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ABSTRACT

The roles of the principal and the lead teacher in a team are closely related in that the lead teacher serves the unit team in much the same way as the principal serves the entire building staff. The prime function of the lead teacher is instructional improvement, and his basic concerns center around the teaching team and children who comprise the unit. The lead teacher has responsibilities both as a member and leader of the team, and as a member of the entire instructional staff. The uniqueness of his position is such that he can and should be involved in the processes of instructional improvement and employment of new team members. While the principal consults and is aware of the decisions and practices of the teams in his building, he asserts more positive leadership in connection with developing improved educational practices, managing the pre- and inservice teacher education activities of the school, and administering research and development projects. In a school involved in team teaching, a network grows with lead teachers consistently serving as linkage agents between the team and the principal. The effectiveness of a team-organized school depends on the ability of the principal and lead teachers to work together. In a multiunit school, provision for shared, school-wide decision making is made through the instructional improvement committee, consisting of the principal and the team leaders. (HND)

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THE PRINCIPAL AND THE LEAD TEACHER:

The relationship of roles and responsibilities.

by Peter G. Peterson

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The role of the principal and the lead teacher is closely related as each has the same goal -- that of ensuring the best possible educational experience for the child. The difference, it seems to me, lies in the nature of the relationships between each other and with other members of the staff. The lead teacher is to the unit or team as the principal is to the various teams functioning within the building. The traditional line and staff structure broadens, not in the sense that the principal loses and the lead teacher gains that authority; rather there is a broadening and sharing of responsibilities and an increase in the commonality of purpose and function.

"The creation of a new formal position, that of lead teacher, has changed the influence structures so that influence is shared by a larger number of persons."¹ The lead teacher is seen as influential not only by members of their own team but by some persons in other teams as well. Even though the lead teacher is a significant person in the influence hierarchy, "The principal remains the single most influential person in the schools"² because of his educational responsibility to all teachers and youngsters in the school.

A prime function of the lead teacher is that of instructional leadership. This function is similar to that of the principal except as it relates to the personnel within the school. The lead teacher is concerned with the management and coordination of team or unit activities whereas the principal is seldom directly involved in the decision-making processes of the team. However, the principal provides similar leadership functions across teams for the total school staff.

¹ Working paper No. 22 Some organizational characteristics of Multiunit schools, Joint publication with the Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration, Wisconsin Research and Development Center for cognitive learning, University of Wisconsin, p. 17.

² Ibid.

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The basic concerns of the lead teacher are with the team and the children with whom the team is working. Under this primary consideration we can identify concerns such as the quality of the learning atmosphere; the effectiveness of all members of the team; the determination of objectives for the individual child as well as the group; the selections of teaching strategies and materials to be used to provide the learning experiences in harmony with those objectives; the evaluation of progress through test selection and other group and individual evaluation practices; the proper dissemination of evaluation results to the team, the child and the parent; and the determination of the kinds of learning activities to be prescribed to further the child's progress.

The lead teacher takes on many of the characteristics included in the definition of the principal as the "principal teacher." He is a teaching member of a team and his performance in that role serves as a model. He takes initiative in developing and trying out new materials and programs in the team. He demonstrates quality teaching in every sense. This is not to say that the lead teacher need be a specialist in all subject areas - rather he should function as a specialist in the basic sound practices and techniques underlying effective teaching in all subject areas. The quality of teaching will depend not only on the teaching qualifications of the lead teacher but also on his ability to demonstrate through his teaching that which he preaches as he interacts with other members of the team.

The lead teacher has responsibilities as a teaching member of the team, as a leader of the team, and as a member of the building staff. "When a teacher in a team seeks advice from a single figure of authority it is likely that he first will turn to the lead teacher rather than the principal."³ "As a teacher in a team teaches, in effect, in public, the pressures of the situation logically lead to consultation with the lead teacher when problems occur."⁴

³
Ibid., p. 15.

⁴
Ibid., p. 25.

The daily deliberations and interactions among the team members enables the lead teacher to be constantly aware of the quality of performance of all team members. The uniqueness of his position is such that he naturally can be and should be involved in the supervisory process.

Two goals of the supervisory process are (1) the improvement of instruction, and (2) to reach a decision to employ or not to employ a teacher.

The involvement of the lead teacher in evaluating the teaching process certainly should lead to more intelligent decisions relating to both goals. The lead teacher is in a position to spot deficiencies and to take remedial action much sooner than is the principal whose opportunities to observe and evaluate are much briefer, infrequent, and subject to the problems caused by other demands on his time.

While the decision to employ or not to employ a teacher ultimately is one that rests with the principal, it would seem that that decision will be more valid as a result of multiple evaluation as well as the considerably increased amount of knowledge about a teacher's performance resulting from the day to day association between the lead teacher and the teachers of the team.

