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## A Suggested Procedure for Effective Staff Meetings in the Elementary School.

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A SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR EFFECTIVE  
STAFF MEETINGS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

Logan Corbin Harding

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
OF THE  
COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY  
FOR THE DEGREE  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Staff meetings of teachers can be, and should be, a forceful instrument for educational growth and development. In order to secure such an outcome, however, careful planning of each meeting is essential.

Staff meetings in public schools have come to be an American tradition. Although conceived as a definite force for teacher and school improvement, many meetings have become scarcely more than occasions for making announcements and giving instructions. In meetings of this type, not much of a constructive nature is accomplished, and much of the opportunity for educational growth is lost. It appears that the following factors have contributed toward this unfavorable situation: lack of interest by personnel concerned, personnel not trained for this type of activity, and the unsatisfactory hour of the staff meeting.

Today more than ever, teachers are confronted by innumerable baffling problems. It is imperative at this time that the staff meeting offer positive assistance to the solution of these problems.

In an article, "A Cooperative Approach to the Professional Staff Meeting", Betty H. Irish made the following statement in regard to how the staff meeting may assist in the solution of problems:

The staff meeting improves instruction by contributing to improved faculty relationship as teachers begin to work together or as they begin to have fun together. Most teachers are highly individualistic in a world which is demanding increased skill in working with other people. Most of them are imbued with the competitive spirit which permeates our culture. At few points in their professional training

they have done more than listen. They have had little opportunity to practice the group approach to the solution of group difficulties.

Most teachers can define and describe democratic behavior. They hold firmly to the democratic ideal--verbally--but they cannot use effectively the procedures which implement democratic action. Because they do not use this cooperative approach in solving their own problems, they use it with difficulty in their classroom.<sup>1</sup>

Staff meetings can and often do become routine, and at times it appears the only reason for holding them is that they are regularly scheduled. If this be the case, the meetings are unplanned and purposeless, and therefore are likely to waste the time of both teacher and administrator.

The writer and his staff realized that their staff meetings were somewhat routine. The meetings were not inspiring and they were held in late afternoon. At this time of day the teachers had spent a full day with the children, and often there were other activities that were more appealing than an uninteresting staff meeting. All concerned felt a dire need to improve the staff meeting. Betty H. Irish is of the opinion that, teachers, like all people in the world learn what they live. It is imperative that the stage for the staff meeting be set so carefully that the desired learning will take place. That is, teachers will live, and consequently learn, the democratic techniques involved in group planning and participation.<sup>2</sup>

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to discover

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<sup>1</sup> Irish, Betty H., "A Cooperative Approach to the Professional Staff Meeting", The National Elementary Principal, (Vol. XXVI, No. 2, October, 1946), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 31-32.

and to evaluate ways and means of improving teachers' meetings in an elementary school.

Setting of the study: The elementary school in which this study was made is located in an eastern Virginia industrial town with a population of ten thousand. The town has two elementary schools. This study was made in the school that is located in the eastern section of the town, and enrolls children from the business district as well as from residential districts. Children are enrolled in grades one through seven. For instructional purposes grades are divided into three sections for each of the first five grades; there are two sections in both grade six and grade seven, making a total of nineteen sections taught by nineteen teachers. The administrative and teaching staff numbers twenty. A majority of the teachers have gained all of their teaching experience in this school. Eleven teachers have had from twenty to thirty-five years of teaching experiences; three have taught from ten to twenty years; and four have had from five to ten years of teaching experience. It is the second year of teaching for one teacher, and there is one member of the staff who is teaching her first session.

The supervisory staff includes the following: one director of elementary education, one elementary librarian, and one director of public school music. These assistants divide their time between the two elementary schools. There is a visiting teacher and a school nurse for the entire school system.

There is also employed a cafeteria manager and a full-time secretary for the principal. The janitorial staff for the school includes

two men and three women. The two men take care of the school ground, and fire the two coal operated boilers. They also assist the three maids in cleaning the building, and preparing and serving four hundred and seventy-five lunches each day.

The school building is of brick construction, containing twenty class rooms, a library, a nurse's office, principal's office, teacher's room, an auditorium, kitchen, and cafeteria.

Most of the equipment in the school has been purchased during the past ten years. The school is adequately equipped with tables, bookcases, filing cabinets, bulletin boards, and audio-visual supplies. There is need for more and better equipment in the cafeteria. With an enrollment of five hundred and forty children it is necessary to serve the children lunches in three shifts each day; therefore, it requires adequate equipment to give satisfactory service. The auditorium does not accommodate the student body as it has only four hundred and fifty-four seats.

The school day begins at 8:45 o'clock in the morning and the last group of children is dismissed at 3:15 o'clock in the afternoon.

In regard to transportation of the children; most walk to school, some ride the city bus, and others are transported by their parents.

The school program is developed around the needs of the children in this particular community. It is a living and learning program, with emphasis being placed on the individual as much as possible. Every experience during the day is considered by the staff to be important, regardless of whether it takes place in the cafeteria, auditorium, class

room, library or on the play ground. No experience or activity is considered "extra", as all experiences are part of the daily living.

Method of the study: The staff of this elementary school being interested in improving its meetings decided it would need: first, to determine the true function of the staff meeting, and second, to determine how a stimulating environment may be created whereby the potentialities of the entire staff can be released for the mutual benefit of the pupils, the members of the staff, and the administration. The staff agreed that the following method should be followed in carrying forward the purpose of this study: (1) the writer should serve as investigator to explore the literature in the field, and to establish a bibliography; (2) an analysis of the material collected in regard to staff meetings would be made by the investigator; (3) the staff would interpret and assist the investigator in summarizing the pertinent information secured; and (4) the members of the teaching staff would establish criteria for appraising effective staff meetings.

Plan of the study: In order to determine the functions of the staff meeting, a study was made of the literature in the field. This review is included in Chapter II, along with appropriate criteria, which were established by the staff. Chapter III contains information in regard to the procedure that was used to organize and conduct the pre-school conference and the procedure that was used to initiate the staff meetings. Chapter III reflects the true picture of what happened in the staff meetings in this particular elementary school. Chapter IV includes an

evaluation of the staff meetings made by application of the criteria set up in Chapter II. From this evaluation and actual experiences pertinent conclusions are reached, which are revealed in Chapter V. The writer offers in Chapter V significant recommendations for the continuous improvement of the staff meeting.

## CHAPTER II

### PURPOSES OF THE STAFF MEETING AND ESTABLISHING THE CRITERIA

The staff meeting, also referred to in this study as the faculty meeting and teachers' meeting, is self-expression, like teaching, and may be called a human process. The staff meeting can be useful and stimulating if properly planned and conducted. Naturally, meetings will vary among schools in method, number, and approach. The composition of the staff is one of the most important characteristics to be taken into consideration when planning for the staff meeting. Yauch states:

Whenever people work together for a common cause the factor of interaction is present. It is true that people always affect one another, whether for good or evil. The desired aim is to direct this interaction in the positive direction, in order that the group product will be superior. Good human relations depends upon face-to-face relationships. It is necessary that members of a group work in close harmony, if common purposes are to be achieved. One may conclude that the staff of an individual school is an organic whole, the members interacting with one another at all times.<sup>1</sup>

In order to clarify the purposes of the staff meeting, a review of the literature in the field was made and opinions of authorities aided in discovering and clarifying the purposes of the staff meeting.

Purposes of the staff meeting: Purposes are a form of social policy, a program of social action based on some accepted scale of value. Since the application of these values varies from place to place and even

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<sup>1</sup> Yauch, Wilbur A., "Human Relations in Elementary School Administration", The National Elementary Principal, Vol. XXVIII, No. 5, April, 1949, p. 32.

from day to day, detailed purposes of teachers' meetings can not be developed so as to be universally applicable and perpetually enduring. Constant study and revision are required to keep them meaningful to the teachers and effective in the school.

A committee of four teachers volunteered to make an analysis of the material the investigator found in reviewing the literature in the field. The committee established the purposes it thought would be applicable to their staff meetings and presented them to the staff. The staff adopted the following purposes as a guide to their staff meetings for the session.

