in charge of our schools shall improve along the lines where improvement counts most. This means especially training that can be put into practise at once. Too many teachers, and administrators too, are simply seeking more credits—more college hours. A course in French next summer may have its value for a principal but if he needs direction in how to supervise and evaluate intermediate grade reading then he better choose the latter since that is his immediate problem and will serve his community best at the present time. There seems to be need of constantly holding before us the fact that what we do and what we plan in education is not for ourselves, but that it is for the improvement of the education of the children in the schools we serve.

Conditions will right themselves just as rapidly as the real need is felt. There is much excellent work being done by principals, supervisors and teachers. This plea is made in the hope that more serious attention be paid to the administrative units of our schools because that is where we must in the final analysis place responsibility.