This is not to say that the evaluative supervisory function is taken over by the lead teacher - rather there is a team function existing, a team function of assistance to and evaluation of the teacher and other team members.

The ability of the lead teacher to function in this role is critical since the other members of the team may view the supervisory process as a threat. All the skill the lead teacher can muster will be required to focus on the improvement of instruction through the mutual evaluation and improvement of the teaching act. This suggests that the lead teacher must have the knowledge and the ability to make use of various instruments and techniques available, such as Flander's Interaction Analysis; Galloway's Categories For Observing Nonverbal Communication, Sanders Classroom Questions, the video and audio tape recorders and the like. These will be of considerable value for reaching and maintaining a proper balance between subjectivity as well as for helping to provide the proper focus so necessary in order to keep the supervisory process on a professional level.

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The lead teacher, in addition to being seen as a model teacher of children who is also involved in the supervisory process, is also viewed as a facilitator. "He facilitates the work of the teacher by...

- ...coordinating the efficient utilization of the team staff members, materials and resources.
- ...searching for, obtaining and preparing new materials.
- ...grouping students and making appropriate teaching assignments.
- ...handling reporting chores.
- ...helping teachers keep up with new developments
- ...discussing instructional problems of individual teachers.
- ...advising teachers on their relationships with parents.
- ...keeping up teacher morale.
- ...relieving teachers of routine chores.
- ...serving as an advisor to teachers - supervising and evaluating their work.
- ...obtaining consultant help.
- ...arranging field trips.
- ...training new teachers and running in-service programs.
- ...taking general responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum.
- ...briefing teachers on school and district policies and procedures.
- ...channeling of information to the teachers from a variety of sources (including the principal).
- ...dealing with the central office on a variety of matters."⁵

It is most obvious that the above list of activities are characteristic of functions heretofore performed in varying degrees by the elementary principal.

⁵
Ibid., p. 12-13.

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN THE TEAMING OR ROLE DIFFERENTIATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The principal does not lose involvement with these things. He consults about and is aware of team decisions and practices in his building. "He assumes greater responsibility for various functions that are not common in the elementary school of today. He takes more positive leadership in connection with developing improved educational practices, managing the pre-service and in-service teacher education activities in his building, and administering the research and development projects."⁶

The principal holds a position from which he can view educational program of the community and his school with a perspective unique to his position. Thus he sees its strengths, its weaknesses, and its needs as perhaps no one else can. As an educational leader he is alert to and knowledgeable about educational practices and research findings which continually emerge from his professional readings and conferences. Herein we are concerned with team teaching, but there are many other potentially bright suns rising on the educational horizon. Two such examples are the non-graded school and the Multi-Unit school. As the underlying theme of non-gradedness is continual progress for the child, it would seem that team teaching is in harmony with that philosophy and, by its very nature, would promote the idea of continuous progress.

The Milti-Unit plan of school organization seeks to change the system of educational structure in such a way as to create "an environment that would simultaneously facilitate children's learning, research and development, and also the inservice and preservice education of teachers."⁷

⁶
Organizing the School for Research and Development Activities, Herbert J. Klausmaier
Director, Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, University of Wisconsin, p. 11

⁷
Ibid., p. 3.

"A Multiunit Elementary School may be thought of as an invention, emerging from a synthesis of relevant knowledge and the best practices regarding horizontal and vertical organization for instruction, role differentiation, decision making, communication, and individually guided education. Horizontally, the Multiunit Elementary School incorporates the concepts and practices of team teaching rather than independent or self-contained classroom teaching. Vertically, it embodies continuous pupil progress and non-grading rather than age-grade classroom groupings."

"The Multiunit School was developed in part to facilitate controlled experimentation without involving a large number of intact classrooms, hundreds of children, and many teachers."

"The goal of initial development activities is to produce materials, methods, processes, equipment, organizational patterns, or any parts or combinations thereof in order to achieve clearly specified objectives with carefully described target populations at identifiable costs in terms of dollars and time...development-based research following the initial development of a usable prototype or experimental product involves trying out, testing, and refining the product iteratively until the product achieves the specified objectives under the prescribed conditions."

With an eye toward the needs of the children, the educational practices being carried on to meet those needs, and the facilities inherent in his building, the principal exerts leadership toward the adaptation or adoption of those educational practices which will supplement and improve the educational program. In his role as instructional leader the principal can make important contributions to the instructional program of the school as a whole by working with and through the lead teachers. This would include joint participation in the determination of building objectives; coordination of educational practices in the building; identification of problems common to the program; consideration and selection of practices which would contri-

8
Ibid., p. 15.

9
Ibid.

10
Ibid., p. 19.

butions to the instructional program of the school as a whole by working with and through the lead teachers. This would include joint participation in the determination of building objectives; coordination of educational practices in the building; identification of problems common to the program; consideration and selection of practices which would contribute to the solution of those problems, and, the creation of the proper environment as well as providing the materials and assistance necessary to their success.

