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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the use of ancillary personnel, professionals and paraprofessionals providing supportive services to the classroom teacher, and the skills and strategies teachers will need in order to use support services wisely. The contents include: "Working with Adults," which discusses the need for teachers to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to teaching in working with ancillary personnel, to communicate with specialists, to recognize the variety and types of contributions different people are able to make, and to concern themselves with the job satisfaction of those working directly under their supervision; "Organizing for Assistance," which looks at the importance of planning fully integrated learning experiences based on the total range of learning objectives and using a variety of activities and organizational patterns; and "Making Decision," which recommends establishing criteria for analyzing educational tasks based on broad social objectives and making effective decisions. (WR)

THE TEACHER AS MANAGER OF ANCILLARY PERSONNEL *

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant trends in education over the past several years has been the increase in the number and variety of supportive personnel working directly with or under the classroom teacher for the purpose of individualizing instruction.

At present there are well over 2½ million volunteers working in the schools largely in the area of reading, and reports indicate that there is hardly a community across the nation that is not still actively involved in programs which bring Senior Citizens, parents, older students into the classroom to act as volunteer tutors and aides.

Throughout the country, the National Reading Center conducted a vigorous campaign to place trained volunteer tutors in the classroom to work directly under the primary-grade teacher. Unlike other programs in which tutors work on a one-to-one relationship with many different children, the program started by the National Reading Center suggests that each tutor work exclusively with only one child. That is,

if a classroom has ten children with reading problems, it should also have ten adults to work with these children with reading problems.

The advent of federal funding in education has also helped to swell the number of aides, assistants, and tutors working directly under the classroom teacher. In addition, federal funding has encouraged the hiring of more trained specialists in the areas of reading, learning disabilities, speech therapy, and special education to work directly with the classroom teacher.

Traditionally, these specialists have operated by taking children out of the classroom for small-group or individualized instruction. Today, however, there is a growing trend not to remove children with special needs from the classroom environment but rather to retrain these specialists to function in a supportive role as resources to the classroom teacher.

Clearly, if present trends continue, classroom teachers could find themselves working with as many adults as children within the course of any school day!

This increase in personnel should result in a wide range of alternatives which permit teachers to provide instruction that meets the needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles of all youngsters. On the other hand, it could result in a fractioning of the educational climate and a classroom filled with chaos and confusion. New skills and different strategies are needed if the classroom teacher is to use the services of all these people in ways that will effectively diversify instruction for the benefit of all children.

Before presenting a brief overview of these strategies and skills, it is perhaps best to clarify the terminology used. Throughout this paper, the term "ancillary personnel" is used to refer to professionals and paraprofessionals providing supportive services to the classroom teacher. The professionals are licensed teachers who are specialized in areas such as reading, learning disabilities, speech therapy, and special education. They provide and/or recommend instructional practices best suited to specialized needs. The classroom teacher manages the services of these specialists in the sense that he or she must find ways to implement and coordinate their recommendations throughout the school day.

The paraprofessionals are all those individuals who are not licensed teachers but whose services are either used to relieve the classroom teacher of non-instructional duties or to give special help to children. Paid aides as well as volunteer tutors fall into this category. Unlike the professional staff, which is on a par with the classroom teacher, paraprofessionals work directly under the supervision of the classroom teacher who must find ways to effectively direct and deploy their services.

The skills and strategies needed to implement and coordinate, direct and deploy ancillary services fall basically into the following categories: (1) Working With Adults, (2) Organizing for Assistance, and (3) Making Decisions.

WORKING WITH ADULTS

Sharing the Children:

At present there is little in pre-service education that

prepares teachers for working with adults. In-service, relatively few teachers have the opportunity to think in terms other than "my children" and "my classroom." Therefore, it should be stated at the very outset that no teacher can manage support services wisely without giving up part of his or her autonomy. There must be a basic willingness to share the children and to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to teaching.

Too often, well-meaning administrators mistakenly assume that if ancillary people are available, teachers will use them. They write federal projects to procure supportive personnel and arbitrarily plunk them, helter-skelter, in every classroom whether or not teachers want them or are prepared to use them. The hostilities generated by such actions are legion. In the end, of course, the children are the ones who suffer.

