

1957

A Partial Study of Teachers' Meetings in the State of Washington

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A PARTIAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' MEETINGS
IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington College of Education

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Edith Weidemann

August, 1957

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the wholehearted cooperation I received from the principals of the sample schools, the teachers, and their chosen reporters.

I also wish to acknowledge the advice and understanding given to me by Dr. Donald Murphy, my Committee Chairman; Dr. Ernest Muzzall, Director of Graduate Studies; and Dr. Roy Ruebel and Miss Mabel Anderson, other members of the committee.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to get the opinions of teachers of various schools in the state of Washington concerning teachers' meetings; (2) to review the literature which has already been written about various types of meetings; (3) to compare the survey with previous findings; and (4) to discuss any new ideas or developments that might show up as a result of the study.

The survey itself did not include teachers' workshops, orientation meetings, or special in-service meetings. Only general faculty meetings were surveyed. As the field was so large, a limitation had to be placed upon the sampling. In the second chapter, however, most types of teachers' meetings were discussed in order to form a background for the survey. The general faculty meeting is the most common one, and teachers' opinions of it would also carry over to the other types.

Importance of the study. The very heart of our educational program is the teacher. He must be a well-rounded person with excellent qualifications and personality in order to provide the right kind of guidance for the children of his room. His mental outlook must be good. He should be as happy and satisfied with his position as

possible, in order to have him be as effective as his superiors want him to be in the carrying out of his duties. Many teachers heartily dislike teachers' meetings, and resent them when they are called. There are many reasons for this: A teacher has very little free time and any intrusion on that time is naturally resented. When the children have at last all filed from the room, and the door is closed, it is a precious, anticipated moment, when the instructor can sink into his chair, and close his eyes for a moment of rest. Then there are countless things that must be done--papers to correct, plans to be made, and projects to work on--so a teachers' meeting just then is often resented.

It wouldn't be so bad if that meeting would concern vital questions for him, or give him experiences which would relate to his own problems or concerns. Often there is little relationship between what is presented or discussed at these meetings, and the really basic problems confronting the faculty.

Teachers resent meetings where the principal merely tells them what he wants done and how he wants it done. They feel that the content of this type of meeting could easily have been disposed of in an executive bulletin. They are bored, restless, and eventually become bitter or even antagonistic. Some teachers have become so accustomed to being "talked to" by the principal, it is hard to change their pattern of behavior even when the principal is democratic in his methods. Once teachers taste the experience of working on their own program

they won't want to give it up. There is no half-way measure. They must decide; they will either have to give up the freedom of their own contributions to the program, or several hours of their time. Free discussion and group planning take time.

The problem of teacher-turnover constantly faces the school boards of the state and the nation. Shortage of teachers looms as a threat to the quality of instruction found in the classroom. Conscientious and far-thinking school people realize that any cause of teacher shortage or turnover is of vital importance to everybody, as it affects the ones we want to protect most--our children. Excessive teachers' meetings could be one thing that increases the teacher's load so much it could affect his mental health. It could cause him to quit the teaching profession or seek a school in another town or under another principal.

According to Melchior, the following presents some of the causes of the failure of teachers' meetings in the past:

Nondemocratic procedure in planning the purposes, content, procedures; lack of integration of the content with other supervisory techniques or procedures.

Hastily called and generally compulsory meetings that interfere with teachers' previously planned after-school hours.

An apparent lack of purposefulness on the part of the supervisor or a specific purpose that seemed unnecessary to teachers.

An outlet for the supervisor's feelings--either a lecture meant for a few but given to all, or meant for all but given in a nonprofessional, personal manner.

The lack of preparation of the teachers for the meeting, and no follow-up; a hodgepodge series of meetings called at any time.

Entire lack of teacher participation in the meeting, even though they had no part in planning for the meetings.

No minutes or memoranda of the meetings.¹

The present writer felt that many things depended on good meetings. Some of these things were: proper orientation of beginning teachers, democratic participation of teachers in the planning of school activities and solution of school problems, improvement of learning through the study of the curriculum, and the growth of teachers through in-service training, conferences, and workshops. The study is very important. It is a good teachers' meeting if plans--both short and long range--are made in a cooperative manner. The working together of administrator and staff welds them into an efficient, loyal, working unit. Professional growth is accomplished and the school lifted to a higher level of achievement because of the constant evaluation. Teachers can get in a professional "rut", and meetings can serve as an inspiration or incentive to improve techniques. Educators learn from one another, and new ideas are always gained during a good professional-type meeting. A grievance exists as soon as a teacher feels that something is wrong. Individual grievances soon become group grievances if they are not solved. These matters can be frankly discussed in a teachers' meeting, and if everyone is fair and understanding, the trouble is quickly resolved. If not brought into the open, continuing irritations can cause real trouble.

¹William T. Melchior, Instructional Supervision (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1950), pp. 312-313.

It is important, then, to get all teachers in a better frame of mind concerning faculty meetings. Teachers' lack of interest, boredom, and even resentment toward meetings which should be beneficial to the whole school system, is indeed a grave problem. The causes must be found and the best way to find them, in the writer's opinion, is to ask the teachers directly. Since it was impossible to get every teacher's ideas on the subject, the present survey is a sampling of teachers' opinions in representative schools throughout the state of Washington. The study, because of the above reasons, is very important. If teachers' ideas and suggestions can be incorporated in future Washington school meetings, and if their present criticisms can be partially remedied, this survey will have accomplished the writer's purposes.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Orientation. Thorndike's Dictionary defines orientation as being oriented, placed exactly, or brought into clearly understood relations.

Orientation, as it applies to education, is the adjustment of a new teacher to a school and community. Teachers are often fearful of a new job and have feelings of insecurity. A new teacher must get the feeling of "belonging" as soon as possible. His full worth and capacity will not be released until he feels he is an active participant in school affairs and a regular member of a team. It is important, therefore, that the sooner he knows about the school system and its policies, and the curriculum of the school, the better it will be.

Orientation meetings held at the beginning of the term will serve that purpose. Orientation of the new teacher involves the establishment of friendly relations for him, the provision of the best professional assistance possible, and his total adjustment in the new situation.

Institutes. A teachers' institute is "an agency for the improvement of teachers."² The character of institutes has changed from the earlier ones, that were scarcely more than coaching schools, to help teachers pass examinations for licenses to teach, to the later ones established for the purpose of improving teachers' in-service.³ Institutes were meetings to provide inspiration and cultural advancement for teachers. They were the beginning of today's teacher conferences, group meetings, and other types of meetings. Institutes were meetings where the teacher was the listener, and where there were no group or section meetings.⁴ According to Burton and Brueckner, a teachers' institute is a meeting for the improvement of educational practice which consists of three types: (1) the special one or two-weeks institute provided by training institutions and devoted to certain problems; (2) the one or two-day county or city institute held

²James Henry Dougherty, Frank Hermon Gorman, and Claude Anderson Phillips, Elementary School Organization and Management (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 284.

³Ibid.

⁴William T. Melchior, Instructional Supervision (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1950), p. 35.

just before school opening; and (3) the one day institute held by school officials at certain times of the year.⁵

Workshops. There are several good definitions for the educational workshop, but the following definition and description by Tyler on the summer workshop is excellent:

The workshop is an arrangement whereby a teacher or a school officer may work intensely on a problem which he brings from his own school and may obtain the assistance of staff members of the teacher-training institution. Typically a summer workshop runs for about six weeks and includes staff members from various fields of study, particularly from the fields of the curriculum, student personnel, evaluation, and administration. Workshop participants interested in similar problems form into small groups, and they also work individually with the guidance of various faculty members who give help on the particular difficulties that they face.⁶

A workshop is a method of learning by doing, and there is no hard or fast scheme of classifying the various types. It is a more recent agency for the improvement of teaching. Unlike the institute, the workshop has group or sectional meetings where the teachers take an active part. They are not just listeners, but they study, and bring into focus problems of common interest. Melchior states:

The term workshop, as applied to education, is a serious but informal study group in which persons individually and collectively work under guidance of a director or coordinator with the aid of consultants or specialists, surrounded by a wealth of materials.⁷

⁵William H. Burton and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Incorporated, 1955), p. 152.

⁶Ralph W. Tyler, "Trends in the Preparation of Teachers," School Review, 61:207-212, April, 1943.

⁷William T. Melchior, Instructional Supervision (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1950), p. 46.

A workshop is a powerful instrument in changing ideas, in starting new undertakings, in making progress toward improvement of educational practices, and in developing leadership. It is a method of working, which shows the effectiveness of democratic group procedures, and the need of cooperative undertaking by all of its members. They may deal with general problems or may be closely limited in the field of study. A workshop is what its name says--a shop in which work is done.

In-service meetings. Teachers go to the best training institutions they can in order to prepare themselves for their jobs, but preparation is continuous, so in-service education is very important. This is teacher training, education, or growth during the time of contract.

Graduation from college is just a minimum to get teachers ready to begin their work, but the rest of learning is continuous and must be gained through experience or more study. Good teachers know that many aspects of education are constantly changing and that they must keep alert to new ideas and abreast of new developments in their fields.⁸ College provides the foundation and background, but the most effective training comes from experience with pupils, and the evaluating of that experience.⁹

⁸Henry J. Otto, Principles of Elementary Education (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1949), p. 394.

⁹Gordon McCloskey, Qeno B. Katterle, and Delmar T. Oviatt, Introduction to Teaching in American Schools (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1954), p. 354.

In-service means the opportunity of teachers to improve themselves and their work while they are in the service. Educational work is changing all the time. Methods, equipment and supplies change, and teachers must understand them if children are to have the advantage of new discoveries and methods.¹⁰

In-service meetings are methods of strengthening the staff through locating the weaknesses and building up new skills so that those weaknesses can be minimized. It means the growing together of a faculty, or an upgrading to produce better teachers.

According to Reinoehl and Ayer, in-service means ways for teachers to become more efficient, as taking part in study and conference groups, reading professional literature, directed observation, demonstration teaching, supervisory conferences, educational exhibits, and cooperative research.¹¹ A short, concise definition is given by the Encyclopedia of Educational Research. It neatly summarizes in the following statement: "Broadly conceived, in-service education includes all activities of employed teachers that contribute to their professional growth and competence."¹²

¹⁰William C. Reavs and others, Administering the Elementary School (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), pp. 494-495.

¹¹Charles Myron Reinoehl and Fred Carleton Ayer, Classroom Administration and Pupil Adjustment (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1940), pp. 505-509.

¹²Walter S. Monroe, Editor, Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 1421.