1. To integrate the staff and to coordinate its work.
2. To insure that all teachers realize the problems and the challenge of the school's program.
3. to develop esprit de corps.
4. To develop a general understanding and sympathy for the principles of education.
5. To plan for the application of the general principles in teaching.
6. To clarify the special functions of the school and to plan that they may be diplomatically achieved.
7. To get all teachers to work together to accomplish the important objectives of the school.
8. To gain understanding of new movements and plan to use what has proved worthy.
9. To renew interest and faith in old doctrines and practices that are good, and stimulate the teachers to realize why they are good.

10. To report on unusually successful and promising practices and devices, and stimulate their wider use.
11. To reward merit by recognition and praise.
12. To capitalize abilities and enthusiasms.
13. To secure by all teachers understanding and appreciation of the special functions and contributions of the various subjects taught.
14. To have the group meeting serve as a clearing house.
15. To get and give understanding of the local situation and plan according to the needs.
16. To exchange information which will aid to a better understanding of individual pupils.
17. To prepare to inform and unify the pupils, parents, and community regarding the program and policies of the school.
18. To stimulate and direct professional growth of teachers.
19. To reveal teaching difficulties, especially of teachers undertaking new techniques of work, and to plan for overcoming them.
20. To initiate the types of supervision and to stimulate the teachers to be receptive to them.
21. To acquaint teachers with the purposes of individual conferences.
22. To impart sincere inspiration.<sup>2</sup>

A bulletin of the Virginia State Board of Education suggests that specific purposes will vary with local teaching situations and will evolve

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<sup>2</sup> Briggs, Thomas H., Improving Instruction, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 412.

as the school's program goes forward.<sup>3</sup>

Benjamin is in sympathy with the purposes of teachers' meetings as expressed in this study.<sup>4</sup>

Establishing criteria: The staff agreed the evaluation of its meetings should be set up as a means of learning, as an integral part of the learning process. Evaluation, as considered by the staff is not the climax of the act of learning but the starting point for further learning. It is true, evaluation may mark the end of one learning project but it should present a lead to a more challenging project.

The following criteria are suitable for appraising staff meetings, because they are directly related to the basic purposes. A committee of three teachers volunteered to make a study of the analysis of the material that was prepared by the investigator and establish criteria for appraising staff meetings. The committee reported its findings to the entire staff and the teachers adopted the criteria that could be used to evaluate their meetings. These criteria will serve, in Chapter IV, as a scale to measure the effectiveness of the staff meetings in the school where this study was made.

(1) The staff meeting should integrate the teachers and assist in coordinating their work, and help the staff members to understand the challenge of the school's program.

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<sup>3</sup> Bulletin, Virginia State Board of Education, Manual of Administration for the High Schools of Virginia, Vol. XXV, No. 2, August, 1942, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin, Harold, The Challenge of Education, (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1937), p. 326.

Because integration is an indispensable characteristic, the staff meeting should assist its members in acquiring it.

Briggs is of the opinion the most economical method of securing the desired integration is through the staff meeting in which the general program for the school can be developed and justified by an understanding of the basic principles of education. When this kind of integration exists it is possible to coordinate the effort necessary to make the school's program effective.<sup>5</sup>

Benjamin reflects, if members of a group do not understand their problems, they serve as the disintegrative force within the group; whereas, if these same problems are adequately understood and dealt with they naturally serve to integrate the group.<sup>6</sup>

The writer is of the opinion that the challenge of the school is larger than the challenge of any particular subject. Through the staff meeting the teachers are informed of the entire educational program and each teacher will be constantly aware of his contribution to the school's program.

(2) The staff meeting should develop an understanding and appreciation of education, and assist in the application of these principles to the end that apparent issues are resolved and right alternatives are selected.

The staff of a school should be in agreement on the meaning of education and on the ends it should achieve. Barr, Burton, and Brueckner

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<sup>5</sup> Briggs, op. cit., p. 413.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., p. 45.

note there is one excellent means by which the desired understanding and appreciation of the principle of education can economically be brought about, and that means is the group staff meeting to which each teacher contributes not only his openminded receptivity of what others say, but also his active efforts to develop a workable definition.<sup>7</sup>

Once the staff has reached an agreement as to the principles of education it will need to work together to discover its procedures for application of the principles. There will be many unique suggestions and all proposals will be judged by the wisdom of the group. Suggestions that are approved will be given a trial, and results will be reported to the staff.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development notes that the staff meeting may be used as a device to pull together all the resources the staff possesses in order to accomplish the principles of education that have been accepted.<sup>8</sup>

(3) The staff meeting should develop morale, impart genuine inspiration, and stimulate professional growth.

Teachers' meetings can contribute greatly to the morale of the teaching corps by developing closer friendship. Nodland points out for good school work to be achieved, it is important that happiness prevail in every classroom and that each member of the staff feel secure in the

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<sup>7</sup> Barr, A. S., Burton, William H., Brueckner, Leo J., Supervision, (New York, D. Appleton-Century Company, 1938), p. 211.

<sup>8</sup> 1947 Yearbook, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development of the National Education Association, Organizing the Elementary School for Living and Learning, (Washington, D. C., 1947) p. 15.

knowledge that he is wanted and appreciated.<sup>9</sup>

Reid notes that the staff meeting is important in maintaining the morale of the teachers. Whenever there is a policy of the school to be changed, it should be by the joint action of the staff. Reid goes on to state if the entire staff works together in building its program, there is a possibility that not any of the teachers will feel insecure. This may be attributed to the fact that each member of the staff then sees his work in relation to that of the other members, and common problems are attacked and resolved by the group rather than becoming frustrations for the individual.<sup>10</sup>

Bahn emphasizes that staff meetings worthy of the name can do much to inspire and stimulate professional growth of its teachers. Unity of purpose will exist in direct proportion to the extent to which teachers share fully in presenting and solving the problems of general education for society and particular education for their own school. Interaction is maintained as intellectual initiative on the part of all teachers is encouraged in discussion and decision making.<sup>11</sup>

One would expect that the highest morale would come from the satisfaction of cooperatively carrying to success a program that individuals with mutual confidence for each other have worked out together.

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<sup>9</sup> Nodland, Marvin T., "Purposes of Teachers' Meetings", The School Executive, Vol. 67, No. 2, October, 1947, p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> Reid, Chandos, "Let's Begin Where the Teacher Is", Educational Leadership, January, 1947, p. 225.

<sup>11</sup> Bahn, Dorothy C., "Teachers Share in Administration", Educational Leadership, April, 1948, p. 431.

Through the staff meeting visions may be shared and built by teachers contributing from their imagination. And with the staff working cooperatively the vision will become real and desired goals will be achieved.

In order for a staff to reflect signs of educational and professional growth it is necessary that each member of the staff be open minded and reflect a spirit of friendliness. Each should possess a sense of humor and be willing to take as well as give suggestions. "There is a well-known adage that 'There is no such thing as remaining on the same level. You either progress or grow stale'."<sup>12</sup>

(4) The staff meeting may give assistance to the teachers in developing a better understanding of local conditions and suggest procedures to meet current needs, and develop policies to inform and unify all school personnel and the community regarding the program and policies of the school.

No two communities are alike, no two offer exactly the same possibilities, problems, or have the same needs. A general knowledge of community organization may serve as a basis for a more detailed investigation of a particular community; however, one of the most effective community studies is a cooperative undertaking by the school staff and interested laymen.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development reveals, when the staff understands what the community needs and offers, it should serve as interpreter between the community and the school; when school-

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<sup>12</sup> Nodland, op. cit., p. 44.

community policies and programs evolve out of the intelligence of the group, they are fairly grounded and carry with them friendly support that insures action.<sup>13</sup>

As the staff has participated in formulating the school's program and policies, it is the staff's responsibility to interpret the program and policies to the pupils and community. It is through the staff meeting that policies will be developed for improving public relations.

According to a report of the Educational Policies Commission published in 1948, there should be no oneway street between a good school and its community. Just as the school obtains information about the community, so, too, the school's purposes, methods, and results must be made known to the community. The staff is to develop the ways to bring the lay-public into the school. The effort is not merely to develop comradship, although this certainly has great value, but also to acquaint the public with what the school is doing and why it is doing it. When the people know these things the school's work will be more effectively supported from outside the school.<sup>14</sup>

(5) The staff meeting should clarify the objectives of the school and plan for all teachers to work together in order that these objectives may be skillfully achieved.