Communicating With Specialists:

Beyond the willingness to work with other adults, there is the need for teachers to be able to communicate with specialists. Whether specialists provide direct services to children or resource help to teachers, the classroom teacher is still the one who is primarily responsible for establishing an effective educational program for every child in his or her classroom.

Unfortunately, specialists often collect their children and disappear with little or no attempt made to coordinate classroom and clinic procedures. In some cases children work with 2 or 3 specialists and spend more time out of the classroom than in it. Surely, there comes a point where more help is just too much help !

Many teachers, on the other hand, all but abdicate their responsibility for children needing special assistance. They incorrectly assume that they are inadequate to deal with these children or that one or two hours a week with a specialist can "do it all."

If children are to benefit, classroom teachers and specialists cannot work in isolation. They must be aware of each other's objectives, able to support and reinforce each other, plan together, and as a team decide who works with whom, when, where, and for how long.

Delegating Appropriate Tasks To Paraprofessionals:

It is also necessary for teachers to recognize the variety and types of contributions different people are able to make. At one point or another, all learning experiences require some sort of adult direction, facilitation, and/or supervision. Whether the assistance should be provided by teachers or ancillary personnel depends on the tasks themselves, the needs of the children, and the skills of the people involved.

All too often, a paraprofessional, regardless of training, is thought of as someone to work with the slow learner, the "bottom group", or the children with "dyslexia." Yet, there is a basic contradiction in expecting a person with little or no professional training to succeed where teachers with 4 or 5 years of professional training have not.

Basic guidelines are needed to help insure appropriate and economical use of the various support services. Generally speaking, tasks that require the most professional skill should

be reserved for those with the most professional training. This includes working with children who have severe learning problems, introducing and extending learning concepts and skills, diagnosing, evaluating, counseling, and guiding.

Tutors who have some training in specific skill areas are able to review, reteach, and drill skills that have already been introduced by the teacher. They work best with children who have corrective needs, in a small group or one-to-one basis.

Aides, or those with no instructional training, can supervise activities initiated by the teacher, provide materials and routine assistance to children who are working independently or in small groups, and help the teacher with clerical matters. They can also provide "flash-card" type drill for individuals, take groups of children to the library or on small field trips, read stories or show movies to the whole class.

Providing Job Satisfaction for Paraprofessionals:

In matching the tasks at hand with the capabilities of the people involved, teachers must also concern themselves with the job satisfaction of those working directly under their supervision. Too often, paraprofessionals quit!

Part of the problem lies in the tasks these people are asked to perform. Although paraprofessionals can and should provide a wide variety of services, they are often asked to do what teachers themselves would be unwilling to do. How many teachers, for instance, would knowingly volunteer to

run a ditto machine or collate papers 15 hours a week? For how long could teachers be expected to listen to children grunt out short vowel sounds without ever finding out what good all this was doing anyway?

Paraprofessionals as well as professionals need to feel that their work is necessary and appreciated. They need to enjoy what they are doing. It is largely the responsibility of the classroom teacher to help paraprofessionals see themselves as important members of the total learning family.

ORGANIZING FOR ASSISTANCE

Planning Fully Integrates Learning Experiences:

The organization of a learning environment in which various types of assistance can occur depends largely on the teacher's ability to plan fully integrated learning experiences based on the total range of learning objectives. Educational programs based on discrete educational tasks, separate subjects, or fixed time periods do not allow the flexibility needed to use support services effectively. What opportunities are there for the successful integration and coordination of a variety of services when all children must complete four worksheets before recess, when reading is thought of as a basal, workbook, 3 groups, and seatwork, when math is taught every morning from ten to eleven regardless of the fact that this is the only time that the speech therapist and reading teacher are available to work with children?

The purpose of having ancillary services is to enrich and expand educational offerings. Yet, when rigid schedules or content demands dictate educational programs, time spent

with specialists and tutors often tends to be thought of in terms of what the child is missing, rather than in terms of what he is gaining.