Grade Level Meetings. Level means being of the same height, evenness. Grade level meetings are meetings of teachers who teach approximately the same grades. A Primary Level Meeting would consist of teachers of the first, second, and third grades; a first year level meeting naturally would consist of just first grade teachers. In grade level meetings the participants take part, make contributions, and grow by exchanging views. These meetings usually consist of small groups, and so can be more effective because of a more interested and devoted study of a problem and its possible solution. A grade level meeting is a conference of teachers of the same grade where individual differences are recognized and where speed and informality make it effective. Problems of specific interest to that grade are discussed and similar needs are quickly recognized.

Boardman, Douglas and Bent state that a grade level meeting would possibly be a small group working upon a project of common interest where no time is given to administrative announcements. Full time is given to the study and discussion of problems, topics, and issues relating to the improvement of the grade and the school.¹³

Regular meetings. The Thorndike Dictionary states that regular means usual, fixed by custom, and following some rule or principle. The definition "usual" applies to regular teachers' meetings very well.

¹³Charles W. Boardman, Harl R. Douglass, and Rudyard K. Bent, Democratic Supervision (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), p. 229.

A regular teachers' meeting, as stated by Wilbur Yauch, is a planned opportunity for teachers to sit down together to think, and make their common agreements. They are situations in which the staff members determine the program and policy of the school with the principal leading the discussion.¹⁴

Regular teachers' meetings could be business or administrative, social, and educational, or those held for the improvement of instruction. Many meetings are complex and composed of two or more of these types. Coffee and cookies may be served at a business meeting making that meeting both business and social, or they may be served at an educational meeting making that one both educational and social. There is an interlocking and overlapping of the different types so that all three may be merged into one--refreshments served at an educational meeting, where business is conducted for a short time at the beginning or close of the meeting.

The business or administrative meeting alone, is the one where the principal and the teachers discuss and participate in major decisions concerning the manifold business of the school, and things that affect the school's administrative practices. Since policies affect all members of the administration and staff, they should be determined by all.¹⁵ Administrative meetings are shorter and less frequent

¹⁴Wilbur A. Yauch, Improving Human Relations in School Administration (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), pp. 65-66.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 74.

meetings at which school organization, routine matters, phases of public relations, and personnel administration are discussed.

Social meetings by themselves meet a need and serve the specific purpose of getting the teachers better acquainted and more relaxed with one another. The more people understand one another the easier it is for them to work together at another time. According to Kyte the social meeting is "A recreational affair which serves to develop mutual understanding, friendliness, and appreciation among the educational staff."¹⁶ The social meeting is a wholesome social gathering where teachers can discuss informally whatever appeals to them as long as it is not something about school, children or education. It is better not to talk "shop" during this type of meeting as it is purely for relaxation and fellowship.

The professional, supervisory, or educational meeting is a professionally instructive group conference. It is a means of providing professional education necessary to unified endeavor by all members of the teaching staff, and a common understanding among them. These are meetings for the planning of the educational program for the school, and putting that program into operation.¹⁷ An education meeting is a meeting for the development of a group's philosophy of education, planning of curriculum revision, and general, round-table

¹⁶George C. Kyte, The Principal at Work (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1941), p. 268.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 269.

school discussion. The key to its success is participation by all members or "democracy at work."

Elsbree and Reutter say it is very important for teachers to work together in professional meetings. These meetings are to stimulate teachers to newer methods of teaching, to get them out of "ruts," to weld the staff together in unity, and to foster both individual and group growth.¹⁸

III. LIMITATIONS

It is needless to say that in a study such as the present one, there are certain limitations. The writer realizes that a sampling of forty-four schools, even of various sizes and in different localities, is not truly indicative of what the results would have been had every elementary school in the state of Washington been surveyed. However, it does show a trend in certain directions, and where the percentages were especially high, it is safe to assume that even the whole state would have had a "tendency" in that direction.

The reporters were very conscientious and kept detailed notes of each meeting. One complete year, however, of analyzing teachers' meetings in each participating school, would have been more

¹⁸Willard S. Elsbree and E. Edmund Reutter, Staff Personnel in the Public Schools (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), p. 218-219.

conclusive than just one semester.

Many authors have written about faculty meetings and their improvement, and the findings in this study only verified the opinions already given.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THESIS

Second chapter. The second chapter of this thesis has been reserved for review of the literature. In reporting the results of any original survey, it is important to establish a background or foundation. The findings have more significance when viewed in the light of previous research, and anything new or unusual can easily be singled out.

Third chapter. The method of investigation is outlined in this chapter. Steps in developing the study are discussed, from the selection of the problem to the reception of the questionnaires.

Fourth chapter. The results of the survey are made known in chapter four. The data have been assembled from the questionnaires sent to the various schools throughout the state of Washington, and an analysis made of them. Suggestions for teachers' meetings, made by the teachers themselves, have been included.

Fifth chapter. A summary of the study is made in this chapter with ideas for improvement of meetings. A few implications are also included which the findings seem to justify.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A great deal has been written about teachers' meetings and their place in the modern educational program. Opinions vary as to the type of meeting, the subjects covered, and the relative importance of each type. Complete agreement will probably never be reached as the ideas of educators can be as assorted as those of any other group of people. It is the purpose of this chapter merely to state the assembled expressions of the well known authors of books on this subject. These will serve as a foundation on which to build the succeeding chapter, and form an historical background for the material gathered from a survey recently conducted by the present writer.

I. TYPES OF MEETINGS

Orientation. There are usually two kinds of meetings for teachers before school begins. The first is a general meeting for all teachers in the system. The length of those meetings has decreased from a five day institute to a one or two day meeting. The general meeting has three functions--business, inspiration, and social. Certain rules and regulations of the board of education are explained, and school policies and plans announced.¹

¹Charles Myron Reinoehl and Fred Carleton Ayer, Classroom Administration and Pupils Adjustment (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1940), p. 16.

Emphasis in orientation meetings is on the introduction of new teachers, but the whole staff participates. Informality is characteristic of this phase of the program in modern meetings. The general policies of the school may be presented through a talk which may or may not be combined with a film, exhibits and round table discussions. Administrative and routine matters are usually disposed of quickly, and documentary aids and other instructional materials given out and explained. Opportunities for questions are provided during all presentations and especially during small group meetings. The superintendent usually welcomes the group and his talk is followed by a short, friendly social hour.²

Joyce Cooper, in her interesting and informative pamphlet "You Can't Do It Alone," discusses the three-day, pre-session or orientation conference at the school camp which gets the Hillcrest School faculty ready for a good start. There, new members found it easy to fit into the social and professional group, and plans for the year were formulated in a relaxed atmosphere far away from the usual distractions. She pointed out how committees were formed on a volunteer basis and responsibilities for those committees decided upon. She states:

Much time is spent in planning the phase of the program upon which special attention will be focused during the year. Once

²William H. Burton and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision, a Social Process (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 146.

it was reading, another time ethical values, another time evaluating children's growth. Another year the group decided to work on ways of improving firsthand experiences. Plans for study and experimentation in the chosen area are developed at the camp.³

Not all schools have a woodland camp of their own where teachers can meet informally to become acquainted and make plans for the year, but a friendly and relaxed atmosphere can be the goal of every orientation meeting.

The second kind of pre-school meeting is for all teachers in a school or building. The principal should give directions concerning time schedules, programs, course of study, textbooks, playground duties, noon lunch duties, etc. In the case of special rooms or activities, the coordination of work between rooms, classes, and teachers should be considered. Plans relating to the school must be completed and well understood by all teachers to insure a smoothly running organization. Teachers old in service in the system should help the principal in the building orientation meeting.⁴

E. Arthur Larson, Jr. in an article on orientation meetings, states that Morris S. Wallace recommended six major areas of concentration:

(1) Orientation practices related to understanding the school's philosophy and objectives, procedures and routines.

³Joyce Cooper, You Can't Do It Alone (Olympia Washington: Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1951), p. 55.

⁴Reinoehl, loc. cit.

(2) Orientation practices related to conditions of work. (3) Orientation practices related to teacher-community relationship. (4) Orientation practices involving administrative supervisory-teacher relationships. (5) Orientation practices related to establishing good teacher-pupil relationships. (6) Orientation practices related to instruction.⁵

Meetings to acquaint the new teacher with the above practices are very important. Education has become big business and we must have understanding and contented teachers to make it a success.

Teachers' institutes. It is not absolutely certain when or where the first teachers' institute was held, but Henry Barnard is given credit for the first regularly organized one, which was held in Connecticut in 1839. This was about the time Horace Mann was made Secretary of the Board of Education in Massachusetts. By 1860, a score of states were holding institute meetings for the improvement of their teachers. Some of these institutes were voluntary and some compulsory, depending upon the school district, county, or state.⁶

The teachers' institute is a complex meeting serving several purposes. It supplies a medium for cultural training, inspiration, technical assistance, and the exchange of ideas. If there is good leadership it is a valuable instrument for the improvement of educational practices. It has been declining since 1900, however, so

⁵Arthur E. Larson, Jr., "Beat That Bugaboo," Washington Educational Association, 34:10, October, 1954.

⁶James Henry Dougherty, Frank Hermon Gorman, and Claude Anderson Phillips, Elementary School Organization and Management (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 284.

that the formal aspects of the institute are almost entirely gone. Extension class meetings, state and district meetings, and various forms of workshops have taken its place.⁷

Workshops. Workshops may be for several purposes. The ones that the Des Moines, Iowa public schools have conducted are good examples. Some are for recreation, some for instruction, and some for the study of a specific problem. Frequently workshop meetings have university teachers as resource persons so that teachers can be given college credit or promoted on the salary scale. In Oregon, many of the pre-school, week-long conferences are continued on a workshop basis as once a week meetings, to study certain problems such as curriculum or guidance.⁸

A good example of the workshop meeting for recreation and a specific problem is described in an article in the National Educational Association Journal. This article was written by Milton J. Gold, then Supervisor of Curriculum in the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia, Washington. He said:

In 1953 the first state workshop was organized to make use of outdoor laboratories as a method to help teachers build necessary backgrounds. . . . A host of organizations and agencies joined the state superintendent of public instruction in planning the first workshop on conservation and outdoor education. The program was dedicated to the development of know-how on the part of teachers in working with students in outdoor situations, extending

⁷Dougherty, loc. cit.