Setting up a list of objectives does not guarantee its accomplishment. Through staff meetings the teachers may work toward procedures for

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<sup>13</sup> 1947 Yearbook, op<sup>l</sup> cit., p. 83.

<sup>14</sup> Education for All American Children, Educational Policies Commission, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1948, p. 245.

achieving the objectives.

Briggs points out that once objectives have been understood and approved, the challenge is clear to achieve them. It is in the general staff meeting that plans will be made to accomplish the objectives. In this way the teachers will develop their own procedure for achievement.<sup>15</sup>

A coordinate system for formulating objectives and achieving them is suggested by Barr, Burton, and Brueckner, which enables each member of the staff to contribute or question the procedure that is to be followed. Once a policy has been accepted by each member of the staff it is understood that each staff member will work toward its accomplishment.<sup>16</sup>

(6) The staff meeting should renew interest in teaching techniques that have proved good, explaining their merits, and introducing new movements and practices that have proven worthy.

The staff meeting should be planned to stimulate the teachers and offer an opportunity for them to increase their own potentialities. Some administrators are prone to place too much emphasis on new procedures in education, thus contributing toward the possibility that teachers who are conscientious and effective in their own methods will become both disheartened and dismayed. There is much good in the old; and a teacher may have a feeling of security in knowing he can accomplish effective results with his present techniques.

All members of the staff should be alert for unusually successful and promising procedures that may contribute toward realization of the

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<sup>15</sup> Briggs, op. cit., p. 418.

<sup>16</sup> Barr, Burton, Brueckner, op. cit., p. 145.

school's program. The writer believes the staff meeting is the appropriate place to discuss procedures that effect the school's program. Borgeson points out as new and improved teaching practices are realized, adaptations of them should be made through teachers' meetings and group conferences.<sup>17</sup>

Benjamin notes that the program of a school is postulated upon the willingness and ability of all teachers to keep abreast of new knowledge. It is through the staff meeting that teachers may inform their peers of helpful articles or books they have discovered and found beneficial.<sup>18</sup>

(7) The staff meeting should offer solutions to possible teaching difficulties, especially for teachers undertaking new techniques of working.

The staff meeting gives teachers an opportunity to exchange ideas and give assistance to one another. According to Briggs it is wise economy for teachers most of the time to know what difficulties lie ahead of them so they may make the necessary preparation to avoid them. It is far better to achieve some degree of success the first time, than it is to fail, and then attempt to find a better procedure. In the staff meeting all the teachers can give assistance to aid their peers in anticipating difficulties and working out possible solutions.<sup>19</sup>

(8) The staff meeting affords an opportunity for skill and enthusiasm to be capitalized and in the staff meeting merit may be recognized.

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<sup>17</sup> Borgeson, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Briggs, op. cit., 426.

As the school is to insure optimum growth in its teachers, the staff meeting should aid in discovering each teacher's talent and giving opportunity for its development. Skogsberg is of the opinion that the discovery and use of teacher's talents presents a real challenge in every school. In every staff there is so much more ability present than commonly used that the administrator and other group leaders have a veritable gold mine under their supervision. New ways to meet recognized needs or recognition of new needs often comes best from within the group. Teachers' meetings that bring out these creative abilities will show immediate and surprising results.<sup>20</sup>

Human nature finds it easier to discover weaknesses than virtues; but it is the latter that makes any teacher valuable. The unusual and promising efforts of a teacher may be given recognition, encouragement, and direction in the staff meeting.

Wilson notes that every teacher does something, perhaps many things, better than any of his colleagues, and everyone likes recognition for what he does well. Through recognition a person's confidence may be strengthened and stimulated to further effort. The staff meeting is a suitable place for the recognition of an unusually meritorious practice.<sup>21</sup>

(9) The staff meeting should serve as a clearing house for problems, and exchanging information on individual pupils.

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<sup>20</sup> Skogsberg, Alfred H., "From the Standpoint of the Principal", The School Executive, Vol. 67, No. 2, October, 1947, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson, Melvin C., "No Ceiling On Praise", Educational Leadership, January, 1947, p. 220.

As members of the staff make statements in regard to their particular work, there will be suggestions for future programs for staff meetings. In this way the programs for the staff meetings can be planned to meet the current needs of the teachers. Each teacher should be encouraged to express his reaction to school policies and suggest ways to improve the efficiency of the organization.

Casey expresses the belief that teachers need to use each other's information about the characteristics and needs of the children with whom they work. Teachers need to make it plain to each other how pupils acted differently in different classes. All the ideas of all the teachers who work with children are needed in order for teachers to build an adequate picture of a child's behavior. It is through the staff meeting that helpful information may be acquired by the teachers.<sup>22</sup>

In exchanging information, Kawin points out that teachers should be careful in reporting, to place the emphasis on what can be done for the pupils' betterment. When teachers discuss the welfare of a pupil, many traits may be discussed and there is little chance for the wrong interpretation to be reflected.<sup>23</sup>

Teachers are usually alert to discover and to satisfy the needs of their pupils, and it is through an exchange of information with one another that they will be helped to meet this challenge.

(10) The staff meeting should acquaint the teachers with the place

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<sup>22</sup> Casey, Veronica E., "Teachers Pool Information", Educational Leadership, May, 1948, p. 501.

<sup>23</sup> Kawin, Ethel, "What Is Guidance in the School Program", Educational Leadership, May 1948, p. 482.

supervision has in the program and the importance of the individual conference.

As everything in the school system should contribute toward the improvement of the living and learning environment, it is accepted that the supervisory program can make a worth-while contribution.

According to Lange and DeBernardis, the ingredients for real success in the educational supervisory program are: skills, understandings, materials, ideas, and personalities. All the ingredients are dependent for effectiveness upon the rapport developed among all members of the learning-teaching situation. As supervision is constructive human relationships it is through the staff meeting that this spirit may be reflected.<sup>24</sup>

The writer is of the opinion that constructive supervision will help teachers to appreciate the principles of education and to exercise their ability in applying those principles, that they may grow in power to solve their own difficulties as they arise.

Barr, Burton, and Brueckner hold that the general purpose of the individual conference is to guide teachers to such self-directed growth that they become increasingly effective in their activities to improve the living and learning of their pupils. They also pointed out that through the staff meeting the true spirit of the individual conference may be reflected. The staff members, then, will realize that the conference has been planned and it will be: first, constructive; second, encouraging;

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<sup>24</sup> Lange, Phil and DeBernardis, Amo, "Successful Leadership Must Be Constructive", Educational Leadership, January, 1947, p. 234.

third, professional in nature; fourth, help to evaluate techniques in use; and fifth, forward-looking.<sup>25</sup>

(11) The staff meeting should aid each teacher in developing an understanding and appreciation of the special functions and contributions of the various tool subjects.

Through the staff meeting each member may be stimulated to realize the importance of having each experience to be meaningful and significant.

Mueller is of the opinion that anyone who works in the field of curriculum revision is aware of the fact that while teachers have become highly specialized in their own work, many know little more than the average layman does about what goes on above or below the grade levels in which they are working. A series of general teachers' meetings in which an overview of the work in all grades is discussed has proved popular. Mueller goes on to suggest that a committee may prepare to lead a discussion on the importance of all tool subjects in the school program.<sup>26</sup>

In light of these criteria the program of staff meetings described in the next chapter was appraised. The appraisal, in the same way that other aspects of the project were undertaken, was made cooperatively, with participation by all members of the staff in the process.

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<sup>25</sup> Barr, Burton, and Brueckner, op. cit., p. 667.

<sup>26</sup> Mueller, F. Eugene, "Teachers' Meetings for the Entire System", The School Executive, Volume 67, No. 2, October, 1947, p. 45.

## CHAPTER III

### DESCRIPTION OF TYPICAL STAFF

#### MEETINGS

In nearly every organized activity it has been found advantageous for the participating members to assemble from time to time in order to plan procedures in order to accomplish their purposes.

