Counselors: What Is Their Role?

Shirley Congdon

Mrs. Congdon is a counselor at Kaimuki Intermediate School. She has long been active in the Oahu Counselors Association and served as its president during 1962–3. This article is a modification of an address she made at the ninth annual coference of the Association.

Last year, President Kennedy sent to the United States Congress a request for a greatly expanded program of youth services because, "our youth deserve and require a better chance. We must afford them every opportunity to develop and use their talents . . . If we serve them better now they will serve their nation better when the burdens are theirs alone."

Since school is the only institution, outside the family, in our society which must account for each child for the ten years after the age of six, Mr. Kennedy's proposal implies that for thousands of youth in the United States, schooling has not provided the "better chance" it is supposed to provide.

CURRENT PROBLEMS OF THE SCHOOLS

Before we jump to the conclusion that schools are inadequate, we should recognize that much of the current schooling problem has been created by population pressures, technological changes, and social dynamics that have made even some high school graduates "unplaced persons."

It may be true that schooling has not been greatly successful in reducing the problem. Let us bring this a little closer to home.

First of all, Hawaii has always been intensely concerned about its children and its youth. This State—even as a territory—has always been able to recognize that students are persons in their own right. Hawaii has, therefore, tried to make its schools centers for individual growth and development rather than centers for custodial care.

Nevertheless, we do have persons leaving the school too early and we do have persons staying in school who do not have "every opportunity to develop and use their talents."

For some students, the programs do not fit; their attitude, do not fit; their personal relationships do not fit. We educate a misfit from start to finish. For other students, all these things fit together so easily and well, they never did see any challenge involved and talents they may have had are obscured by the need for conformity. It is to Hawaii's credit that the misfits cause us distress and the undeveloped talents give us uneasiness.

It is further to Hawaii's credit that some efforts are made to fit the school to the child rather than vice versa. I offer the gifted program, the MR program, and the school drop-out experiment as concrete examples. I could also offer the counseling program as an illustration.

FOUR ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

To my view, the individualized educational program rests upon four bases: administration, teaching guidance, and counseling. Some unnecessary difficulties arise from the definition of these words, so let me state what I have in mind.

By *administration*, I mean educational leadership. Insofar as school administrators become involved in clerical work and become enmeshed in petty emergencies, they do not really provide the base of leadership; they merely facilitate the other three bases. In education, the administrators should not be bookkeepers promoted to comptrollers; they are educators promoted to the original meaning of the word "principal"—principal educators.

By *teaching*, I mean the transfer of information, the encouragement of useful skills, and the promotion of social attitudes. Unlike Mark Hopkins and the log, school teaching has to be a group kind of activity and learning comes from interaction within the group. The teacher's skill in group activity is indispensable, television and machine instruction notwithstanding.

By *guidance*, I mean the exploration with the student of alternative paths of educational and vocational possibilities. When this can be done in groups, I think the classroom teacher is the best qualified guidance worker because of her mastery of group processes. When this must be done individually, person by person, the guidance specialist should be asked to relieve the classroom specialist.

By *counseling*, I mean individualized assistance to individual pupils in the integration of personality. This requires a different training, a different rationale, from that which produces teaching skill. And it is an activity different from guidance work. Insofar as counselors act as school disciplinarians—which is a common assignment—they are departing from real educational activity and reverting to custodial care.

Notice that my distinctions are based on fuctions, not on problems. The problem of an under-achieving child, a withdrawn pupil, a discipline problem, does not automatically put the problem in the lap of the administrator, the teacher, the guidance worker, or the counselor. Each has a function to perform on each of these problems.

I suggest that the real key to the creation of an effective school team

is the clarification of the functions and roles of each of these four participants.

MANY VOICES DESCRIBE COUNSELOR'S JOB

Let me point out that at this moment, members of the American School Counselor Association all over the nation, including Oahu, Maui, and Kauai, are meeting in discussion groups attempting to specify the role and function of the counselor in school. Counselors are trying to make their professional group a dynamic force in American education. The well-known Wrenn report is an example, and I recommend to you an article by Berlin, "The School Counselor: His Unique Mental Health Function" in the January, 1962, *Personnel and Guidance Journal.*

The counselor has a definite specialty and a full-time job—as do the other three individuals basically involved in a child's education. Our current problem is to recognize each other's functions and utilize them—not try to take on the other fellow's job.

If we are to do this, we must have a team dedicated to the proposition of lessening the number of "unplaced" youth for whom President Kennedy is seeking out-of-school solutions.

Presented February 15, Ala Moana Center

President's Message to the 9th Annual Conference of the Oahu Counselors Association

---

HOPKINS—*Cont'd from page 5*

Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education embarked on a project which should improve the situation.