⁸Paul B. Jacobson, William C. Reaves, and James D. Logsdon, Duties of School Principals (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 499.

from brief field trips to camping experiences of a week or more. A second emphasis of the workshop was on developing know -about so that teachers would feel secure in leading the study on natural resources. But the most important emphasis was to arouse want-to, and an ardent desire to do something about conservation education.⁹

Just "rubbing elbows" with other teachers is valuable as they discover their problems are the same, and the general discussions and exchange of ideas bring out possible solutions to those problems. Workshop meetings have proved to be powerful instruments in stretching and enlarging ideas, in stimulating teachers to new ventures, in furthering democratic processes, in developing skills in human relationship and leadership, and in making strides toward improvement of educational procedures. Some of the best ideas for this writer's classroom activities have come from workshop meetings and discussions with other teachers.

The term "workshop" and the process have been used a long time, coming into education in 1936. Burton and Brueckner state that the workshop was first organized in 1936 at the University of Ohio under the direction of Ralph W. Tyler, then chairman of the Department of Education, University of Chicago. This workshop grew out of the demands of teachers participating in the Eight-Year Study. This group worked on actual problems, and social as well as professional

⁹Milton J. Gold, "Workshops on Conservation and Out-Door Education," National Education Association. 44:39, January, 1955.

activities were included.¹⁰

A workshop has definite characteristics according to Kimball Wiles. All participants follow individual programs to fulfill their own purposes. It is a flexible plan that can be changed many times during the session, with only the preliminary daily schedule worked out before. No group assignments are made, but cooperative work is encouraged, so teachers can plan together and share the results of their work.¹¹

Heaton lists seven essential characteristics of the workshop meeting:

1. The participant is given an opportunity to make an intensive study of an interest which has arisen out of his experience as a teacher.

2. The participant shares in planning a program of individual and group activities designed to meet his needs and those of his fellow workers.

3. The participant is provided with easy access to the services of various staff members, representing a variety of kinds of assistance.

4. Formal and informal association with other participants of varied backgrounds contributes to the participant's thinking on his specific problem, broadens his general professional orientation, and provides opportunity for experiences in cooperative activity.

5. An effort is made to interest the participant in the whole child, the whole school, and the whole community.

6. The participant's total experience as he studies a specific interest or problem tends to prepare him for the solution of other professional problems in the future.

7. Since workshops have been concerned not only with the professional problems of the teacher, but with his life as an

¹⁰William H. Burton and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision a Social Process (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 147.

¹¹Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 166.

individual, efforts have been made to afford opportunities for balanced living.¹²

Many types of creative activities are made possible in a workshop, such as experience in dramatics, dancing and art media. As soon as the group gathers, a social committee is organized that has the responsibility for planning and carrying out social activities.

Committee work of all kinds is an important part of a workshop. These committees usually are: planning, social, hospitality, publicity, bulletin board, decorations, and evaluation.

A great deal of emphasis in workshops should be placed upon evaluation, especially on the ways of working together. According to Kimball Wiles, it is usual to establish an evaluation committee that has the responsibility of recommending evaluation procedures to the whole group. Evaluation periods, with the discussion under the leadership of a panel of members of various work groups, have proved a good way of improving workshop procedures.¹³

There are still many ways workshops could be improved, but no school system can hope to be really progressive and vigorous if it does not include this type of training for its teachers.

In-service training. The workshop just discussed is actually one form of in-service training. According to Ned Flanders in his

¹²A. S. Barr, William H. Burton, and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Incorporated, 1947), p. 712.

¹³Wiles, op. cit., p. 167.

interesting article on the administrator's role in the improvement of instruction, teachers are always busy and have no time to participate in an in-service program that is "separated" from everyday classroom teaching. He feels that "if there is to be improvement of instruction, it will have to be an integral part of the regular teaching function, something that is a part of the total school program."¹⁴ This could be done in some cases by having a resource person in once a month at regular staff meetings.

The December, 1953 issue of The Nation's Schools has a good article by Walter Edwards which shows that the teachers' avid interest in law which affected them--contracts, liability for pupil injury, and discipline--was the reason for their wanting in-service meetings. The program took shape as a part of the teachers' own organization, although not every meeting was occupied with the study of school law. Study sessions followed their business meetings, and were preceded by cups of coffee for relaxation and fellowship. The resource person lectured for an hour, and then there was a discussion on the things the teachers felt they most needed to know.¹⁵

The feeling of Elsbree and McNally is that "a teacher's growth takes place best through his participation in cooperative study and improvement of the teacher-learning situation, and the self-

¹⁴Ned Flanders, "The Administrator's Role in the Improvement of Instruction," The Elementary School Journal, 57:34, October, 1956.

¹⁵Walter L. Edwards, "The Teacher and School Law," The Nation's Schools, 52:41, December, 1953.

evaluation which is attendant upon such study."¹⁶

If an in-service education program is to be a significant experience, according to Weber, it must be based on challenging problems which have developed within the framework of the local school itself. The teacher needs a real situation with a continuance of activity in which he is interested for its own sake as a basis for in-service meetings. The teachers should agree as to the problem to work on, experiment, and finally evaluate.¹⁷

It is the writer's observation that teachers will be bored with meetings that concern situations or problems that are indefinite, of no immediate worry, or that are limited to a certain group of teachers. They are intensely interested, however, in problems that vitally concern all of them and that are tangible enough that something definite can be done about them. Teachers will come to in-service meetings if they feel that they will benefit themselves personally or their teaching methods.

Weber states that nearly every school system wishes to develop a program for training teachers in-service, but is puzzled as to what agencies to use. According to him the following agencies should be used besides the local school system itself:

¹⁶Willard S. Elsbree and Harold J. McNally, Elementary School Administration and Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1951), p. 412.

¹⁷Clarence A. Weber, Personnel Problems of School Administrators (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 75.

1. The universities, colleges, and teachers' colleges within reasonable proximity.
2. State departments of education.
3. State and National teacher's organizations.
4. The community in which the schools are located.
5. Industry and business agencies.
6. Labor organizations.¹⁸

Colleges and universities are willing to send resource persons to local in-service meetings for the purpose of helping teachers. They often arrange curriculum laboratories, reading clinics, or send specialists for certain specific problems. The State Departments also can be very helpful by sending consultants in the following areas to meetings. Weber lists these areas in part as follows:

1. School buildings and grounds.
2. Curriculum development.
3. Elementary education.
4. Health and physical education.
5. Community recreation.
6. Safety and driver education.
7. School lunch programs.
8. Special education.
9. Industrial arts.
10. Citizenship.
- . . .
11. Legal service.
12. Transportation.
- . . .
13. Guidance.
- . . .
14. School libraries.
- . . .
15. Parent education.
16. School nursing service.¹⁹

¹⁸Weber, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁹Weber, op. cit., p. 89.

Teachers' organizations could do more to help in-service training. The community, also, is a fertile area from which to obtain help. Good school leadership should see that there is a well-developed program of community planning in which teachers can take a part. All areas have meetings that concern themselves with organizations, industries, the press, theaters, radio, libraries, churches, youth-serving agencies, service groups, labor organizations, business growth, etc.

According to Wiles, changes in the nature of the community itself are clues to the in-service training meetings that should be held. He gave New York City as an example when the number of Puerto-Rican students had increased so rapidly. The teachers knew all the skills for the local children, but knew far too little about the simple, agrarian culture from which those Puerto-Ricans had suddenly been transferred. In-service meetings were started to train the teachers to greater understanding of the background of the Puerto-Rican youth, and the problems they faced in transferring to a big city. In this way the teachers' abilities were increased to cope with the job confronting them.²⁰

Paul Misner, in a fine article in Childhood Education, stated that it is imperative in the next decade that teachers and administrators practice the art of wearing each other's shoes. In this way effective communication will achieve a high level of unity. He felt that well-

²⁰Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 223.

planned, in-service training meetings have proved to be one of the best means of achieving cooperation among teachers and administrators. He also urged that provision be made for frequent reports of progress to the entire group by those members most directly responsible for the particular activity. An opportunity must be given at certain meetings for all members of the group to take part in the decisions.²¹

In-service training meetings must not be haphazard. Some clues come from evaluation as areas of weakness show up. A second source of guidance is the direction the school program is taking. If curriculum changes are necessary, study meetings should be held for investigation of possible alternations.²²

If instructional education is what is desired by the teachers, demonstration teaching could be carried on. According to Reavis, Pierce, Stulken, and Smith, the value of demonstration teaching in meetings, rests not so much on the skill or success with which a demonstration is carried out, as on the effect produced on the practices of the observer. After the demonstration, the lesson should be discussed fully and freely.²³

²¹Paul J. Misner, "In Unity There is Strength," Childhood Education, 32:108, November, 1955.

²²Wiles, op. cit., p. 222.

²³William C. Reavis and others, Administering the Elementary School (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), pp. 495-496.

Burton and Brueckner point out that the chief purpose of the early demonstration-teaching meetings was to show observers "how to do it." Now demonstrations are made in terms of carefully formulated criteria and are followed by critical discussion. As soon as the facts are established, the discussion should turn to the evaluations of what was observed. This type of meeting is very beneficial to teachers as new methods and techniques are observed, and increased insight and comprehension are achieved.²⁴

Grade level meetings. Meetings of teachers of the same grade levels or subject fields are found to be very worth while. These group conferences should deal with topics in which teachers are vitally interested, and which aim to improve instruction. For instance, if a group of first grade teachers should have a meeting, they would relax as they would be with people of similar problems, and they would unburden themselves and discuss those problems that belong purely to the first grade. They would probably talk about the preparations for reading, readiness tests, individual differences, how certain discipline problems could be handled, etc. Readiness tests would certainly be vital to first grade teachers, but would have no meaning or interest to the intermediate teacher. Each particular grade or particular level has its own problems and that is why grade or group

²⁴William H. Burton and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 162.

teachers' meetings are often more popular than are the general ones.

Joyce Cooper stated that three primary teachers in a small building always had meetings each afternoon to discuss problems and make plans. The "Show and Tell" idea came from one of the teachers. Other primary teachers decided to try it and came back with enthusiasm and additional ideas to make it even better.²⁵

The present writer, at group meetings in her own building, has seen teachers plan science corners, room libraries, accept advice from one another, criticize constructively each other's bulletin boards, and outline future activities together.

One of the teachers that Joyce Cooper wrote about said, "It helps just to talk over problems. Sometimes I understand better as I explain what happened. Sometimes I just get things off my chest. Sometimes I get back my sense of humor."²⁶

Reinoehl and Ayer want to keep conference or group meetings small and made up of teachers with common interests. They state that teachers grow by studying their problems, by exchanging views, and by arriving at proper solutions. Their meetings should come frequently and regularly. They are usually very effective because of the common

²⁵Joyce Cooper, You Can't Do It Alone (Olympia, Washington: Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1951), p. 12.