The writer presents in this chapter information in regard to the procedure the staff used to organize and conduct the pre-school conference, and the procedure that was used to initiate the staff meetings. A description of a typical staff meeting is also included.

The pre-school conference: In the school where this study was made it is the custom for teachers to decide at their last staff meeting in June, whether or not they wanted the pre-school conference in September, and if so, the type of conference. The staff decided at its last meeting in June that it wanted the pre-school conference two days before the opening of school in September, because it is in this conference the over-all plans are shaped for the year's program. The staff decided the principal should act as chairman of a committee to work out procedures for the pre-school conference. Tradition and previous experience in pre-school conferences were the reasons the staff wanted him to serve as chairman. Six teachers volunteered to serve on the pre-school conference committee with the principal. The pre-school conference committee had meetings during the first part of the summer and by the middle of July

the following arrangements were established: (1) The pre-school conference would be for two days, September the seventh and eighth; (2) there would be a morning and afternoon meeting of the staff each day; (3) there would be a luncheon each day, arrangements for which would be made by the cafeteria manager and the principal; (4) the supervisory personnel and officers of the Parent-Teachers' Association would be invited to the luncheon on September the seventh; (5) the superintendent of schools and members of the school board would be invited guests at the luncheon on September the eighth; (6) the principal would preside at both morning meetings of the staff; (7) the principal was to use the first morning meeting to welcome the teachers and at the morning meeting on September the eighth, the principal would lead a discussion on school procedures; (8) the six teachers serving on the pre-school conference committee decided to form two committees to conduct the two afternoon meetings of the pre-school conference; (9) the three teachers on committee "A" made arrangements to conduct a discussion on constructive planning at the afternoon meeting of September the seventh; (10) the three teachers serving on committee "B" made arrangements to use the afternoon meeting of September the eighth to make tentative plans for the staff meetings during the session; (11) at the afternoon meeting on September the seventh, a member of committee "A" would preside and a member of committee "B" would preside at the afternoon meeting of September the eighth.

The pre-school conference met on September the seventh in the school where this study was made. The principal presided at this meeting which

convened at ten o'clock. The entire staff assembled in the library, as it is one of the most comfortable and attractive rooms in the building. The principal welcomed the staff and then new members of the staff were presented. This meeting was informal and each teacher told of the interesting experiences that were enjoyed during the summer. The teachers had enjoyed pleasant trips, traveling to various sections of the United States and Canada. Four teachers had attended school and taken courses to renew certificates.

After the luncheon the staff assembled in the library for the afternoon session of the pre-school conference. The chairman of committee "A" presided at this meeting and opened the discussion on constructive planning. This topic was selected by Committee "A" because the staff at its last meeting in June had requested assistance on this problem. The members of the committee had read and studied material dealing with constructive planning and they were of the opinion they could lead the discussion. The first sixty minutes of the meeting were devoted to exchanging ideas and sharing information in regard to constructive planning. During the last thirty minutes the following method of approach was agreed upon by the staff: (1) survey the school and community to discover needs of the pupils, (2) formulate purposes to meet needs, (3) select methods of approach, (4) devise a plan of action, (5) adjust plan to meet needs, and (6) evaluate effectiveness of plan.

The pre-school conference committee arranged for the staff to convene in the school library on the morning of September the eighth. The committee felt it was necessary for the entire staff to have an

opportunity to discuss routine school procedures. The principal presided at the meeting and the members of the pre-school conference committee distributed to the teachers a folder containing the following: the school calendar; explanation of sick leave plan for the school system; the list of substitute teachers; a list of magazines available to students and teachers; the list of books available in the professional library; a list of maps that may be checked from the library; a list of all recordings; a list of films that are owned by the school system; the textbook list with prices; full instructions for fire drills; schedules of school nurse, elementary librarian, director of elementary education, and director of music; the policy of the school in regard to lunches for indigent children; the price list that prevails in the school cafeteria; the class roster; and room assignments. The writer has found through experience that teachers prefer to have all the above information in well-organized written form. The staff was in agreement that with different teachers reading and explaining the items in the folder, it would be possible to detect any misunderstandings.

Arrangements for the afternoon meeting of the pre-school conference for September the eighth were prepared by committee "B". The chairman of committee "B" presided at the meeting which convened in the school library. The committee's plans revealed it would be the purpose of this meeting to make tentative plans for the staff meetings during the school year. The following ideas and information were contributed by the teachers for making their staff meetings effective:

First, there will be clearly recognized purposes for all staff

meetings. The meetings are not to be ends in themselves but antecedent to the satisfaction of some clearly recognized need. The meetings will be planned by the staff as a need is ascertained.

Second, the staff meetings will be carefully planned by the teachers as to content and sequence. When more than one meeting is necessary to accomplish the purposes of the staff, the meetings will be arranged in sequence. Plans may be remade or revised in the light of new experiences.

Third, the topic, or series of topics to be discussed are to deal with live issues with which the staff as a whole is vitally concerned. The topics are to be suggested by the teachers.

Fourth, the staff as a unit is to be in agreement concerning speakers, and modes of procedures.

Fifth, in some of the staff meetings a mimeographed brief may be used to advantage. The brief may consist of an outline of what is to be done at the meeting.

Sixth, the teachers will participate in the staff meeting by presenting illustrative materials, presiding at meetings, serving on a panel to conduct a discussion and by serving on committees. In this way the teachers assume the responsibility for the success or failure of their meetings.

Seventh, the staff meetings are not for routine administrative purposes.

Eighth, the teachers recognize the importance of effective leadership and the staff is looking to its leader or leaders to guide the discussions and keep them progressing.

Ninth, the staff meetings should end with a summary and a look to the future. There may be meetings when a written summary will be advisable. Such summaries serve as an official record of the meeting.

The chairman in summarizing the outcomes of the meeting, noted the following important facts and principles: All staff meetings are to have a clearly recognized purpose to meet a definite need. The meetings are to be carefully planned and they will deal with topics that are of interest to the teachers. The teachers will participate in the meetings and they will assume the responsibility for the success or failure of their meetings. The meetings are not for routine announcements. Effective leadership is recognized as having an important part in the success of the staff meeting. Mimeographed briefs may be used at the meetings and each meeting should end with a summary.

Before the afternoon meeting adjourned one teacher suggested it would be helpful to each member of the staff if the pre-school conference was appraised. The teachers believed that an appraisal would be helpful to all members of the staff in planning for another pre-school conference. Each staff member agreed to write a brief statement reflecting his views in regard to the pre-school conference. Typical of the responses concerning the conference is this statement:

I want to express my deep appreciation for one of the most stimulating experiences of my professional career. The really significant thing about the pre-school conference was the fact that one received specific help on a specific problem. I felt a definite need for help in constructive planning and now I believe I can carry forward more effective planning with my pupils. The luncheons were most enjoyable, the food was delicious and served most attractively. This period of fellowship was a real inspiration. There is another feature that I must mention, and that is the democratic manner in which the pre-school conference was conducted and the earnest participation of each member of the staff in the group meetings.

Staff meeting procedures: It is the policy in the school where this study was made for committees to be formed by teachers volunteering to serve on the committees of their choice. Four teachers volunteered to serve on the Staff Meeting Committee, which would serve to coordinate procedures for the staff meetings. At the first staff meetings in the fall the teachers felt there were certain administrative aspects in regard to their meetings that should be given attention. The teachers discussed and suggested the following procedures for their meetings:

First, the frequency of the meetings. It is difficult to state how frequently teachers' meetings should be held. The frequency of the meetings depends on the type of programs and evidence of growth in the personnel concerned. The staff agreed to arrange a meeting for each week.

Second, the time, length, and place of meeting. The staff agreed the most plausible time for their meetings would be 2:45 o'clock, Tuesday afternoon. This decision as to hour and day was based on past experience. Each member agreed to the hour and day of the meeting and he arranged his personal activities as well as his school schedule not to conflict with the scheduled staff meeting. The staff wanted all the meetings held in the school. Most meetings would convene in the library; however, some meetings would be held in the school cafeteria. The purpose of the meeting may determine where it will convene. Regardless of where the teachers assembled, they would arrange the room to be comfortable and cheerful. Easy chairs, flower arrangements, proper ventilation and satisfactory lighting would be given attention. The length of the meeting was set by the staff not to exceed ninety minutes; however, only a few meetings extended the full time. Most meetings adjourned after being in session

from seventy to eighty minutes.

