

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY SUPERVISOR AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL

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With the vast changes in the rapidly expanding educational program of today we have witnessed new areas and new services encompassed in the curriculum and within the school as school boards, administrators, teachers, pupils, community leaders of allied social agencies have joined together to educate the whole child. There is a common desire and endeavor to work with the individual child according to his abilities, needs and interests so as to develop a worthy member of society. The library plays an important role in this program and the concept of it has changed and grown apace.

In discussing supervision in multi-library situations it should be emphasized that the fundamental principles are the same regardless of the size of the city. The organization in large cities is different simply in that the operation is far more complex. In any administrative or supervisory position it is essential to know the objectives of the institution and their relation to a department or sub-division of this parent agency. It is then necessary to formulate purposes and aims based on these objectives for the allied specialized area. It is likewise important to be directed at all times by these objectives and purposes. The admonition to a player of any ball game, "Keep your eye on the ball," can well be applied to this basic rule in supervision. In establishing policies, in direct and indirect contacts with associates and with the personnel within the department, these principles will help maintain a true perspective and keep one from going afield.

What is the difference between a secondary and elementary school library? The most distinctive difference is in relation to the program. In the elementary school, groups or whole classes are scheduled regularly to the library while in the high school students usually come of their own volition during a free period. Provision is made for single pupils or a small group to come to the elementary school library other than the scheduled period so as to locate immediate information to take back for the class, or a committee to work on some phase of a unit of work. There is increasing evidence of the trend for conference rooms adjoining the libraries in both high schools and elementary schools where a teacher may bring an entire class for use of varied materials in his instructional program. Here may be located books, periodicals, pamphlets and audio-visual aids on a given subject and here the teacher has the assistance of the librarian. It is essential when these conference rooms are part of the library quarters that a schedule be maintained from day to day for classes accompanied by teachers or for groups of students working on a given project. Arrangements have to

be made in advance for this phase of the library program if it is to be really effective. But in the elementary school library a controlled situation of class groups is the dominant difference from that in the high schools.

One must recognize the junior high school in the structure of a city system. Some cities maintain a 8-4-2 program, others a 6-3-3 program, while some have a 6-2-4- program. In any case, the junior high school, is similar to that of the high school inasmuch as the school is departmentalized and the pupils usually have scheduled study periods. As a rule the pupils are admitted to the library by permit.

Elementary schools are charged with teaching the mechanics of reading. At the same time the pupil must have access to wide variety of reading materials from pre-primers and picture books to those of ever-increasing difficulty. On this premise the elementary school library formulates its objectives. The first is to stimulate a love of reading and develop good reading habits of good books, both of which are essential in laying the foundation for literary appreciation. The second is to supplement curriculum needs. The latter runs fairly parallel with the first as the child is innately curious about the world and things around him during these formative years and subject matter taken up in the classroom is reflected in his selection of reading material from the library.

Libraries in the elementary school are learning centers and promote both skills and attitudes, such as:

1. A background for reading readiness
2. Mental, social and emotional development
3. Appreciation for good literature
4. Guidance
5. Critical evaluation of materials
6. Problem solving
7. Skills in using materials
8. Recreational reading
9. Sharing of ideas

Equally important to the objectives and purposes of the elementary school library and the consideration of the structure of the school's program is a thorough knowledge of the administration of the school system by the library supervisor. In a big city system there are many departments, bureaus, divisions and sections. It is incumbent upon the supervisor to know the functions and duties of each, to understand the relationship of one to another, and to be conversant and well acquainted with the personnel as far as possible. Upon this knowledge, understanding and acquaintance the success of the supervisor is proportionately dependent.

In many large cities where school systems have been surveyed and detailed reports are published, the functions of these various sub-divisions are outlined according to line and staff officers. The former designate the administrative directives from the Superintendent through the Assistant Superintendents, District Superintendents to principals of individual schools. The latter designate administrative directives from the Superintendent through the Assistant Superintendents to Directors and Supervisors in the departments charged with services to the kindergarten through high school or junior college grades. The school library director or supervisor is but one of many responsible for such services to the schools.

The director or supervisor holds an enviable position regarding the specialized area to which he is assigned in relation to the administrative officers and associates with whom he works. To an extent he is considered the authority to this group in regard to his chosen field. He stands ready to provide such information whether the query is about national trends and standards or specific information pertaining to organization and administration within the system. He establishes policies for these in the special service area with the approval of the immediate superior officer. He recommends the requirements of education and training in his field for the employment of personnel in the system. He is consulted regarding quarters, types and specifications of equipment and supplies. He serves as chairman of committees in the selection of materials. He serves as a consultant and makes recommendations regarding budget percentages or amounts.

