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ABSTRACT

This article suggests directions in which pupil personnel services should be moving. Specifically, pupil personnel workers should: (1) employ a team approach whenever possible, thereby focusing the talents of specialists from the various disciplines on the problems of the student; (2) serve as resource persons for teachers; (3) make more extensive use of group techniques with students, teachers and parents; (4) serve as spokesmen for students; (5) be willing to change their methods as a result of educational innovations such as computerized guidance systems; (6) work more closely with community agencies; and (7) engage in research activities. (Author/HMV)

Julianna L. Boudreaux

PREPARING TODAY'S CHILD TO MEET TOMORROW'S WORLD:
THROUGH MORE EFFECTIVE PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

The pupil personnel worker can play a significant role in making schools the kinds of places that will prepare today's child for tomorrow's world. Because he is child-oriented, a believer in the principles of child growth and development, and an advocate of children and youth, the pupil personnel worker can influence the tone, the climate, and the environment of the schools.

In education, as in most disciplines, the pendulum swings back and forth. At times the traditional orientation of the subject matter has been stressed; at other times emphasis has been placed on a child-centered approach; and in between there have been similar either/or approaches.

During the 1940's the emphasis was on life adjustment. During the early 1950's, of necessity, it was on construction, with some attention being given to the gifted. Then along came Sputnik, and emphasis was placed on "intellectual upgrading," quantity education, Bruner and "the structure of the disciplines," and pushing more and more information down until geometry was advocated in the first grade and reading in the cradle. There were many gains, as for example, the discovery method, inquiry process, fact-finding and not fact-stuffing, and a variety of media and materials.

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However, during the late 1960's, there was increasing concern about the dehumanizing influences in society as a whole. One heard more and more about such things as alienation, depersonalization, mass society, mass media, automation, etc. Likewise, one heard about the dehumanizing influence of the school. A 1969 Carnegie study reported that public schools were literally destructive of human beings.

Much concern was expressed about humaneness by organizations such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. This was evidenced by a proliferation of pamphlets, books, and monthly publications devoted to humaneness and humanism in the schools. The 1970 ASCD Yearbook, To Nurture Humaneness: Commitment for the 70's, set the tone for the new decade.

A story which illustrates what has been happening in the schools is that told about President Lowell of Harvard, who walked into Professor Yerky's psychology lab, where he watched earthworms crawl down a maze. When they reached the intersection the earthworms turned left. They received a shock; the next time three-fourths of the earthworms turned right. President Lowell commented, "The earthworms have been changed by their Harvard course; however, I don't think they're any better earthworms for having been at Harvard."¹

Schools generally do a better job in the cognitive area than in the affective; sometimes they even seem to ignore the entire affective domain. Research specialists in child development, psychology, and sociology long have emphasized the role of feelings in education and the importance of self-concept.

For example, Earl Kelley, in an article on the place of affective learning, points out that how a child feels is more important than what he knows because how one feels controls behavior more often than what one knows.² Milly Almy, in Ways of Studying Children, states that feelings, whether acknowledged or not, surround everything that the child does.³ According to William Purkey's Self-Concept and School Achievement, academic success or failure is as deeply rooted in concepts of self as it is in mental ability, if not deeper.⁴ And Walcott Beatty advocates the development of an emotional curriculum to be integrated with the current intellectual curriculum.⁵

But it would be equally erroneous to swing to the opposite extreme, to infer that humaneness is the only function of education. Balance is needed. Students need to be educated to reach their potential for humaneness, which ideally includes both rational and humane behavior, both reasoning and feeling, both the cognitive and affective areas. The goal should be to produce students who, unlike the Harvard earthworms, would not only change their course as a result of being in school, but would also be better people for having been there.

Pupil personnel workers should be the school personnel best able, because of their philosophy, training, and concerns, to provide leadership in achieving the needed balance, to help insure that schools actually become more humane places, places where the uniqueness of the individual can be preserved.

The New Orleans Public School System, in a recent reorganization, combined the two formerly separate divisions of Instruction and Pupil Personnel Services into one, and chose as the title of the combined unit

the "Division of Instruction and Child Advocacy." In explaining the rationale for the new Division to the School Board, Superintendent Gene Geisert pointed out that academic facts and skills aren't enough equipment with which to face today's world. Schools have to accept responsibility for many of the emotional, social, physical, and vocational needs of students, as well as their intellectual ones. He emphasized that children are not fragmented into parts, but learn as total human beings. They do not learn in an intellectual vacuum; rather they bring all their needs and problems to school.