The principal also assures himself that each team "is properly organized for instruction and that the team leader and teachers develop the interdependent relationships necessary to make relevant decisions and carry out their instructional tasks."¹¹

Whether the principal should be an expert in any subject-matter field, in research design, or in teacher education, is a moot question. He must have, however, a working knowledge so that he can oversee the work of others. "He also utilizes the best knowledge available within his staff and from consultants, delegates responsibilities, and assists in arriving at group decisions which can be implemented effectively."¹²

Experienced lead teachers, defining the function of the lead teacher, were of the opinion that the responsibilities of a lead teacher are, in many teams, decided by the group as a whole.¹³ They suggested that the lead teacher can carry part or all of the following responsibilities:

...Act as a coordinator between administrators and/or consultants and team members.

...demonstrate an enthusiasm for an understanding of team teaching.

...help to incorporate the planning of all the children's experiences cooperatively.

11

Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, op. cit., p. 26.

12

Klausmeier, op. cit., p. 11.

13

Team Teaching, Goodman, Park and Kuhlmeier, Working paper for Role Differentiation Institute, University of Wisconsin, 1969, pp. 13-14, mimeographed.

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- ...initiate team goals in all academic areas.
- ...pool ideas about the degree of effectiveness of previously determined large and small group activities.
- ...set up agendas for team planning.
- ...interpret the team operation to the community.
- ...assist new team members in methods and procedures regarding the operation of the school and team.

The principal should also be involved as the team leader carries on these responsibilities. He should be performing similar functions with the team leaders in his building, coordinating their efforts and directing their combined thinking and performance toward specific building and system-wide objectives.

In a school involved in team teaching a network of interdependence grows and communication is imperative. It has been shown that the lead teacher consistently serves as a linkage agent between his team and the principal. The effectiveness of a team organized school depends on the abilities of the principal and the lead teachers to work together effectively. Decisions made collaboratively by the principal and the lead teachers impinge upon the school and the teams within it. A team operates almost independently, relying on the lead teacher for support, advice and assistance. Both function as leaders and facilitators within their respective spheres.

Team affairs are decided by the lead teacher and the team members. That business which the staff of the whole building is about is decided by and/or in consultation with the team leaders by the principal. The multi-unit plan of school organization makes provision for this through the establishment of an Instructional Improvement Committee. This committee consists of lead teachers and the principal who meet weekly to consider an agenda formulated by the principal in consultation with the unit leaders.

"The functions of the Instructional Improvement Committee may be considered at three levels: interpreting and synthesizing system-wide and statewide policies that affect the building program; developing the broad outlines of the instructional program, research and development projects, and teacher-education for the building;

and coordinating the activities, including the use of facilities, time, material, etc., that the units do not manage independently. It thus has both development and management, but not supervisory, functions. Policies and guidelines developed by the Instructional Improvement Committee are transmitted to the Unit staff by the Unit leader. In turn, the highly significant decisions regarding an appropriate instructional program for each child are made and carried out by the certified teachers of the Unit."¹⁴

Regular, planned meetings of the principal with the lead teachers would seem to be an imperative necessity to the success of building or across-team school operation. Effective relationships between the principal and the lead teacher are essential if either or both are to function in fact as instructional leaders. They must be mutually supportive. Both have important contributions to make in the development of an educational program which offers maximum benefit to its boys and girls.

The social climate within which the educational program is carried on is of mutual concern to the principal and the lead teachers. An atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect is an absolute essential. Assuming that the personnel in a teaming school are involved as a result of choice, and it is questionable whether one should be involved against his will, a base for a healthy social climate is already present. It behooves the principal and the lead teachers to have a working knowledge in the field of human dynamics in order to build upon that base a structure strong enough to withstand the buffeting of the winds of verbal exchange, the rain of criticism and storms of dissent common to all active, growing and dynamic social groups. A common grappling with problems mutually identified, involvement in the development and execution of possible solutions to those problems, evaluation, and the refinement of future activities are what teaming is all about. The principal and the lead teachers together create the conditions which make it possible.

¹⁴Klausmeier, op. cit., p. 8.

We have attempted to comment on the relationships of roles and responsibilities of the principal and the lead teacher. We see, in effect, a sharing and a delegating of some of the aspects of the operation of the building program. As the lead teacher serves as the linkage agent between the team and the principal, so, too, the principal serves as the linkage agent between the school and the superintendent and his staff, and ultimately to the community. Thus the principal must be the final decision-maker for in the final analysis, he is still personally responsible and accountable for the educational program of his building.