²⁶Ibid., p. 13.

interests of the group and their earnest devotion to the study of the problem.²⁷

General or regular teachers' meetings. In his informative book, Fundamentals of Instructional Supervision, Fred Ayer lists three chief types of teachers' meetings which determine the screening and selection of purposes. These are: (1) meetings for routine administrative purposes, (2) meetings for social purposes, and (3) meetings that deal with improvement of instruction.²⁸ The purposes overlap a little, but in general those are the main ones.

Sometimes there is an urgent need for administrative meetings involving the entire school staff. School organization, routine matters, administrative policies, personnel administration, etc. require cooperative planning and unified action.²⁹ Items taken up at these meetings usually have to be carefully explained. Sometimes they can be stated in a bulletin to the teachers. Many administrators resort only to this type of teachers' meeting and as a result the teachers are not too happy to attend. They feel their time is taken up by listening

²⁷Charles Myron Reinoehl and Fred Carleton Ayer, Classroom Administration and Pupil Adjustment (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1940), p. 507.

²⁸Fred C. Ayer, Fundamentals of Instructional Supervision (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954), pp. 1-2.

²⁹George C. Kyte, The Principal at Work (New York: Ginn and Company, 1941), p. 268.

to information that could very well have been written in a bulletin.

Ayer lists twelve selected purposes or objectives for holding teachers' meetings of any kind: They are as follows:

1. To reach an agreement as to the philosophy that governs the group's goals.
2. To unify the efforts of the entire educational staff.
3. To improve old practices.
4. To discover problems for social study.
5. To carry on special projects for the improvement of instruction.
6. To plan the integration of newly adopted practices into the standard program.
7. To explore the value of standard supervisory activities and administrative policies.
8. To study community--school relations.
9. To develop morale.
10. To discover and utilize special talent.
11. To exemplify good group action.
12. To inspire teachers' professional enthusiasm. ³⁰

Sometimes school teachers just have to relax after the strain of the day's activities. It is good to assemble then with other teachers and join them in indulging in coffee and small talk. This social meeting should be a comfortable, recreational affair which helps develop friendships and mutual understanding among the staff.

Kyte suggests the selection of a social committee, so its members could take the lead in planning most of the school's social meetings held in the school. He states: "Special luncheons, teas, dinners and entertainment are planned. They provide informal opportunities for teachers to welcome new members to the staff, to honor a promoted colleague, or to recognize a personal or school anniversary." ³¹

³⁰Ayer, op. cit., pp. 81-83.

³¹Kyte, Loc. cit.

Meetings that deal with improvement of instructional and administrative planning. The last type of meeting is the one that deals with the improvement of instruction. According to Adams and Dickey, "The improvement of instruction begins where the teachers are."³² Many principals do not want their teachers to help plan the school program or formulate recommendations. On the other hand they may have too many committees, and in this situation everybody does everything and the work constantly overlaps. In the words of Noah Turpen:

Much more effective is the democratic situation in which group decision and teamwork reinforce individual responsibility. . . . Everyone has a chance to share directly or through representatives, in setting goals and determining basic policies.³³

Henry Willett believes that cooperative administration involves many people and many ideas, and for that reason is a means of arriving at better and more workable decisions. He states that administration must be democratic if it is to stimulate effective activity. This does not mean that everybody should do everything, but it does mean that teachers should come together in meetings and share in making plans that are of importance to them and their work.³⁴

³²Harold P. Adams and Frank G. Dickey, Basic Principles of Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1953), p. 90.

³³Noah C. Turpen, "Tyranny, Turmoil or Teamwork," Washington Education Association Journal, Vol. XXXIV. 34:14-15, April, 1955.

³⁴Henry I. Willett, "Cooperative Administration, Fact or Fancy?" National Education Association Journal, 44:91, February, 1955.

Many superintendents and principals are now recognizing the importance of the teachers in studying school needs and compiling the annual school budget. Every member can take on a certain responsibility according to his needs and interests, and the whole school staff work as a team. The school system, in this way, acquires an understanding of the whole school program and its needs.³⁵

Democratic group-planning meetings are very important, for without them few experiences are provided which allow teachers and supervisors to grow in the ability to plan together in a democratic way. Adams and Dickey give a good, actual illustration of this, in which the teachers supplied the impetus for program changes:

The major responsibility for shaping the educational policies and the curriculum of Moultrie High School, Moultrie, Georgia, has rested primarily with the teachers. The entire faculty has met one evening a week to discuss some professional subject which has been planned in advance by a committee of teachers. Over a period of one school year the meetings were concerned with the school's policies in five areas: health, recreation, economic life of the community, ethics, and citizenship. The elected chairman of the faculty presided and the superintendent, the supervisor, and the principal took part as regular members of the group without recognition of any special difference in their positions.³⁶

Willard S. Elsbree, in his article, "Improving the Relationships of Administrator and Staff," said some educators have interpreted democratic meetings to mean all division of labor should stop and

³⁵Ibid., p. 93.

³⁶Harold P. Adams and Frank G. Dickey, Basic Principles of Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1953), p. 92.

everyone share in administering the school. The term formulating policies democratically means something different from this. It implies that those likely to be affected by a policy should have the chance to share in shaping that policy; that they should be able to make suggestions, to criticize existing arrangements, and to help formulate new policies that relate to conditions of work and the curriculum.³⁷

Burton and Brueckner also stated that it is an increasingly popular thing to have teacher committee participation in discovering and defining educational problems. Some of these are problems of teachers arising out of environmental factors, and some out of personal characteristics of the individual concerned. Some also arise out of staff relationships and administrative practices.³⁸

Meetings on curriculum planning are becoming popular, as this is a constant, on-going activity. It includes the development of new means by which teachers, pupils, parents, and adults as members of the community may fully take part.³⁹ These meetings have a great deal of value as the teachers recognize the need for the curriculum changes and have a pride in realizing they have a part in the revisions. Hagman writes: "It is difficult to see how curriculum study can be

³⁷Willard S. Elsbree, "Improving Relationships of Administrator and Staff," The Nation's Schools, 53:51, January, 1954.

³⁸William H. Burton and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Incorporated, 1955), p. 163.

³⁹Ibid., p. 164.

other than the reeducation of teachers, a process desirably both continuous and teacher-initiated.⁴⁰ Beck, Cook, and Kearney go even further by stating, "It has been said the teacher is the curriculum."⁴¹

Weber states that the most promising technique for educating teachers, is to give them a big part in the conducting of faculty meetings and in the planning and shaping of school policy.⁴²

Teachers usually will not object to meetings if the majority of them are concerned with problems of instruction. Sometimes administrative meetings are called that deal with routine things that bulletins could have dealt with. Jacobson, Reavis, and Logsdon believe that if a committee of teachers, representative of every grade in the school, was appointed to plan a series of meetings, and if the meetings were related to a supervisory program the teachers have helped to plan, and in which they are interested, and if they had a chance to take part in those meetings, there need not be any concern over a luke-warm feeling on the teachers' parts.⁴³

⁴⁰Harlan L. Hagman, Administration of Elementary Schools (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), p. 154.

⁴¹Robert H. Beck, Walter W. Cook, and Nolan C. Kearney, Curriculum in the Modern School (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), p. 151.

⁴²Clarence Weber, Personnel Problems of School Administrators (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 94.

⁴³Paul B. Jacobson, William C. Reavis, and James D. Logsdon, Duties of School Principals (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 510.

A principal should never have a teachers' meeting just merely for the sake of holding one. Many principals have set, scheduled times as every Tuesday or Thursday, or the second Wednesday of each month, or the third Thursday, etc. Sometimes a scheduled policy of meetings works out, but in general, meetings should be called to discuss problems that arise out of daily needs. If there is to be a series of meetings for a particular study, it must be carefully pre-planned.

According to Kyte, the initial planning is extremely essential in order to study or review the data accumulated. He feels planning for a meeting involves, "(1) defining clearly the purposes to be achieved, (2) selecting the procedures to be used, and (3) formulating the program of study to be followed."⁴⁴ The plans usually take in two steps; (1) the planning by the principal, and (2) the cooperative planning by the principal and the teachers. Some problems will concern only primary teachers and some only the intermediate teachers, but there will run through both sets of problems a thread of significant needs common to both groups. Three different meetings should then be planned--one for the primary teachers, one for the intermediate teachers, and one for the general staff.⁴⁵ The subject for discussion at the general meetings should arise out of daily needs, as the making of the curriculum, problems of social grouping, growth problems of children, discussions

⁴⁴George C. Kyte, The Principal at Work (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1941), p. 270.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 271.

of specific subject matter fields, and methods of observing child behavior. The principal should be prepared well in advance and have his reference material on hand.

In the general faculty meeting, according to Barr, Burton, and Brueckner, there is a tendency toward the introduction of a greater variety of appeals, such as skilled technical and non-technical lay speakers, panel discussions and the use of audio-visual aids. Reports can be given by individual members of the group, a specialist in some aspect of the school's program may speak, and there may be general group discussion, or panels. This latter type of discussion may bring on widespread participation. It consists of three to ten members, a good chairman, an audience, and a worth-while topic. To get good results the meeting should be carefully planned.⁴⁶ If meetings are to be vital and worth-while to teachers they must be organized around teachers' problems. A staff meeting should have a definite plan, an agenda which the teachers should have an opportunity to see before hand so they have a chance to discuss it.

A helpful discussion of teachers' meetings is that of Kimball Wiles. He states that the whole faculty should be free to change the order of items on the agenda at the beginning of a meeting. The only criticism of that is it may take up too much of the faculty's time in unnecessary arguing. He also mentioned the importance of

⁴⁶ A. S. Barr, William H. Burton, and Leo J. Brueckner, *Supervision* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947), pp. 718-719.

frequently changing the membership on the planning committee. This is a very important committee as it selects the meeting place, the arrangement of furniture, the securing of special consultants and the provision for refreshments.⁴⁷

Elsbree and McNally tell about the report of a former River Forest, Illinois, superintendent. He related how group planning by his staff members in meetings developed a new method of reporting, a new salary schedule, a code of professional ethics, and a procedure for the evaluation of teaching. Every teacher in meetings of this kind, has a voice in newly projected plans and understands them thoroughly. Because they are plans which the teachers themselves helped formulate, they try to make them work to the best of their ability.⁴⁸

II. TIME OF MEETINGS

There is disagreement among teachers as to the best time to hold faculty meetings. As in everything else, it is impossible to satisfy everybody, so no matter what time is selected, someone will be dissatisfied and will raise objections. At the Holtville School in Alabama and the Washington Junior High School in Pasadena, California, the teachers' schedule calls them to the building a half

⁴⁷Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1950), pp. 152-153.