The name "Child Advocacy," a term long the theme song of pupil personnel workers, was carefully chosen to emphasize the importance of a humane and personalized approach to education, one responsive to the needs of the total child. This is the posture of the new Division of Instruction and Child Advocacy. The Division contains all those elements which bear directly of the intellectual and personal development of the child: instruction, medical and health, school social work, guidance and counseling, and psychological service.

The school system's new division is discussed to point out the recognition being given by an urban school system to a humane approach to education, one that seeks to help each child develop his potential. The kind of services provided by, and the attitudes and the philosophy exemplified by the pupil personnel workers in the New Orleans School System over the past forty years (social workers, counselors, nurses, and school psychologists), had a great deal to do with setting the stage for this posture by the school system.

These are exciting times in the whole area of pupil personnel services. New directions, new trends, new ways of working abound. Some of these have been in the talking stage for a long time, but little has been done to implement them. Others have made a good beginning, and others are just appearing on the horizon.

For example, in the field of pupil personnel services the team approach has been advocated for some time, but is still not widely practiced. There have been good reasons for this -- heavy case loads, insufficient staff, and the difficulty of implementing the method. The team approach focuses the talents of specialists from the various disciplines on the problems of the youngster, and hopefully comes up with plans for dealing with them. The specialists have roles in common, but they also have unique functions and talents which shed light on the situation.

A second direction for the pupil personnel worker is that of serving as a resource person or consultant for teachers. More and more it is being recognized that the teacher is the key person in the educational process. It is she who makes an impact on those thirty youngsters, and the teacher needs support. All members of the pupil personnel team can expand and increase their effectiveness by serving as consultants to teachers, supplementing the teachers' skills with their more peripheral understandings. Counselors, for example, are in a unique position to point out the need for new courses, to suggest ways to make the curriculum more relevant to the youngsters, to help plan ways to individualize instruction, to introduce occupational information into the curriculum, etc. They should be part of the curriculum council, or the instructional team in the school. Social workers and psychologists, because of their knowledge of human behavior and

personality, can help teachers develop a better understanding of child growth and development. They can help them interpret what is normal behavior and what can be reasonably expected of the child at each stage of growth.

Third, pupil personnel workers need to make more extensive use of group techniques with students, teachers, and parents. Again, this is time-consuming and not always easy, but the rewards generally compensate for the effort.

Fourth, pupil personnel workers are going to have to pursue a more vigorous advocate role; where they see a need in schools they will have to serve as spokesmen or advocates for youngsters.

A fifth direction will be the introduction of new ways of working and new techniques. Counselors, for example, will have to change their methods as a result of computerized guidance systems. This should increase the effectiveness of the counselor by freeing him from routine details and, at the same time, provide the student with more accurate, up-to-date information on colleges and job opportunities tailored to his individual needs and interests. A concern, of course, will be whether the computer will replace the counselor. As was said many years ago of teachers, any counselor who can be replaced by a machine, should be. The human touch is still the prime ingredient in the counseling situation and cannot be automated.

Too, the use of paraprofessionals has tremendous potential for expanding the services of pupil personnel workers by freeing them of routine chores and allowing them to do the professional job for which they were trained.

Sixth, there needs to be closer involvement and interaction with community agencies. Pupil personnel workers probably have done more of this

than any other group in the educational field, but there is still more to be done. There still exists too much duplication of services. Roles need to be defined to insure the most effective use of resources.

Finally, pupil personnel workers need to engage in research activities. Research takes a great deal of time, and time is a very precious commodity for pupil personnel workers. But what group is better able to know the kind of research that is needed in the field. More and more they are going to have to engage in action research and pilot projects.

In summary, pupil personnel workers have made an impact in the past, because of their orientation, their particular skills, and their outlook, but they can make an even greater impact in the future. These kinds of roles are not easy ones, especially when one considers the multitudinous demands made daily on the pupil personnel staff. But they can add a stimulating new dimension to pupil personnel services and education. The challenge is to think and act anew. New methods and new ways of working are needed if the school is going to fulfill its mission in the tough, troubled, but exciting days ahead. The response of pupil personnel workers, and of all other school personnel, to this challenge will have a great deal to do with how well today's child meets tomorrow's world.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Harold Taylor, "Students, Teachers, Values," Spaulding Lecture. New Haven: Yale Graduate School, April 19, 1960, p. 1.

²Earl C. Kelley, "The Place of Affective Learning." Educational Leadership, XXII (April, 1965), p. 455.

³Milly Almy, Ways of Studying Children: A Manual for Teachers. New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1966, p. 115.

⁴William Watson Purkey, Self Concept and School Achievement. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970, p. 14.

⁵Walcott H. Beatty, "Emotions and Learning." Educational Leadership, XXII (April, 1965), p.517.