Third, attendance at the meetings. Compulsory attendance was not discussed as each teacher reflected a spirit, which indicated it was a privilege to attend the meetings. When it was necessary for a teacher to be absent from the staff meeting, the teacher made the decision as he was accepted as an intelligent self-directing adult with professional ambitions.

Fourth, the topic and purpose of the meeting. The staff was in agreement that each teacher would suggest the topics and problems he wanted discussed at the meetings. Three teachers volunteered to serve as a committee to compile the topics as to content and sequence. This list served as a guide to the staff in arranging for its meetings. The staff agreed to the specific purposes that were to be accomplished at each meeting.

Fifth, the responsibility of the presiding officer. The teachers were in agreement that the principal and individual teachers would preside at meetings. The chairman assumed the responsibility to encourage participation, to guide the discussion along lines of progress, to recognize every contribution, and to summarize the discussion. In those meetings which called for a written summary, a teacher would serve as recorder.

Sixth, the use of committees. The teachers realized from past experience that committees can do effective work. The staff gave to the Staff Meeting Committee the privilege of asking for volunteers to assist with any phase of the meetings in which help was needed.

Seventh, types of staff meetings. The teachers classified their meetings under the following types: (1) for organization and administration, (2) for the direction of the social life of the school, and (3) for the improvement of instruction. In working on this classification the teachers found that some of their meetings could have been classed under two types. As an example, administration affects teaching and social activities; the method of teaching frequently determines administrative details; and it is almost impossible to draw a line between directing the social life of the pupils and the instruction that leads to better education.

Eighth, topics of staff meetings. The writer is of the opinion that for this study it is advisable to give the topics of some of the staff meetings that were held during the session. The staff held meetings in which the following phases of school living and learning were discussed: (1) stimulating professional growth, (2) the importance of pupil-teacher morale, (3) coordinating the work of the staff, (4) how can the school better serve the needs of the community, (5) the importance of informing the community regarding the school's program<sup>1</sup>, (6) clarifying the objectives of the school, (7) used and new techniques of teaching, (8) understanding and applying the principles of education, (9) what are the values of the anecdotal method, (10) the place of supervision in the school's program, (11) how each experience may contribute to better understanding and appreciation of the tool subjects, (12) the staff meeting as a clearing house, and (13) rewarding merit by recognition.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from school staff to patrons, September, 1948, Appendix.

A typical staff meeting: The investigator has selected and described a typical staff meeting in order to give a clearer picture of the meetings.

There was a recognized need on the part of the teachers to have a meeting on the values of the anecdotal method of appraising the behavior of boys and girls. This topic was selected from the list of topics the staff had compiled, it ranked third in teacher interest. The teachers made arrangements the first week in October for this meeting which was held the second week in November. The staff developed the following purposes for this meeting: (1) To point out how the anecdotal method may aid teaching, (2) to discuss the type of form to be used, (3) to acquaint teachers with the types of behavior to be recorded, (4) to clarify the position of the teacher as to interpreting the facts, and (5) to reveal how the anecdotal method serves in case studies. Each teacher gave a copy of an anecdotal record to the Committee on Staff Meetings. The teachers agreed that each member of the staff would give one question in regard to the anecdotal method to the members of the committee. The questions were mimeographed and given to the teachers two weeks before the meeting. The staff agreed that the director of the state consultation service would be able to give competent assistance at this meeting, and therefore invited him to attend the meeting and assist with the discussion. One teacher volunteered to write the invitation to the director. The staff agreed the following information should be included with the invitation: the topic to be discussed; the mimeographed list of questions; the date, hour, and place of the meeting; the approximate number of persons that would attend the meeting; and the length of the meeting. The teachers suggested the

Committee on Staff Meetings meet with the principal to discuss the procedure of opening the meeting and to ask the principal to preside at the meeting. It was decided to have a tea during the first twenty minutes of the meeting and three teachers volunteered to arrange for the tea. Two teachers volunteered to greet the speaker and present each teacher to him during the tea.

As the school does not possess the necessary household items to serve a tea it was necessary for the committee to make requests of the staff members. One teacher was delighted to give the use of her silver tea service; another supplied the linen tablecloth; the linen napkins were loaned by one of the teachers; three teachers having the same silver pattern supplied the flatware; another teacher brought a silver flower bowl and guided her pupils in taking care of the flower arrangement. Some of the staff members baked and decorated cakes for the tea, while two teachers made mints. The cafeteria manager was asked to preside at the tea table and six upper grade girls assisted in serving the tea. The guest, on his arrival was met by two teachers and they went to the cafeteria where the tea and discussion would take place. An informal atmosphere existed, and during the first twenty minutes the entire group socialized and it was during this time that all teachers met the guest.

After the tea the entire group was seated and the principal opened the discussion. One member of the Staff Meeting Committee distributed the copies of anecdotal records that the teachers had contributed. The principal used these materials to show how far the school had progressed in using the anecdotal method. He pointed out that Miss Y had improvised

a form she used for writing the anecdotal record.<sup>2</sup> The form used by Miss Y had proved beneficial and the teachers of the first three grades were now using the same form. The questions on the mimeograph sheet served as a guide for the discussion. The teachers on the committee assisted the chairman in directing the discussion. All contributions were recognized. The writer will note some of the ideas and information that were contributed to the discussion. The following was brought out: the teacher is in the position to observe the child under different circumstances; anecdotes are to be purely descriptive of behavior, uncolored by teacher interpretation; all instances of behavior should be recorded; teachers may use card file to record observation; this type of record is very helpful in conferences with pupils and parents; and teachers should record both desirable and undesirable instances of behavior. The chairman in summarizing the discussion disclosed the following values of the anecdotal method: (1) The observation of significant conduct and behavior by all teachers will direct the attention away from the mere teaching of facts, (2) record the significant observations on a card or sheet of paper and place in cumulative record form, (3) teachers should record every instance of behavior which attracts attention both desirable and undesirable, (4) teachers should make these concrete anecdotes with no interpretation or coloring, and (5) periodic staff meetings should be held for each pupil - to present, review, analyze, and diagnose all case data. The staff was in agreement with the summary. One teacher volunteered to serve as recorder and write the summary, and give it to the

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<sup>2</sup> Anecdotal form used by Miss Y, October, 1948, Appendix.

principal's secretary to mimeograph. The teachers were thoughtful in expressing appreciation to the guest for his visit and professional assistance. The principal wrote a letter of appreciation to the guest, thanking him for attending the staff meeting and contributing to the discussion.

Evidence of improvement: At one of the staff meetings in May, the staff was in agreement it would be helpful in future planning for staff meetings, if each teacher would write his reaction to the staff meetings that had been conducted during the session. It was mentioned by one teacher that this method of appraisal is a self-analysis, which is true evaluation of an activity. The following report from Miss B is typical of those received:

The outstanding accomplishment of our staff meetings was the democratic way in which they were conducted. Each person was given an opportunity to be heard. The Committees worked together harmoniously and all meetings were well planned. The meetings reflected an atmosphere which was pleasant and there was a feeling of friendliness among the staff, which encouraged teachers to ask questions. I can earnestly state that I received help on problems that in the past I had hesitated to mention. Naturally, I feel the real test of our staff meetings is whether I have been stimulated to the extent the results are reflected in the daily living and learning in my classroom. Thinking back over the session and the various meetings we had, I feel I received help that aided me in the following areas: to recognize and understand the needs and desires of my students, and ways in which I could make their experiences of more lasting value to them; methods of presenting materials which attracted and held the attention of my pupils; procedures for planning with pupils, teachers, and parents; helping pupils to form and understand goals they wish to accomplish from an experience; methods whereby each experience provided self-expression for all pupils and at the same time satisfactory results were evident; positive methods of coping with situations that required firm measures, rather than using negative external controls; methods of appraising the growth of the pupils through the application of the learning to daily living; and I received helpful suggestions on how to stay calm, unruffled, enthusiastic and patient.