⁴⁸Willard S. Elsbree and Harold J. McNally, Elementary School Administration and Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1951), p. 415.

hour before the children arrive. Daily faculty meetings are held at that time, and each teacher is briefed on the expected developments of the day. Other authorities argue that meetings held in the morning tire the teacher for the rest of the day, and that important deliberations have to be interrupted because of the time to start school.⁴⁹

It has been the writer's experience that the morning meetings do not work out too well, due to the fact that working parents bring their children to school at 8:00 a. m. Bus children, on the first run, are often delivered at 8:15 a. m. Someone has to be on duty to supervise these children, so the complete staff is never there. They often have last-minute things they want to do before the children come to the rooms, so are nervous and inattentive during the meeting.

Those who believe that meetings at the end of the day are best, hear the criticism that the teachers are tired out by that time. Saturday morning meetings have been suggested, according to Wiles, as everyone is refreshed at that time. Teachers, however, dislike to give up part of their week-ends, and usually oppose this suggestion.⁵⁰

The staff will agree to two things concerning time of meetings, Kyte informs us:

The meetings should occur early in the week. Teachers are less tired and seem to have fewer engagements on Monday and Tuesday than on other school days. All persons also prefer that a certain hour of a specific weekday be set aside for the meetings. Being thus scheduled, the meeting times can be remembered easily, and the teachers are better able to make

⁴⁹Wiles, loc. cit.

⁵⁰Wiles, op. cit., p. 154.

plans for their other duties and activities.⁵¹

The teachers involved should have a voice in determining the schedule. The place, time, and length of meetings should vary, depending upon the distances teachers must go to attend, and the purpose of the meeting. The best results come when the attendance is wholly voluntary.⁵²

III. PLACE OF MEETINGS

Kyte explained that the nature of the meeting should determine the place at which a meeting should be held. For demonstration purposes, and for using equipment, the classroom is the best place. Other meetings could be held in the office, library, faculty room or lunchroom.⁵³ One good argument for the library is that it is pleasant and has a flexible furniture arrangement. Thinking is more likely to occur where people can relax and be comfortable. People must be able to see one another to take part and exchange ideas. Some staffs use a square arrangement of seating, some a semi-circle, and in large faculty meetings a double circle is feasible. The physical arrangement of the furniture should suggest unity. A blackboard should be available as discussion has less repetition and is more logical if someone is keeping a record on the

⁵¹George C. Kyte, The Principal at Work (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1941), p. 281.

⁵²Fred C. Ayer, Fundamentals of Instructional Supervision (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954), p. 85.

⁵³Kyte, loc. cit.

board of the flow of discussion.⁵⁴

IV. LENGTH OF MEETINGS

The length of teachers' meetings depends upon the topics to be considered. Enough time should be provided to groups to think problems through. All staff meetings cannot be limited to thirty minute sessions.⁵⁵ According to Elsbree and McNally, meetings should probably not be longer than an hour and a half, and not much less than one hour.⁵⁶

V. MEETING RECORDS

Writers of recent literature agree that records should be kept of the teachers' meetings. Generally, someone records on the blackboard the issues discussed, but a permanent record should be kept of each meeting which includes the name of the group, date, meeting place, members present, problems discussed, decisions reached, assignments made, and plans made for the next meeting. This record is important for getting continuity of planning. It should be circulated to all who took part as it serves to give a sense of

⁵⁴Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 156.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 174-175.

⁵⁶Willard S. Elsbree and Harold M. McNally, Elementary School Administration and Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1951), p. 414.

direction and achievement. There should be constant evaluation of meetings and the record helps do this.⁵⁷ According to Barr, Burton, and Brueckner, the meeting should end with a look to the future. A summary should be given, and what is expected to take place at the next meeting. Written summaries of facts are later distributed in some schools to serve as official records and as a guide to future discussion. General evaluation of the meeting is excellent.⁵⁸

VI. RESULTS OF MEETINGS

Briggs and Justman summarize the feelings of most writers as to the results expected from teachers' meetings. They are listed as follows:

1. An awareness by teachers of problems and of needs and a stimulated desire to learn how to solve the former, and to satisfy the latter. Teachers should get some immediate help, but better still, they should get increased power to help themselves.
2. Increased knowledge gained from others with common interests.
3. Sympathetic appreciation, publicly expressed, by the supervisor.
4. Understanding of possibilities for unusual success along lines of which one has peculiar gifts, and both encouragement and help in achieving it.
5. A wider outlook, leading to better understanding of the contribution that one's work can make to the larger educational program.

⁵⁷Wiles, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

⁵⁸A. S. Barr, William Burton, and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947), p. 721.

6. Appreciation of dependence upon and obligation to one's fellow teachers in achieving the ends for which the school is maintained.
7. An increased will to grow--and to keep on growing, with some knowledge of how that is possible.
8. Better professional attitudes.⁵⁹

The underlying reason for all teachers' meetings is simple--to help the children of our nation. No matter what the specific object--changes in curriculum, or improvement in teaching methods--the betterment of education for the child is the heart of it all. For that reason, conscientious and dedicated teachers everywhere are willing to take the time and use the energy needed for that purpose.

⁵⁹Thomas H. Briggs and Joseph Justman, Improving Instruction Through Supervision (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), pp. 442-443.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

I. SELECTION OF PROBLEM

There are many educational problems that bear investigation. The question is to select one that has real significance to the writer's personal work, to his community, or to general progress. Several areas of administration were discussed in detail in a summer school elementary principal's course. The present writer then contacted his school superintendent and other key school people to see which of those areas would be most appropriate to study and most useful to the schools in that district. The problem of teachers' meetings was selected on that basis. A great deal has already been written about teachers' meetings. There is always room for improvement, however, and the purpose of this study was to bring into focus the ideas of active teachers so that adjustments could possibly be made.

II. STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE STUDY

Determining the sample. The selection of the sample schools was very important. It was felt that all areas of the state should be represented so that every type of problem or situation would be considered in the teachers' replies. Size of school enrollment was also watched so that no one particular group was emphasized. Class of schools was another factor, and the writer was careful to select as

many schools from Class I as from Class II and Class III. In this way, information would be received from all types of districts. Teachers would reply, not alone from districts where materials and facilities might be limited, but also from those where money is no problem.

Since the nature of the reports in this study placed rather severe demands upon the reporter, the author to be reasonably sure of the returns, went one step further in selecting the participating schools. Within the various classes the author selected schools in which she knew, either personally or professionally, at least one member of the teaching staff.

The following schools were selected from the Washington Education Association Salary Book, and from the Washington Educational Directory:

<u>School</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Class</u>
Roosevelt	Olympia	1
Chelan Elementary	Chelan	1
Whitman	Wenatchee	1
Lewis and Clark	Wenatchee	1
Lincoln	Wenatchee	1
Washington	Bellingham	1
Penninsula	Moses Lake	1
Midway	Moses Lake	1
Larson Heights	Moses Lake	1
Garden Heights	Moses Lake	1
Lakeview Terrace	Moses Lake	1
Knolls Vista	Moses Lake	1
Central	Moses Lake	1
Larson	Moses Lake	1
Leschi	Seattle	1
Henry Ford	Renton	1
Terrace Heights	Yakima	1
Hoover	Yakima	1
McKinley	Yakima	1

<u>School</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Class</u>
Adams	Yakima	1
Alki Grade	Seattle	1
Grant	Wenatchee	1
Cromwell Park	Seattle	1
Captain Gray	Pasco	1
Whittier	Pasco	1
Coulee City Elementary	Coulee City	2
Odessa Elementary	Odessa	2
Laboratory School	Cheney	2
Grant	East Wenatchee	2
Rock Island	East Wenatchee	2
Jefferson	Richland	2
Soap Lake Elementary	Soap Lake	2
Wilson Creek Elementary	Wilson Creek	2
Prosser	Prosser	2
Cowiche	Cowiche	2
Moxee Central	Moxee	2
Grand Coulee	Grand Coulee	2
Lind Elementary	Lind	2
Grandview	Ephrata	2
Columbia Ridge	Ephrata	2
Grant	Ephrata	2
Parkway	Ephrata	2
Ritzville Elementary	Ritzville	2
Coulee City Elementary	Coulee City	2
Mt. View	Quincy	2
Pioneer	Quincy	2
Hiawatha	Othello	2
Lutacaga	Othello	2
Dixie Elementary	Dixie	3
Monitor	Monitor	3

Survey Letter. The following letter was written to the above schools asking for cooperation in the study.

Columbia Ridge School
Second and H. Street, S. E.
Ephrata, Washington
October 12, 1956

Dear Fellow Principal:

Many teachers, as you know, resent and criticize the type of teachers' meetings they attend. I feel that much can be done to improve meetings and to make them more beneficial to the teachers and more to their liking. For this reason I am writing my Thesis on the subject.

I need your cooperation in seeing that the enclosed card and forms are carefully filled out and returned. Perhaps you can locate a volunteer to do the job. This person would take notes during teachers' meetings the remainder of this semester, paying special attention to items mentioned in the questionnaire. At the end of the Semester, I would appreciate it very much if all the teachers would review the meetings and select the best one they had.

I will compile the results of many sample schools throughout the state, and send a brief copy to you before school is out in the spring.

I will mail the final questionnaire and report to your reporter sometime between January 10th and 14th, and hope for an early return.

Enclosed is a self-addressed card. It is important that I know very soon if you will participate in this research.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Very sincerely,

Edith Weidemann

Enc.

SAMPLE COPY
(Continued)

3. An Open House for the public was discussed, and it was decided to wait until the new P. T. A. planned for Columbia Ridge was established, so that they could help in this project.

LENGTH OF MEETING: 1 hr. 5 min.

NAME OF REPORTER: Carl Carlson

Five blank forms were also enclosed. Each school was asked to use these forms to keep a summary of every meeting held during the first semester of the 1956-1957 school year. A sample copy follows:

SURVEY OF TEACHERS' MEETINGS

SCHOOL _____

PRINCIPAL _____

DATE _____ TIME OF DAY _____

PERSON IN CHARGE OF MEETING _____
Name PositionNATURE OF MEETING _____
(such as: social, business, planning)TOPICS COVERED 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SUMMARY OR RUNNING NOTES OF THIS MEETING:

LENGTH OF MEETING _____

NAME OF REPORTER _____

Self-addressed interest card. The following facsimile of a self-addressed, stamped post card was enclosed in the letter to each school.