The plan is to develop a one-year course in high school geography. The project will provide everything from basic skills and classroom methods to the actual manufacture of maps, globes, films, and video tapes. The methods and materials are to be tested in school districts around the country.

The early stages have already begun under William Pattison, a geographer at the University of California, Los Angeles. This project is worth watching. If it is as successful as it is ambitious, the final product will be of value and available to schools everywhere. A one-year program will not cure our geographic ignorance, but it will be a beginning.

Completion of this project, however, will probably take another two years. Meanwhile, what can be done now to improve the teaching of geography?

For the college student preparing to become a social studies teacher, the path is clear: studying geography and methods for applying it in the classroom are needed. For the teacher already in the classroom, it means this: names and places are not geography. Events, historical and current, occur not only in time but in space. If events happen and people live in a place, they are bound to be affected to some extent by the physical and cultural environment of the place. The teacher must endeavor to find out what places are like by the use of an atlas, a good regional geography book, maps, a reputable encyclopedia. The school administrator should look toward the completion of the A.A.G.N.C.G.E. project, and begin working more closely with educators and geographers in his local college or university. They should be ready and willing to provide ideas and aid in the teaching of geography.

There will be no Sputnik to shake geography from its lethargy as there was in science education. By its nature, geography is less spectacular, yet is just as essential as other sciences. The lack of geography in the school curriculum is like a man with a vitamin deficiency: it may not be as easily recognizable as a broken arm but it still results in a less able person.

The responsibility for curing the deficiencies in the teaching of geography lies equally with the classroom teacher, the school administrator, and the university geographers and educators. One cannot carry the load alone. Only a concerted effort can help, and only an enormous one at that.

LAMBERT—*Cont'd from page 8*

lently prepared teachers in the public schools and the steadily increasing quality of the learning programs in the public schools. Curricula, faculties, and physical facilities in a number of outstanding public schools equal or exceed those of many campus laboratory schools.

In Hawaii, the same pressures and related factors experienced by laboratory schools on the mainland have affected the University Elementary School. Until recent years, the primary function of the University Elementary School in the teacher education program had been to provide student teaching experiences for seniors. In 1947, there were 29 seniors in the program and all did their student teaching in the Elementary School. In 1952, there were 57 seniors in the program and, again, all did their student teaching in the campus school. In performing this student teaching function, the University Elementary School made a significant contribution to teacher education and to the public schools of the State.

In 1962-63, however, there are 166 seniors in the elementary program. Since two student teachers per classroom are quite widely accepted as the maximum for effective supervision, this means that the School can provide, at most, opportunities for student teaching for 40 students per year. This is less than one-fourth of the total number of seniors in the program. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to justify the continued existence of any campus school on the basis of working with less than one-fourth of the student teachers in a teacher education program.

BURDENS ON SCHOOL GROW GREATER

In Hawaii, as in campus schools on the mainland, the Elementary School first attempted to meet the requests for more frequent and earlier professional laboratory experiences by adding these functions to those already being carried on (in the case of training schools, the student-teaching function). However, it soon became apparent that this pyramiding of functions resulted in staff overload and a decrease in the quality of performance of all the faculty. With this realization, it became essential that the Elementary School clarify and delimit its functions. That is, it became necessary to decide which of the possible contributions to the teacher education program the Elementary School could uniquely and significantly perform at a high-quality level.

UES FACULTY STUDIES AND PLANS

In November, 1961, the faculty of the School began a rigorous staff study of this problem. In June, 1962, a report of this study was presented to the Administrative Council of the College of Education for its consideration and subsequent approval.

In clarifying and projecting its functions, the University Elementary School recognized four significant trends which are emerging in the national picture:

1. Because rapidly rising enrollments in teacher education and the upward spiral of school operation costs prohibit the expansion of campus schools which would be necessary to keep pace with college enrollment, those campus schools devoted to student teaching are working with smaller and smaller proportions of the total teacher education enrollments each year.

2. As a result, the student teaching function has been shifted from the laboratory schools to the public schools where personnel and curricular conditions are now more conducive to good student teaching experiences than was the case earlier.
3. As this function has been diminished, campus schools have assumed other professional laboratory experience functions, primarily those of a pre-student teaching nature. These important new functions enable campus schools to serve significantly greater proportions of students in teacher education.
4. The potential of campus schools for research and curriculum innovation is being recognized by an ever-increasing number of professional educators.

The staff study conducted by the faculty developed the following major functions for the University Elementary School. These functions represent the unique contributions which the School should make to the teacher education program of the College of Education and to the public schools of the State.

School Learning Program

To provide the best possible learning experiences for all pupils enrolled in the School. These learning experiences should be a planned, integrated part of the curricula of the three campus laboratory schools.