At the last staff meeting in May the teachers were in agreement that their meetings should have aided professional advancement and in order to know the effectiveness of the meetings it would be advisable to get the reaction of each member of the staff. It was brought out by one staff member that a check list would get each teacher's reaction to the same questions. The teachers decided to compile a check list at this meeting. One teacher volunteered to serve as recorder and write the suggestions offered. When the final list was agreed upon it contained twenty-four topics to be answered "yes" or "no". It was agreed by the staff that the secretary to the principal would be asked to mimeograph the list and give one to each teacher. The teachers agreed to check the list and return them to the secretary. The complete list with the number of teachers voting "yes" and "no" follows:

TABLE I  
CRITICISM OF STAFF MEETINGS

	Number of Teachers Voting Yes	Number of Teachers Voting No
There was a regular schedule	20	0
Built fine, friendly spirit among teachers and supervisory personnel	19	1
Discussions were democratic	18	2
Promoted morale	18	2
Suggestions were given for meeting current needs of pupils	18	2
Usually well organized	17	3
Gave aid in understanding pupils	17	3
Merit was recognized	17	3
Promoted professional advancement	16	4
Served as a real inspiration	16	4
Informed community of school's program	16	4
Served as a clearing house	16	4
Better understanding of the anecdotal method	16	4
Better understanding of supervision	15	5
Objectives of school were clarified	15	5
Excellent educational ideas were presented	15	5
Techniques of teaching were discussed	15	5
Coordinated the work of the staff	15	5
How tool subjects effect daily living	14	6
Discussed matters pertinent to the staff	14	6
Opportunity was given to express individual view point	14	6
Released talent of the staff	13	7
Authorities that attended meetings were enjoyed	13	7
Suggestions received for making the school an integral part of the community were helpful	11	9

Decidedly in the forefront in the frequency of mention was that a regular schedule for the meetings was observed. Of the twenty teachers who recorded their views, twenty or 100% so stated. The table shows that

95% of the teachers felt the staff meetings built a fine, friendly spirit among the teachers and supervisory personnel. Eighteen teachers were of the opinion the meetings promoted morale, were conducted democratically, and suggestions were given for meeting the current needs of their pupils. Seventy percent of the teachers noted that the staff meetings gave an opportunity for individual views to be expressed. Seven teachers stated the meetings did not release the talent of the teachers. Fifty-five percent of the staff was not favorably impressed with the suggestions they received at the staff meetings for making the school an integral part of the community.

## CHAPTER IV

### APPLICATION OF CRITERIA

The improvement of the staff meeting should be a continuous objective in every school. When a meeting is successful it is because an individual or a committee has carefully planned for the meeting and the procedure has been carefully executed. Even though the meeting may have been well planned it may not measure up to the desired goal. Every program, new or old, needs critical evaluation and constant revision of current activities for the purpose of making the program more effective. During the 1948-49 school session the staff meetings had undergone change and growth, and were ready for an evaluation. In order to evaluate the staff meetings, the writer used the criteria set up in Chapter II. The criteria are broad statements that were established by the teaching staff. They will serve as the basis for the evaluation:

(1) The staff meeting should integrate the teachers and assist in coordinating their work, and help the staff members to understand the challenge of the school's program.

As teaching is a human undertaking, then it must be done by human individuals. The staff meetings aided the teachers in having a better understanding of their subject matter, the methods of teaching, child development, and character building. Opportunities are present for developing attitudes and poise, which when combined with knowledge and skills constitute the personality. Chairman of the committees and presiding officers of meetings were conscious of the importance of making

clear explanations, and of creating opportunities, whereby each teacher may make a contribution. The writer is of the opinion that lasting integration comes from what people give, rather than what is given to them. It was through the staff meetings that each teacher could see how his work fitted into the entire program and thus realized that his contribution was important. With each teacher understanding the challenge of the school's program he is in a better position to propose solutions which contribute to effective coordination. Miss B reported she felt each teacher was given an opportunity to be heard and the friendly atmosphere reflected by the staff released tension. On the check list of criticism of the staff meetings, fifteen teachers thought the staff meetings coordinated their work.

(2) The staff meeting should develop an understanding and appreciation of the principles of education and their application to daily living.

The staff was of the opinion that just agreeing on the principles of education would be ineffective; unless it is through these principles that one receives direction for performing better his task. The staff meeting gave courage, momentum, and hope to the group to continue effort toward the application of the principles of education. The leaders of the group took every opportunity to stimulate the teachers to accomplish the desired goal. The teachers were in agreement that the real test of their efforts would be reflected by their pupils. The benefits the teachers received from the staff meetings were reflected in their daily living. One teacher reported she received assistance in helping pupils form and understand goals they wish to accomplish from an experience. Eighteen

teachers reported the staff meetings had assisted them in meeting the needs of their pupils, and fifteen members of the staff were of the opinion that excellent educational ideas were presented.

(3) The staff meeting should develop morale, impart genuine inspiration, and stimulate professional growth.

The staff understood morale as applied to the teachers to describe the nature and degree of cooperation, unity of understanding, sympathy, and confidence between the individuals composing the staff. The writer believes the teachers were aware of certain urges that develop morale and the staff reflected them in their meetings. They are the desire for: recognition, justice, stimulating leadership, satisfying one's sense of achievement, stimulating social contacts, and security. The physical environment was never neglected by the teachers as they felt it was an important factor in building their morale. The meetings provided an opportunity for each teacher to contribute and share in formulating the policies of the staff. This method of cooperative planning brought satisfaction to the teachers, because they felt they were making a worthy contribution to the success of the organization. It was through the staff meetings that visions were shared, cooperatively built and effectively applied to daily living. The meetings stimulated professional growth by presenting current materials for teaching, discussing techniques of teaching and securing authorities in different phases of school life to meet with the staff. Eighteen teachers believed the meetings promoted morale, sixteen teachers felt the meetings promoted professional growth and sixteen members of the staff thought the meetings served as a real inspiration.

(4) The staff meeting may give assistance to the teachers in developing a better understanding of local conditions and how the needs may be met, and how to make the school an integral part of the community.

The staff meetings furnished an opportunity to pool the knowledge of the individual teachers in regard to local conditions. With this over-all knowledge of local conditions pooled the staff was in a position to devise a program which was consistent with conditions under which the school would work. With the school's program developed, the staff had the responsibility of informing the pupils and community of the program. Ideas were contributed at teachers' meetings for informing the public of the school's program. The more important ideas were: inform the pupils, use the public press, have open forums, mail letters of explanation to laymen, personal contact with individuals, hold an "open house", have exhibits and entertainments. The staff decided to make a survey of human resources the community offered and as a result of the survey approximately eighteen persons were invited to the school during the session to take part in the activities. Sixteen teachers felt the staff meetings gave help in informing the community of the school's program; however, only eleven teachers felt they received assistance in making the school an integral part of the community. For another session this activity should prove to be a stimulating challenge to the staff.

(5) The staff meeting should clarify the objectives of the school and plan for the staff to achieve them.

Once objectives are understood and approved by the staff, the next procedure is to adopt methods to achieve them. The teachers realized

they could arrange procedures best through the staff meetings. Modifications of traditional practices were cautiously adjusted by the staff. The writer has observed that teachers are usually favorably disposed to improvement programs when they can be brought to participate in them and share in their success or failure. Effective leadership brought out the participation of the staff and aided in developing a sense of responsibility on the part of the teachers. Fifteen teachers thought the objectives of the school were clarified. One teacher pointed out in her appraisal how harmoniously the committees worked together to accomplish objectives the staff had established.

(6) The staff meeting should give assistance in used and new techniques of teaching and offer solutions to teaching difficulties.