1. Our school will participate in this study.	yes	no
2. We would like a resume of the results.	yes	no
3. Our reporter will be _____ _____		

This was to make it possible for the writer to determine if enough schools would take the time and interest to participate to make it a worth-while study. Fifty letters and cards were sent, out of which forty-four cards were returned.

Second letter. After four months of school had elapsed, a second letter was sent to these forty-four schools. A questionnaire and final report accompanied each letter.

Columbia Ridge School
2nd and H Street, Southwest
Ephrata, Washington
January 10, 1957

Dear Fellow Educator:

Thanks for the return of the post card which indicated your willingness to help with my Master's thesis. Chapters I and II are written, and I am now ready to receive the information you've assembled about your regular meetings.

I am enclosing another questionnaire in case you lost the one I sent earlier. The important thing is the single sheet final report that I am sending at this time. Please fill it carefully, paying special attention to your reasons for selecting the best meeting. I am very anxious to find out what makes a meeting outstanding - what are the criteria that make a meeting good.

Would you please send all the information now as quickly as possible? I am enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience.

Thank you again for your cooperation. I appreciate it very much.

Sincerely yours,

Edith Weidemann

Questionnaire. The questionnaire, which would be instrumental in getting the desired information, was carefully planned. Meetings are criticized for various reasons, and it was believed that if teachers could state their opinions concerning these reasons much worth-while and usable information could be obtained. The time that meetings are held is a controversial question, as well as their length and where they take place. The reasons for meetings are often a cause for criticism, and the results sometimes lead to dissatisfaction and disunity. Some teachers believe they do not have a large enough role in administrative planning, while others complain about the lack of organization.

The above problems were organized in questionnaire form to find out the situations as they actually exist and what the teachers would prefer.

A sample is found on the following page.

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE ON TEACHERS' MEETINGS

To be filled out by the Reporter, and returned in January.

PLEASE CHECK CORRECT STATEMENT

-
- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Who conducts teachers' Meetings in your school? | Principal _____
Teacher _____
Others _____
Variety _____ |
| 2. Who do you think should conduct the meetings? | Principal _____
Teacher _____
Others _____
Variety _____ |
| 3. How often are meetings held? | Once a week _____
Every two weeks _____
Every month _____
Several times a semester _____
Several times a year _____ |
| 5. In what room of the building are they held? | Library _____
Office _____
Multi-Purpose room _____
Teachers' Lounge _____
Other _____ |
| 6. Where do you prefer they be held? | Library _____
Office _____
Multi-Purpose room _____
Teachers' Lounge _____
Other _____ |
| 7. What time of day are they held? | Before school starts _____
Immediately after school _____
Noon hour _____ |

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8. What time do you think they should be held? | Before school starts. _____
Immediately after school _____
Noon hour. _____ |
| 9. How long do your meetings generally last? | One-half hour _____
One hour _____
One and one-half hours, _____
Two hours _____ |
| 10. How long do you prefer they last? | One-half hour _____
One hour _____
One and one-half hours _____
Two hours _____ |

PLEASE CIRCLE CORRECT ANSWER

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 11. Do the teachers have freedom of expression in your meetings? | yes | no |
| 12. Are your meetings well organized? | yes | no |
| 13. Do you feel too many meetings are of the "Business" type? | yes | no |
| 14. Do teachers prefer the meetings that are conducted by teachers? | yes | no |
| 15. Do you believe the topics covered in teachers' meetings have real value? | yes | no |
| 16. Could the matter discussed in meetings have been taken care of in bulletins? | yes | no |
| 17. Do you resent the extra time teachers' meetings take? | yes | no |
| 18. Do teachers have a part in administrative planning at these meetings? | yes | no |
| 19. Is there a feeling of accomplishment at the end of a meeting? | yes | no |
| 20. Do the meetings create unity in the staff? | yes | no |

REMARKS as to the criteria of a good meeting and suggestions for improvement of Teachers' Meetings in general:

Final report. The final report concerned the meeting the teachers would select the best of the semester. Space was allowed for them to enumerate what they thought were the criteria of a good meeting. . .

FINAL REPORT

of the Best Teachers' Meeting of the First Semester

Data from Selected Meeting Notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Brief Summary

Why the teachers selected this meeting as the best meeting.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.

Forty out of the forty-four who had returned cards and promised participation, sent back their completed forms. These had been carefully worked out and the writer felt that the teachers had made great efforts to be honest and fair. Certainly teachers' meetings is a subject vital to every teacher. They have to participate anyway, so it is better for it to be a happy and profitable experience rather than a drudgery.

The compiling of all the replies and their analysis is the very heart of this thesis.

CHAPTER IV.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The analysis of teachers' opinions of what they considered essentials of a good meeting, was the most important part of this study. The results of the questionnaire also shed a light on what teachers are thinking.

I. CRITERIA OF BEST MEETINGS

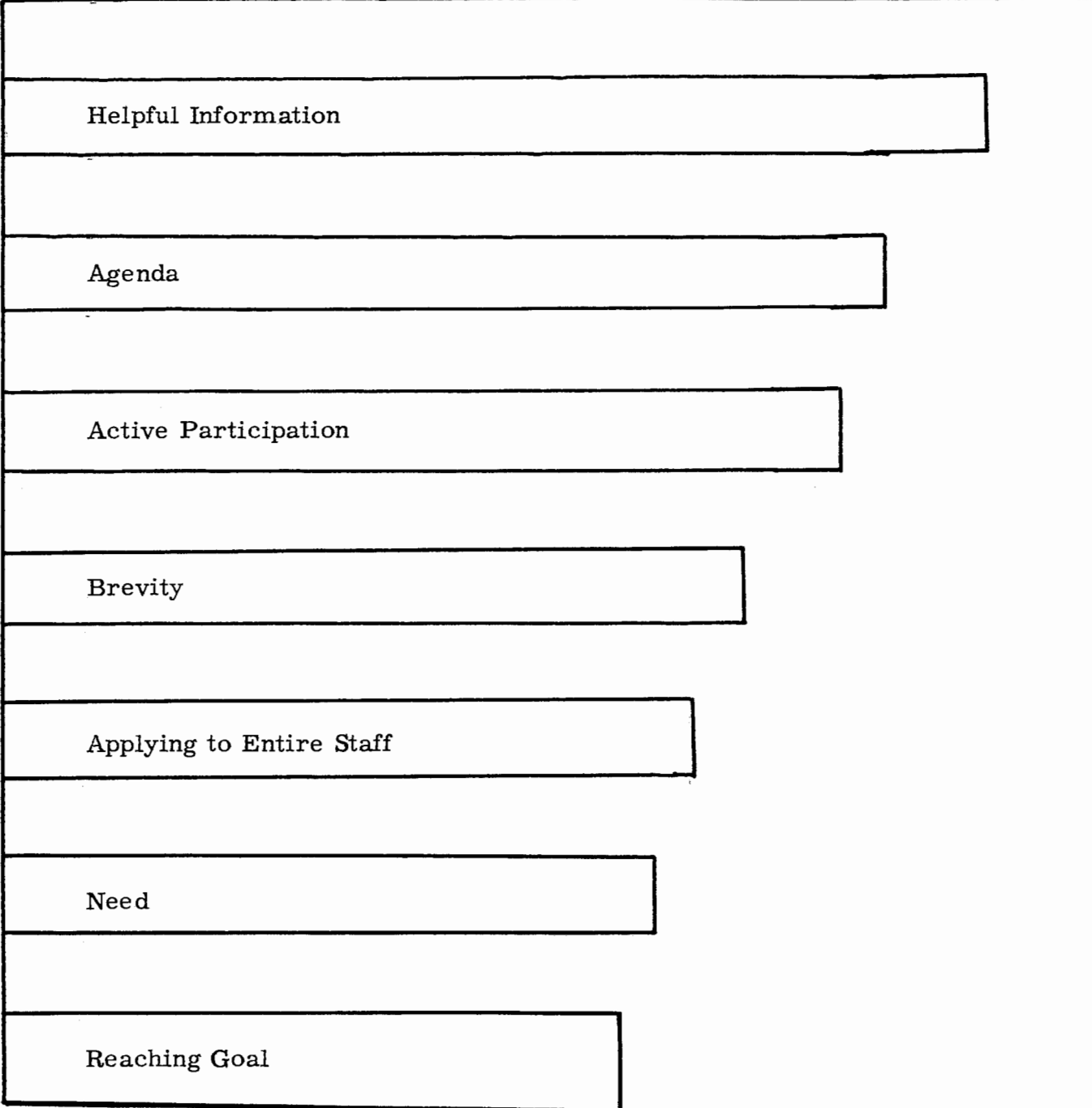
The success of faculty meetings depends upon whether the members feel they are receiving enough benefits to counteract the extra time that is spent. If a group of teachers can plan and work together toward a common goal, they are welded into a strong unit that can accomplish fine things for the school in which they work, and for the children whom they instruct and guide.

Teachers varied in their choice of the most important criteria, but the seven that were listed most frequently are shown in the following chart. Helpful information, for example, was named by thirty-seven of the forty schools that reported.

It is interesting to note that in this survey most of the schools reporting named the reason for a meeting being best as: Helpful information to make a teacher more effective in the classroom. This makes it clear that teachers will not resent meetings that are down to earth and of actual value to them. As one reporter stated: "These

NUMBER OF REPORTING SCHOOLS

5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40



CRITERIA OF BEST MEETINGS

topics affected each teacher personally for better teaching and as to what he was expected to perform. Most teachers will do things if they know what to do !"

The second most mentioned criterion of a good meeting was: Having an agenda and staying with it. Many schools mentioned that the meeting should be well organized with an agenda that had previously been put in the hands of the teachers so that they knew what to expect. If faculty meetings are to be vital to teachers, they must be organized around teachers' problems and not just things that the administrators consider important. An agenda is a definite plan and should be developed by the total staff, with each contributing any problem that he feels is important. Sometimes schools have planning committees, and items to be included on the agenda are turned over to them. The faculty should have the right to change the order of the agenda so that no more time is given to the principal's topics than to the staff's. Some quotes from reporters concerning the agenda go as follows:

The teachers appreciated being prepared for this meeting knowing the subjects to be discussed.

The principal had our best meeting outlined for everyone's convenience. The teachers knew what was going to be discussed and it saved a lot of time.