Curriculum Leadership

To provide leadership to the elementary schools of Hawaii through the development of original curriculum materials which have been carefully selected for experimental purposes.

Research and Experimentation

To design and implement experimental studies which will yield data regarding the effectiveness of instructional materials, methodology, and organizational patterns and to disseminate the analysis of such data to all interested agencies.

To participate in research studies which originate from other sources within the College, State and nation.

Laboratory Experiences in Teacher Education

Observation: To provide the students in the teacher education program with the opportunity to observe principles of child growth and development as evidenced in the classroom behavior of pupils. These experiences will be provided through direct observation and by means of closed-circuit television.

Demonstration: to provide the opportunity for Laboratory School staff and College instruction staff to demonstrate promising instructional methods in classroom settings. These experiences will be provided through direct observation and by means of closed-circuit television.

Field Service

To provide an opportunity for professional colleagues in service to observe recent developments in curriculum, methodology, and organizational patterns.

Wherever possible, to cooperate with and to participate in selected in-service training programs which have been developed by the College of Education and/or in-service training programs jointly developed by the College of Education and the Department of Education.

It is interesting to note that these functions are very much in accord with projected functions that were expressed by administrators of the leading campus laboratory schools in the country at the 1963 Annual

Meeting of the Laboratory School Administrators Association.

The 1962-63 academic year is a transition year for the University Elementary School. With the strong support and cooperation of the Elementary Education Department of the College, it has been possible gradually to move the student teaching function into the public schools. This movement will be completed by the beginning of the 1963-64 school year. As this function has diminished, the School has assumed the responsibility for two pre-student teaching professional laboratory experiences.

1. Opportunity is provided each year for approximately 50 freshmen to complete the required field experience with children through playground supervision at the School.
2. Opportunity is provided for all elementary education sophomores to accomplish one semester of planned observation (two hours per week) of children in classroom enviroments.

The demonstrations listed in the statement of functions have been implemented to a limited extent this year, and through both direct observation and closed-circuit television, will become one of the major functions next year.

The School is currently involved in an extensive curriculum study which will continue into the coming year. It is anticipated that many projects will evolve from this study. Projects already in the planning stages include

1. a comprehensive pilot program in the communication arts;
2. implementation and evaluation of promising, recently developed horizontal and vertical patterns of school organization;

3. evaluation of recently published instructional materials in elementary mathematics which have introduced new content and method into the teaching-learning program;
4. initiation of a major revision of the evaluation of the School learning program;
5. extensive revision of the scope, sequence and content of the School social studies curriculum;
6. a pilot program in the creative arts (i. e. art, creative dramatics and music) which, it is hoped, will be the first step in the development of a creative experiences laboratory for the three campus schools;
7. the development of instructional materials for use in elementary science programs in the State;
8. evaluation of the possible effectiveness of teaching machines in carefully selected curriculum areas;
9. development of effective uses of educational television;
10. controlled study of the effectiveness of the foreign language program of the School.

The challenging years ahead involve two problems which must be faced: personnel and facilities.

A change in the functions of the school will require changes in the competencies and responsibilities of the staff. Those chiefly interested in supervision may seek supervisory positions in the off-campus University program or in program-specialist assignments in the Department of Education. This will necessitate finding replacements who possess the interests and capabilities to perform the changed functions.

Most of those who choose to remain at the University Elementary School will be faced with rigorous professional self-improvement. Many staff members have already begun to take concrete steps to strengthen their interests in subject-matter areas, curriculum, methology, and research.

The physical plant and facilities present serious problems. To carry out the new program in a cramped, archaic and inflexible facility is almost an overwhelming obstacle. Surely, it will tax the ingenuity of every member of the school staff, professional and non-professional. Unfortunately, however, the implementation of Thelen's "School Burning Theory" (4: 4-7) does not yet appear to be indicated.

The faith which the author has in the dedication and capabilities of professional educators and the considerable respect which he has for the staff of the University Elementary School permit this closing prediction: The challenges of the changing functions and of the anticipated and unanticipated problems will be met and the University Elementary School will continue to prove the thesis that this School will remain a significant contributor to teacher education and the public schools of Hawaii.

REFERENCES

[1]Association for Student Teaching. *The Supervising Teacher.* (Thirty-Eight Yearbook of the Association for Student Teaching). Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1959.

[2]Blair, Lois C., Dwight K. Curtis, and A. C. Moon. *The Purposes, Functions, and Uniqueness of the College-Controlled Laboratory School.* Association for Student Teaching, Bulletin Number 9. Cedar Falls, Iowa, 1958.

[3]Clopton, Robert W. "Perspectives in Education — 1962." *Educational Perspectives*, Vol. 1, February, 1962.

[4]Thelen, Herbert A. *Education and the Human Quest.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960. 224 pp.