The teachers held meetings in which committees discussed techniques of teaching that have been used and new techniques of teaching. Authorities in the following fields visited the staff meetings and contributed to the discussions: Art, physical education, music, reading, natural science, and guidance. Teacher committees brought before the staff mimeographed briefs that dealt with different phases of teaching. The leaders of meetings pointed out successful techniques that certain teachers had used. On the check list of criticism of the staff meetings, fifteen teachers were favorably impressed by what the meetings offered in regard to techniques of teaching. Thirteen teachers were favorably impressed by the authorities that attended the meetings. The writer believes the teachers received assistance through exchanging ideas on teaching procedures and techniques. This is especially true when one teacher noted that help was received in presenting materials to the pupils. Fifteen teachers

thought the meetings dealt with matters that were pertinent to the interests of the staff. Discussions were centered around developing the best methods for overcoming difficulties in teaching.

(7) It is through the staff meeting that skill and enthusiasm may be capitalized, and merit may be recognized.

Individual teachers presenting to the staff ideas in regard to certain activities that had been successful with their students, served as a stimulus to the teachers. When one teacher reports success with an activity, other teachers are less hesitant to attempt a similar activity. Teachers reported to the staff on techniques used in working with pupils in the following activities: natural science, safety, selecting a balanced lunch, preparing for field trip, and introducing a film. The principal pointed out at one of the meetings that Miss Y had been successful in writing anecdotal records. The writer believes that praise is beneficial to the staff as a unit. One can usually find an activity in which every teacher can excel, in fact the individual teacher knows his assets. Seventeen teachers felt that merit was recognized through the staff meetings. Only thirteen teachers believed the staff meetings encouraged the teachers to share their talent with the group. Miss B reported she received helpful suggestions from the meetings on how to remain enthusiastic and patient.

(8) The staff meeting should serve as a clearing house for problems, and exchanging information on individual pupils.

On the check list of criticism of the staff meetings, fourteen teachers felt the meetings gave them an opportunity to express their own viewpoints. One teacher mentioned that she received help on problems

that in the past she had hesitated to mention. Seventeen teachers felt they had received assistance from the staff meetings in understanding their pupils. One member of the staff noted in her report that she had received help in working with pupils to form and understand goals they wish to accomplish. Sixteen teachers considered the staff meetings served as a clearing house for individual problems. The leaders of the meetings were successful in establishing an atmosphere which was conducive to participation. With tension released, ideas were contributed and information was exchanged. The meetings aided the teachers in securing pertinent information about individual pupils. One can't teach a pupil well unless he knows him, and each teacher's knowledge is for various reasons different from that of any other teacher. Therefore, the teachers found it profitable to exchange pertinent information about the pupils. In exchanging information about pupils, the teachers were careful to analyze and illustrate specific reactions. The teachers wanted information that would aid them in helping the pupils to apply their talents and overcome any defects that may be present.

(9) The staff meetings should acquaint the teachers with the place supervision has in the program and the importance of the individual conference.

Effective leadership was successful in stimulating the teachers to manifest interest in the help one may receive through supervision. The staff proposed activities which obviously it would need expert assistance in order to be successful. One such activity was, adjusting the six-year old child to group living. The director of the Memorial Guidance Clinic from a nearby city attended one of the meetings in which this topic was

discussed and gave helpful suggestions. It is through constructive supervision the teacher is helped to grow in order that he may become increasingly competent to progress. The individual conference was discussed by the staff and the teachers believed the individual conference would serve to build friendly relations, aid understanding, and develop confidence. The individual conference was not used to point out weaknesses but to discuss ways of overcoming difficulties, and to give constructive help. Nineteen teachers felt the staff meetings contributed toward developing a friendly spirit between the teachers and the supervisory personnel. The teachers called on the supervisory personnel in the school system for assistance from time to time. Help was secured in: improving attendance, improving health habits of children, locating supplementary material, arranging musical programs, and securing clothing for children.

(10) The staff meeting should aid each teacher in developing an understanding and appreciation of the special functions and contributions of the various tool subjects.

The staff expressed the opinion that isolated tool subjects as such were not meaningful. With this attitude the teachers attempted to develop the living and learning program in which each child could adjust himself and make a worth-while contribution. The staff realized the pupils should master many different kinds of learning. For this study the writer will mention four of the basic skills the staff discussed: ability to read, ability to speak correctly and write legibly, to deal accurately with numbers and measurements, and developing the habit and skill of critical thinking. Fourteen teachers felt they received help

from the staff meeting in how tool subjects effect the daily living of the pupils. It was pointed out by one of the teachers that she received assistance in appraising the growth of her pupils through the application of the learning to daily living.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover and to evaluate the ways and means of improving teachers' meetings. In the opinion of the writer the data revealed in this project are convincing evidence that the school in which this study was made is an improved school because the teachers discovered and evaluated the following ways and means of improving their staff meetings: (1) there was a clearly recognized purpose for all staff meetings, (2) the staff meetings were carefully planned by the teachers as to content and sequence, (3) the staff decided the frequency of the meetings, (4) the time, length, and place of the meeting was the responsibility of the teachers, (5) the topics that were discussed were suggested by the members of the staff and they dealt with issues that developed from the school's program, (6) attendance at the meetings was accepted by the staff as a privilege, (7) the staff as a unit was in agreement as to procedures used and speakers invited to the meetings, (8) mimeographed briefs were used when the staff deemed it feasible, (9) effective leadership guided the discussion and stimulated those present to participate, (10) committees were used by the staff to arrange for the meetings, (11) teachers participated in the meetings by serving in different capacities and they assumed the responsibility for the success or failure of their meetings, (12) a regular schedule was observed, (13) the physical environment of the meeting was thoughtfully arranged by teachers, (14) democratic action was the process used, and

(15) the meetings ended with a summary and look to the future.

Experience of the past session gives evidence that teachers are not only willing but also are eager to participate in staff meetings if they are interested by appreciation of a worthy purpose, if they are challenged, and if they are made aware of their own competence to contribute. Their participation in the larger meetings is often brought about by teachers first being given an opportunity for satisfying participation in smaller groups. In the smaller groups the teachers are less embarrassed and they will develop confidence.

The evidence cited in the project indicates the ways and means used by the staff to conduct its meetings were successful in accomplishing the following desired goals: (1) coordinated the work of the teachers, developed an understanding of the school's program, and integrated the faculty; (2) developed an understanding and appreciation of the principles of education and methods of applying them to daily living; (3) developed morale, served to inspire the teachers and stimulated professional growth; (4) helped the staff to understand local conditions and to meet certain needs; (5) assistance was given by clarifying the objectives of the school and suggestions were given to achieve them; (6) techniques of teaching were discussed and suggestions were presented to meet teaching difficulties; (7) merit was rewarded by recognition and praise; (8) skills and enthusiasms were capitalized; (9) the teachers develop a better understanding of their pupils; (10) the staff became receptive to supervision; (11) there was a better understanding of the individual conference; and (12) an appreciation was developed for the functions of the tool subjects.

In looking to the future the writer is of the opinion the teachers

in this school can place emphasis another session on the following factors in their staff meetings: First, better methods for making the school an integral part of the community; second, wider use of supervisory personnel; third, skillful ideas to release teacher talent; fourth, secure experts that are skilled on the topic to be discussed; and fifth, create a greater desire to use the individual conference.

The techniques of the cooperative approach to the professional staff meeting may not be mastered within a few meetings; in fact, it may take the full school session or longer to lay the groundwork for this type of progress. But once the foundation is established it will be realized the staff has developed a spirit which reflects happiness, friendship, growth, and unity.

Recommendations: From study, experience, and observation the writer is lead to offer the following recommendations for the continuous improvement of the staff meeting:

1. It is recommended the staff meeting raise the level of democratic cooperation.

Individuals who work together for a common end are said to be cooperate. There are, however, many different kinds of cooperation. A low level exists when a number of persons rush to the assistance of someone in danger. When people, because of fear, carry out the directions of a dictator, there is a different kind of cooperation. And when a group of people voluntarily work together to consider and to devise methods of dealing with some problem of common concern, the highest level of cooperation that has been devised exists - namely, democratic cooperation. The following methods of democratic cooperation may be used

to an advantage by a teaching staff, first define a common problem; second, the entire group considers the methods that may be used to attack the problem, leading to the formulation of a plan of attack; third, the staff works as a unit to carry out the plan adopted; and fourth, the entire staff should evaluate the program.

2. It is suggested the staff meeting be guided to enhance the feeling of teamwork and lead the staff to accept the responsibility for the entire educational program.