Skills, concepts, cognitive abilities, attitudes, and appreciations to be developed can be combined in many ways and taught through a variety of content areas. The skill of following written directions, for example, can be taught through math problems, science experiments, map reading, and art projects. Plans can be made to teach this skill in ways that foster attitudes of independence, perserverance, respect for others, and that develop the cognitive abilities of explaining, restating, applying, and infering.

Communicative skills, by their very nature, lend themselves easily to this type of integration which is necessary to build the flexibility needed to use a variety of services to best advantage.

Using A Variety of Activities And Organizational Patterns:

With current emphasis on individualized instruction, we tend at times to lose sight of the fact that not all learning is best suited to situations where children are working in isolation pretesting, post-testing, and practicing on paper and pencil exercises.

Individualized instruction starts with the individual needs of each individual child. Children need to drill on skills. They also need multiple opportunities to experiment, demonstrate, perform, participate, listen, speak, observe, draw, construct, read, write, discuss, examine, investigate,

contemplate, create, study, etc. Although it is true that children need to learn to work independently, they also need to be able to work as members of a group. Children can and should learn in a variety of educational settings. They can learn independently, on a one-to-one tutorial basis, in whole class settings, in small groups, or pupil teams. Groups can be established on the basis of ability, interest, achievement, special needs, and even proximity depending on the purpose of the group. Furthermore, a variety of educational activities and settings can occur concurrently.

In Mrs. J's class, for example, all children are working toward the improvement of oral expression skills. Pupil teams are at the listening station recording and practicing a dialogue. One child is working with a tutor on phrasing. A few children are working independently at their seats revising their speeches. At the same time, Mrs. J. is instructing a group of debators in techniques of argument, another group of debators is in the library where the librarian is helping them with their research, the aide is prompting youngsters who are trying to memorize their lines in a play, and the student teacher is teaching a choral reading selection to still another group of children. In this classroom there is room for, and indeed the need for, a variety of services.

MAKING DECISIONS

In a classroom where children are learning different skills and concepts at different times with different people

through a variety of experiences, questions such as - What skills are basic? What attitudes ought to be developed? For whom? When? - confront the teacher at all times. If these questions are to be answered in ways that will help children live more effectively in the world as it is and as it should be, teachers will need to develop competencies necessary for making major educational decisions. Teachers must see themselves as educational leaders, as users of materials rather than followers of published programs.

Too often the authority of the textbook prevails despite the obvious fact that educational publishers, in business primarily to make a profit, must necessarily allow criteria such as cost of production, page size, and "will it sell K-8" to determine their educational programs. Do all children need to read every story in the basal, wait until 4th grade to learn to use quotation marks, review phonic generalizations each year simply because this is what the publishers prescribe?

Teachers must be able to establish their own criteria for analyzing educational tasks based on broad social objectives and the fundamental purposes of education. Evaluation of reading instruction, for instance, must proceed from an understanding of <u>why</u> people read and not from a scope and sequence of skills thought necessary to be able to read. When reading is thought of as something people do for information and for pleasure, mastery of the "schwa" sound takes on a somewhat different significance. "Do they want to read?" becomes as important a question as, "Are they able to read?"

Skill in decision making requires the confidence to question pat orthodoxies, established authorities, and current innovations, the openness to recognize and explore alternatives, the ability to establish effective criteria for making judgments and evaluating outcomes. Unfortunately, few teachers see themselves as decision makers, as educational leaders. In-service, most teachers work in isolation, hardly aware of what is happening in other classrooms within their own buildings, let alone in different communities, other states, various parts of the world.

Making effective decisions requires a high degree of professionalism. A professional, according to Alfred North Whitehead, is one who has theoretically based skills and is neither local nor parochial, but international in point of view. For many teachers this will demand a sharpening of skills, a change of image, and a broadening of vistas.

The purpose of this paper has been to present a brief overview of the skills and strategies teachers will need in order to use support services wisely. While many of the skills and strategies mentioned should be part of every teacher's repertoire they are essential to the effective management of ancillary services. The question now remains: What pre-service and in-service programs will colleges, universities, school systems, and professional organizations provide to help teachers develop the competencies needed to become effective managers of ancillary personnel?

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* This paper is based on the address presented at the May 1974 Annual Convention of the International Reading Association held in New Orleans.