This director or supervisor on the other hand serves the personnel assigned in the special area to the individual units or schools within the system in the capacity which the title denotes. It is well to consider here the attitude of aversion toward the position of supervisor that is apparent as expressed through professional literature and conferences. The exercise of dictatorial directions has been rightly criticized by teachers. The true concept of this position has emerged and is interpreted in professional literature and in practice. The most important qualification of the supervisor is that of leadership and the ability to exert or express it in countless and subtle ways. Through his leadership he inspires staff loyalty, a sense of respect and confidence and the development of teamwork from central office relations to the individual in the school unit.

Dr. Edward B. Stanford, Director of Libraries of the University of Minnesota, presented these qualifications and others as essential in a supervisor, as well as some salient facts on supervision in an article, Supervision in Libraries--What It Is--and What It Takes!<sup>1</sup> He emphasized the need for emotional control, a genuine liking of people, a sense of humor, the ability to listen to the opinions, suggestions and complaints of others, a willingness to assume responsibility and to make decisions, to administer fairly and to admit one's own error of judgment graciously. Likewise, he

stressed the quality of self assurance coupled with reasonable modesty, a true sense of loyalty to the administration on his own part and to inspire the same of those under his direction. The supervisor must have the ability to teach effectively and to give clear and simple instructions. A sincere expression of enthusiasm and ambition are also desirable traits. Professional literature in education is rich both in books and periodicals on this subject. It is necessary for the supervisor to keep himself informed through this literature and be conversant with his colleagues on the subject.

And what are some of the techniques in administering supervision? In multi-library situations in a large city system it is evident that lines of communication must be established and must be kept open in both directions: The Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendents or the administrative officers under which the department of libraries functions should be kept informed of policies and program to be established and initiated, securing an official approval and followed by progress reports. When confidence and rapporte are firmly fixed the rest is more or less routine as no executive cares to be bothered with trivia. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep contacts and be ready at any time or upon casual meeting to discuss new developments or urge further support, financial or otherwise.

Likewise the personnel within a school library department need the avenues of communication opened to them. Each individual looks to the supervisor for guidance, counseling, direction, confidence and support. Much of this can be maintained through a newsletter that is issued at intervals during the school year. There are occasions when private conferences are necessary - oftentimes to avoid a serious issue that might develop from a trivial grievance. The use of the Superintendent's official bulletin to the schools proves most advantageous for important announcements or essential information. The supervisor should welcome all invitations from allied department heads for speaking engagements or for writing articles so that other specialists or classroom teachers in the system may be better informed as to the work and services of the library department and the librarians in the schools.

It is important to prepare bulletins pertaining to procedures, or even better, a handbook including these essential directives. If the latter course is followed it is imperative to keep the contents up-to-date with directions for deleting obsolete instructions. Such a handbook should be made available to principals as well as the librarians.

In-service training is an essential obligation of the supervisor; in fact, the full gamut of the training program plays an important role in the performance of the department. It is to the supervisor's advantage to work closely with local teacher training institutions if such are available, and others within a state or in close proximity. These are the institutions

that provide the majority of new teachers within a school system. Recommendations regarding the curriculum and the content of the courses, assistance in teaching or giving series of lectures, provision for assignment of student librarians in their practice teaching, are the immediate concern of the supervisor. Here lies the source of supply, and without well-trained teachers in the area of library science to fill vacancies or to step into new positions the supervisor may be thwarted at every turn in promoting the school library program. The librarian on the job is in need of further training whether the years of service are long or few. Once assigned she seeks assistance in practical techniques, finding some of the previous training too theoretical. Some find themselves in a rut year after year in the same school. By coming together and sharing problems with one another confidence is given to one and a new lift to another. Workshop methods work admirably in an in-service program. The most recent information and instruction is provided, new materials are distributed, inspiration and enrichment revitalize the group and professional attitudes are promoted.

Public relations have to be maintained outside the system as well as within. The supervisor should stand ready to write articles or to speak before interested and associated groups. The several educational or allied agencies within a local community or within a state or another state may wish to hear about the school library program or to be informed from the wealth of knowledge the supervisor has at his command regarding his special field of endeavor. Such opportunities should be welcomed as another avenue to promote the values and worth of the program.

Much of the success of supervision in multi-library situations is dependent upon a balance of these many obligations and activities as presented here. A true perspective of the dual role has to be maintained and kept uppermost in the mind of the supervisor. On one hand, there is knowing and selling the program to the administrator as well as to the community; on the other, is working with the librarians in the school, providing direction and information, giving confidence and inspiration, and challenging each to greater performance for his own satisfaction. Such are the major activities of the supervisor.

#### REFERENCE

1. Stanford, E. B.: Supervision in Libraries--What It Is--and What It Takes! A.L.A. Bulletin, 44:119-121, April 1950.