Effective leadership should be supplied at all times. If possible, the leader should be secured from the group as it will insure local emphasis. The leader should know his subject and be able to give clear explanations. The leader has the responsibility of stimulating teacher participation and it is through participation the teachers will be favorably disposed to work for improvement.

3. It is recommended the staff meeting seek the reaction of the teachers at all times.

This may be done by asking for specific suggestions, comments, and criticisms of the work in progress. These opinions may be gathered by questionnaires or written reports. Wherever possible, specific instances of good and poor procedures should be cited, and definite suggestions for future improvements should be made.

4. It is suggested the staff meeting stimulate self-appraisal as individuals and as members of the group.

A self-appraisal sheet for teachers may include posture, grooming, voice, vitality, sincerity, and poise, Emotional maturity and mental adaptability should be stressed as necessary to a wholesome situation.

5. It is suggested that more district and state meetings be conducted as laboratory conferences, whereby all in attendance may have an opportunity to practice the cooperative approach to the topic being discussed.

State-wide teachers' meetings at various levels can be successful if teachers are given a chance to help develop plans. The purposes of the state-wide meetings should include: (1) an opportunity to clarify the goals which the teachers as a whole wish to achieve over a period of time; (2) the development of plans for realizing these goals; and (3) evaluation of the extent of success in achieving purposes which have been agreed upon. Basic to the success of the meetings is the faith of leaders that effective education demands teacher participation in policy-making and procedures.

6. The writer recognizes the value of continuous evaluation of any activity and also recognizes the presence of limitations in this study; therefore, it is suggested that further research be done on techniques to stimulate staff meetings.

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## APPENDIX

PATRICK COPELAND SCHOOL

Hopewell, Virginia

September 30, 1948

Dear Patron:

Another school session is well under way, and we hope the first two weeks of our term have passed successfully. The purpose of this letter is to explain to our patrons the organization of our school. In the three day meeting before school considerable thought and study preceded the organization of our school; however, we realize that without the help and understanding of our patrons the results can not be meaningful. The aim of the school is to direct and assist each child in living harmoniously, effectively, successfully, creatively with himself and his fellows. In order to accomplish this, all experiences have to be worth-while and contribute to the development of the whole child; therefore, it is imperative that the home and school work closely toward your child's social, mental, physical and spiritual growth.

In order to present a clearer picture of our daily program, including details, may I begin with the child's arrival at school and take you through the various activities of the school for a day.

The first bell rings at eight forty-eight for the children to go to their rooms and prepare for the day's work. It is advocated that children should not come to school too early or have too long a period at school before the opening of the day's work. Being at school too long before the opening often causes some children to become restless or tired, and others over exercise and are untidy and upset before the day's work begins.

The bell at nine should find each child in his class room ready to participate in the experiences of the day. Rosters are checked, lunches ordered and requests to see the nurse are listed. Each class room has its opening program and its daily activities according to the needs of the children.

As was done last session, the physical education and lunch periods are separated. The first three grades have a morning milk period and then the first two grades have lunch from 11:30 to 12:00. The third and fourth grades have lunch from 12:00 to 12:30; and the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades have lunch from 12:30 to 1:00. The fourth grade has its out-of-door play period of thirty minutes from 10:45 to 11:15; the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades have physical and health education from 11:30 to 12:15; and the other grades have supervised play in the afternoon after a rest period following their lunch. It is desired that parents wishing their children to eat at home send a written request to the school to that effect. In this way the suggestions of the medical profession, by which one is advised to rest after eating, are observed. During the play periods smaller groups approximately the same age level are on the play ground at the same time. This affords them the pleasure of having a better opportunity of using the playground and the various equipment in a more democratic way. They

are directly supervised by their teachers at these play periods, and together they decide where and what to play.

As long as it was possible to rush out to play during the lunch period, many lunches were thrown away or so hastily eaten that various disorders resulted. As it is now arranged, smaller groups are in the cafeteria for lunch, each with a regular place to sit. All are encouraged to dine properly. The dining period is one of our most wholesome experiences. It is truly as important as any learning experience one may have. The teachers advise and teach proper selection of a well-balanced meal. Mrs. Sid Fischbeck is managing our cafeteria. Our patrons are invited to visit our lunch period, to see the attractive arrangement and well-balanced menus. There is a hot plate lunch for 15¢, which varies, but it usually contains a meat, two vegetables and a roll. The sandwiches are 10¢, or half sandwich for 5¢. Desserts, salads and vegetables ordered separately are 5¢, ice cream and milk are 6¢ and soup is 8¢. Knowing the regular prices, a parent can provide his child with sufficient money to get a well-balanced lunch or supplement the lunch that is brought from home.

Some of our older students are helping to make our program a success by taking the responsibility of sitting at the tables with the lower grades for lunch and returning with them to their class rooms while they enjoy a rest period or have time for relaxation.

The first grade children are dismissed at noon during the first two weeks of school. After this period they are dismissed at two o'clock, the second grade at 2:30, the third grade at 3:00 and the other grades at 3:15 except on each Tuesday when the entire school is dismissed at 2:30; however, on this day the first grade continues to be dismissed at its regular hour, 2 o'clock. This is done to enable the teachers to attend their regular staff meeting from 2:45 to 4:15 for the purpose of having study groups, planning and evaluating our school program. This dismissal schedule will inform patrons when to meet their children or when to expect them home.

Miss Zolly Ursin, Miss Byrdie Krane, and Miss Beckie Coble joined our staff this session.

Miss Ursin is from New York City and she has a first grade section.

Miss Krane is now residing in Hopewell but her native state is Iowa. Miss Krane is teaching a third grade section.

Miss Coble has been with us before and we welcome her return. She is teaching the first grade.

Miss Martha Fearey, the music director, comes from Ohio. Miss Fearey has taken the work previously done by Miss Connie Buckley. Miss Fearey meets the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grades in the auditorium each Friday from 1:15 to 1:45 for a song program. This is proving to be both pleasant and instructive.

If your child loses any article at school we may be able to help him find it, provided he reports his loss to the office. Found articles are taken to the office and if they are not claimed within a few days they are given to a student committee, which display them in the lower corridor.

As a result of the physical inspection, we found entirely too many students with defective teeth. Please exert a special effort to take your child to a dentist if necessary.

Having our textbooks furnished and being able to secure other necessary supplies, we were able to get organized and proceed toward a successful year. The patrons are cordially invited to visit us at their convenience and we are looking forward to this contact being both pleasant and beneficial to the home and the school. We have an active P.T.A. which needs your cooperation.

May we repeat, in closing, that we hope our patrons will help in making this year one of the most stimulating and pleasant in the history of our system.

Yours very sincerely,

Principal and members of the staff

PATRICK COPELAND SCHOOL

Hopewell, Virginia

Anecdotal Record

Child's name Jimmie Hill  
Parent's name Mr. and Mrs. James B. Hill  
Home address 507 N. Seventh Avenue  
Date of birth August 29, 1942  
Grade 1st

Observation of teacher

Clean and neat  
Happy disposition  
Good mixer, well liked by other children  
Eats well  
Makes adjustments easily  
Has artistic talents  
Tool subjects not difficult, really enjoys all phases of school life  
One year in kindergarten

Conference

Date Nov. 15, 1948 Place child's home

Results:

I have visited the home, several children in family and Mrs. Hill didn't feel that she could attend conference during the day, as she didn't have anyone to care for younger children.

Happy home

Pleased with Jimmie's progress

He is interested in school and wants to attend. Cooperative and helpful at home.

Paints and sings while in the house in the evenings.

Helps mother with smaller children - cooperative.

Observation of teacher

Dependable

Happy - admired by his classmates - nice feeling for other children

Expresses leadership in quiet and unassuming manner

Reading not as fluent as it could be - doesn't know or recognize words as well as he should or could - other tool subjects satisfactory.

Conference

Date March 15, 1949 Place at school

Results:

Mrs. Hill feels that Jimmie is very willing at home and cooperative.

Jimmie cries very easily when playing with other (older) children, feels a bit worried about this. Mother is going to listen and help Jimmie with reading at home.

Enjoys school - likes his classmates.