The object of the meeting was well understood because there was a definite agenda given to us beforehand.

We teachers find by having the agenda handed to us a day or so before the meeting, it gives us an opportunity to think about the various areas to be discussed and therefore we are in a better position to contribute to the meeting.

Something that seemed just as important as the agenda in the minds of most teachers was the need for active participation of all teachers in meetings. They felt strongly on the subject of having meetings completely democratic in nature, where everyone felt free to speak up and have his opinion taken courteously and given careful consideration. One reporter said, "An important criterion of a good meeting is that every teacher feels free to comment on the business." Another one said, "Complete freedom of expression is vitally important." One teacher, in listing reasons why a certain meeting was considered best, said, "Each teacher was given a chance to give her or his views on the Christmas program--which was the big topic of the agenda." Another one wrote, "Teachers felt free to voice honest opinions." This one, I thought, had an original way of stating it: "There must be freedom of speech for the teacher (acceptance of constructive criticism), and democratic, permissive leadership."

Actually, it is the duty of each teacher to contribute to the solution of a problem that has come up in a meeting. No one should take a passive role because that is a sure way to make a meeting unsatisfactory. If a question needs to be clarified, he should ask for its clarification. He should be able to listen carefully to others, think the matter over in his own mind, come to a decision on it, and state that decision in a brief and concise manner. Supervisors and principals should have no preferred status in a general meeting conducted by a teacher. When they have important facts to contribute, they should offer them freely, just like the teachers, but they should be careful not

to use up too large a portion of the time set aside for the meeting.

In close fourth place as being very important in consideration of teachers' meetings was brevity. Many reporters used the term "short," alone, and others the term "short and to the point." The following are a few statements from reporters:

1. Meetings should not be too lengthy.
2. Brief
3. Meetings should be brief and to the point.
4. It didn't take much time to get a lot accomplished.
5. No wasted time at this meeting.
6. Our best meeting accomplished more in less time.
7. Lots of ground was covered in a short period.
8. Our best meeting was short--slightly more than an hour.

The subject of length of meeting is also discussed in connection with the questionnaire.

Many reporters listed, applies to all the staff as an important criterion of a good meeting. There evidently are many schools where grade level topics are brought up in a general meeting. If that is the case, teachers not teaching on that particular level are bored with the discussion as they know nothing about the problem and probably care less. The following are typical comments from the reporters concerning this:

1. The teachers selected this meeting as best because it had practical value to all of us--not just a few.
2. Personal and grade level problems were not brought up at this meeting.
3. It was the one meeting we felt the materials presented were more applicable to all the staff. It was of great value to all attending.
4. It was a meeting meaningful and valuable to all of us--not just a few.
5. This meeting pertained to down to earth problems of all teachers and solutions discussed were possible to execute in each

classroom. It delved into problems faced by all teachers and satisfied a real need.

6. Only data that concern all teachers should be brought up at a general meeting.

7. The material or problem discussed should be one that all grades and teachers are interested in or concerned about.

8. Criteria for teachers' meetings should cover mutual problems and group sessions for improvement of instruction, rather than drifting into "gripe" sessions.

If problems arise that pertain just to one grade or one level they should be introduced at a grade level meeting not at a regular teachers' meeting. Subjects should not be allowed to drift away from the scheduled agenda.

Another important criterion brought out in the analysis of this survey was the necessity of the meeting. Many reporters discussed the need of more bulletins to take care of routine, business matters. Others frankly stated that many teachers' meetings could be done away with entirely by the effective use of clear, daily bulletins. A meeting is ruined if routine announcements and administrative details consume most of the time. Those things can be handled by a daily news sheet or an up to date bulletin board. Routine announcements should not take up meeting time, either. One reporter stated this clearly when he said; "A good meeting should not be a repetition of material already issued in a bulletin. Policies that could be formulated by the administrator are out of place in a staff meeting. Teachers resent being used as a sounding board for ideas when they know their expressions of opinion will have no bearing on the final outcome." Another fine observation by a teacher was stated this way: "If there could be some way of stopping the unnecessary discussion or routine

questions or affairs that have been already settled, more really important things could be discussed. "

The reporters did excellent work for this writer. They conscientiously reflected the feelings and opinions given to them by the teachers of their schools, and in addition, added some straight-thinking ideas of their own. The following is an example:

Teachers must be oriented to something other than a "business-administrative" type of meeting. Teachers' meetings could be geared to teacher professional and social growth if each teacher would conscientiously read administrative bulletins and directives. The meetings, then, could cover mutual problems and group sessions for improvement of instruction and the profession.

Often there is little relationship between the basic problems confronting the teachers, and what is discussed at a faculty meeting. Small matters should definitely be handled through opinionnaires or bulletins, and meeting time kept for important matters that vitally concern all teachers and that contribute to their growth.

The next criterion mentioned by the reporters in this survey were informality and sociability. If meetings are held at the end of a school day, the teachers are tired, and need time to relax and rest a little before attacking professional problems. Many interesting comments were made about the social aspects of the meetings. One teacher said, "We selected this meeting as best because it was so relaxing. Coffee was served all during the meeting and shop talk was done even over the last cup. " Other comments were:

1. Jolly time--good lunch.
2. The atmosphere was relaxing and everyone liked the informality of the meeting.

3. Excellent refreshments were served.
4. Relaxation and group harmony were felt throughout entire meeting.
5. The after school meeting should be more informal than formal.
6. Don't make it a stuffed shirt affair.
7. Allow freedom of mind and body. Let them relax. Definitely have everyone be acquainted and friendly.
8. Keep things informal, with coffee, but stick to the subject.

Social activities will help teachers get to know one another better and will develop a feeling of unity or oneness. The serving of coffee or other refreshments relieves tension and strain, and gives the teachers a chance to visit, joke, or exchange information. If the meeting is to be a long one, beginning during school hours and extending into later afternoon, an intermission is a good idea. Physical activity for relaxation during this time is a good idea, and refreshments can also be served. The important thing to remember is that teachers are much more willing and able to face the problems of their profession if refreshments or some other kind of social activity is given to them.

Other criteria of great importance in a teachers' meeting is a feeling of unity, and the reaching of a desired goal. One reporter not only sent back a carefully filled questionnaire, but a wonderful, three-page letter discussing their meetings. She wrote:

Occasionally what may seem like a minor matter is discussed and settled before it becomes a major matter. . . . But because these trivial problems are not allowed to become hall gossip, I believe we have a better unity and rapport than among any group with which I have ever worked.

Another reporter said, "A meeting is of value to us when the problems we have brought up are solved." Still another made this

remark, "Don't let anyone sidetrack the discussion. Stick to the subject until a decision or plan is reached." Other comments made concerning this matter were as follows:

1. Definite policies should be established about school troubles before leaving the meeting.
2. A vote should be taken, if necessary to settle the discussion and to get a definite decision.
3. There was a definite striving to improve our meetings and definite action was taken.
4. This general meeting resulted in everyone understanding the procedure to follow. There was a feeling of unity.
5. The atmosphere was that we were all working for a common goal.
6. It was a harmonious meeting.
7. Our discussion (sick leave) actually accomplished something definite--nothing left hanging.
8. We didn't deal with personalities and there was a unified feeling in the group.
9. The working spirit among the group was good, and the morale high.

From the above excerpts you can see that the teachers themselves realize the importance of a good feeling in the group, a oneness, a working together toward a common goal.

The last criteria mentioned frequently by reporters were promptness of meetings and staying within the time limits set. The feeling was that teachers did not seem to resent the meetings nor even the length if they knew beforehand how long they were expected to stay and were not kept beyond that set time. It is aggravating when a teacher has after-meeting plans, to sit for an hour longer than planned. This causes irritations and loss of rapport no matter how interesting the meeting may be.

Other criteria mentioned less frequently were:

1. Making use of trained specialists.
2. Meeting helpful to new teachers.

3. Evaluation of meeting
4. Stimulated thinking
5. The meeting should move fast
6. Don't deal in personalities

II. SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

A sample of the general questionnaire sent to the various schools was shown earlier. Seventy-five per cent of the schools reporting had principals conduct teachers' meetings. Twenty per cent had a variety of chairmen, and five per cent had teachers conduct.

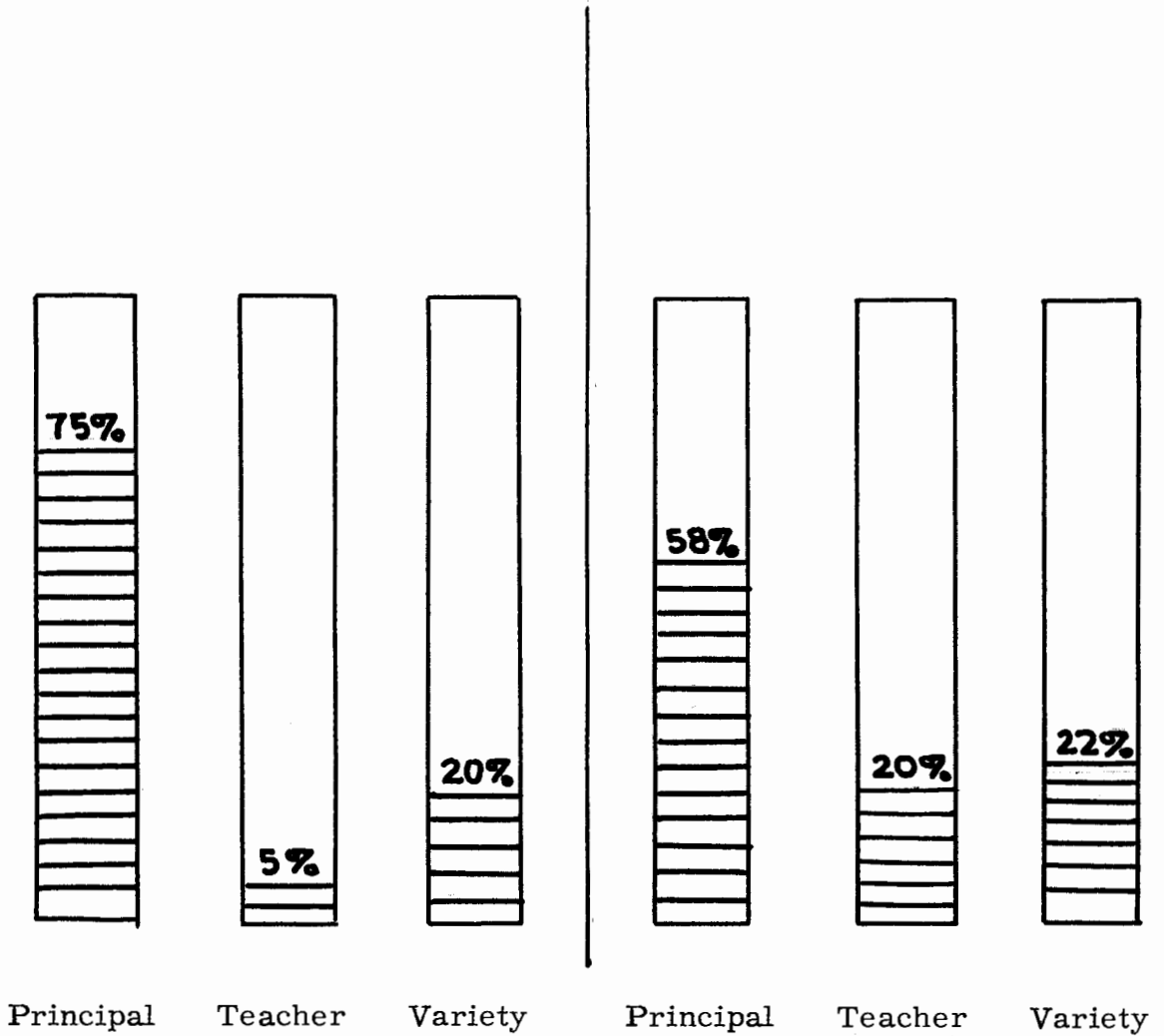
One reporter made this observation concerning the above fact:

Our building attempted a schedule of meetings conducted by the teachers, but the results were not encouraging. I fear it is a lack of professional growth and leadership among 'we' teachers. We are willing to let the principal have his meeting, get it over with, and go home.

However, the results of the second question, "Who do you think should conduct the meetings?" shows a trend away from having the principal conduct them. Fifty-eight per cent of the schools still felt the principal should, twenty-two per cent felt a variety should, but twenty per cent felt the teachers themselves should conduct the meetings.

ACTUAL

TEACHERS' PREFERENCE



WHO SHOULD CONDUCT MEETINGS?

In the question of frequency of meetings, it was found that 12 per cent of the reporting schools had meetings once a week. In the corresponding question asking for teacher preference, the answer was 5 per cent. This shows, of course, the aversion that most teachers have to meetings that are held more frequently than they believe are necessary. Sixty-eight per cent of the schools had meetings every two weeks, 15 per cent once a month and 5 per cent several times a semester. The teachers' preference on that was almost the same:

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

	<u>As is</u>	<u>Preferred</u>
Once a week	12%	5%
Every two weeks	68%	70%
Every month	15%	15%
Several times a semester	5%	5%
Several times a year	0%	0%
When necessary	0%	5%

One teacher made this comment, "We have meetings whenever there are reasons for having one. It may be necessary every week at certain times of the year, and only one every three or four weeks at other times of the year."

Another reporter contributed this idea: "We are working on a plan whereby one meeting a month is devoted to the business for good school functioning and the other is a professional type meeting. We feel this plan should prove beneficial." Another reporter said:

Our meetings are scheduled for every two weeks but are omitted if there is no real need. Any questions that can be answered by general bulletins are not brought to teachers' meetings. This tends to make ours group-planning meetings in which every teacher takes part.

Many reporters emphasized that meetings should not be held just for the sake of having meetings, but as a real need for them arises. One stated, "The meeting should be held just before the school board meets so that if something is brought up that needs the board's attention, it will be taken care of quickly."

In the questions concerning the place of housing the meeting, there seemed to be no clear cut decision or tendency. The following table is self-explanatory.

LOCATION OF MEETINGS

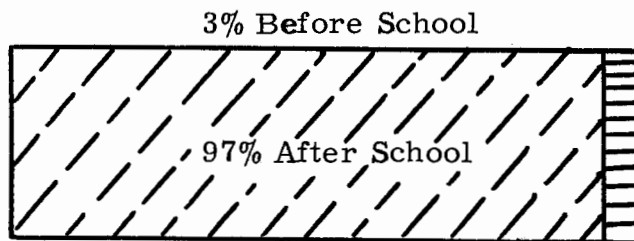
	<u>As is</u>	<u>Preferred</u>
Library	25%	23%
Office	5%	7%
Multi-Purpose Room	7%	7%
Teachers' Lounge	36%	45%
Other	27%	18%

The teachers' lounge and the library were the most popular places. This shows (and as many reporters commented) the meeting room should be a pleasant place with flexible furniture arrangement, and away from the classroom with its memories of the day's activities. Teachers should be able to see one another and be comfortable and able to relax during a meeting. A blackboard should be available, if possible, and located where everyone can see it. Discussion is more

logical and less repetitious if someone is keeping a record.

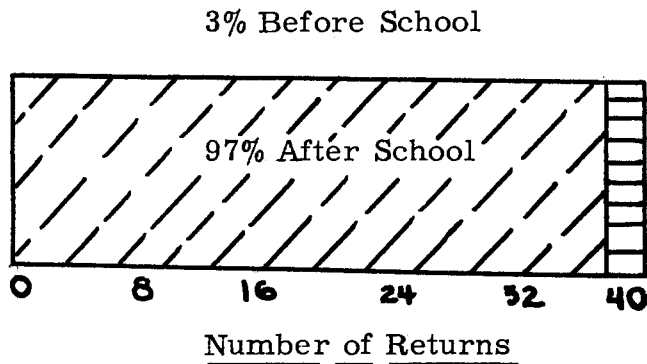
In the question of "What time of day are meetings held?" the actual and preference percentages were identical. Seven per cent reported meetings before school starts and 93 per cent immediately after school, or after the last bus leaves. One brave soul wrote the following comment in her questionnaire, in addition to her other check mark: "Sometimes teachers' meetings are held at noon in the library. Teachers take their lunch trays there and we 'meet and eat'." One reporter checked the statement--immediately after school--and then wrote in this comment: "Our hands are tied here, as we have only one time during the day when we can hold a meeting--after the last bus." That was typical of numerous remarks made concerning the time for meetings. In defense of after school meetings, this remark is also a typical one: "At this time of day, refreshments of coffee and cookies are very welcome."

What time of day are meetings held?



Number of Returns

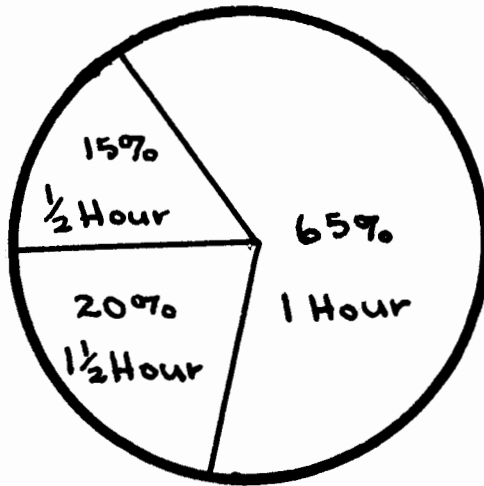
What time do you think they should be held?



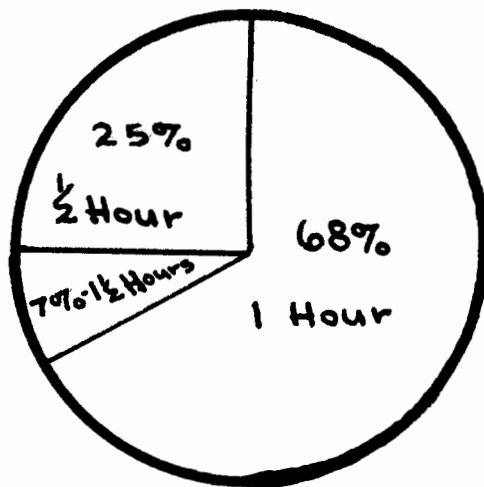
In the teacher preference graph, the one-half hour per cents were increased from 15 to 25 and the one and one-half hour per cents were decreased from 20 to 7 per cent. This shows clearly that the preference and the trend are away from the lengthy meeting and toward the shorter one. Most conscientious and fair-minded teachers realize that little can be done in a half hour's time. A very important thing to remember is to set and keep time limits. Everyone appreciates being able to count on the length of a meeting and people often contribute more freely if they know they can leave promptly.

The last part of the questionnaire consisted of yes and no answers to questions. Ninety-eight per cent of schools reporting said the teachers had freedom of expression in their meetings, 2 per cent said they did not. The tendency seems to be that more and more teachers are taking an active role in administrative planning and administrators are becoming more conscious of the need of teacher help in that area.

The following are circle graphs to give you at a glance the reactions of the teachers to lengths of meetings.



MEETINGS NOW HELD



MEETINGS PREFERRED

The next question asked, "Are your meetings well organized?" Ninety-three per cent said, "yes," 7 per cent said, "no." One reporter made this criticism: "In some schools teachers are tied up with time consuming committees on areas which have already been thoroughly worked out by experts, and must periodically make reports on their findings. Truthfully, what was found that couldn't be picked up readily in perhaps the preface of a book or teachers' manual?"

Thirty per cent of the reports said that teachers felt too many meetings were of the "business" type, 70 per cent said they did not feel there were too many of that kind.

In the question, "Do teachers prefer that meetings are conducted by teachers?" thirty per cent said, "yes," and 70 per cent said, "no." In the earlier part of the questionnaire it was reported that 22 per cent liked a variety to conduct the meetings, so it is safe to assume that at times the principal is preferred because of his closer association with the superintendent and his more detailed knowledge of the problems at hand. At other times teachers are preferred when mutual problems are discussed or demonstrations carried out. Specially trained personnel can take charge of a meeting to good advantage. One reporter stated:

The teachers here decided that the best meeting we've had was with the School Psychologist in which the results and significance of sociometric tests were considered. The discussion involved mental health problems and we appreciated discussing these behavioral problems with a competent, well-trained psychologist. This meeting delved into problems faced by all classroom teachers and it satisfied a real need.

The school nurse, guidance instructor, librarian and others can also be used in conducting meetings. One reporter mentioned that at their best meeting the librarian gave a report, and suggestions for increased use of reference material. She even gave the teachers a test on the use of the library. Community leaders and book representatives can make many types of meetings more valuable.

Ninty per cent of the schools believed that the topics covered in teachers meetings had real value, 10 per cent believed they did not. The following are samples of the types of meetings teachers considered best:

1. To develop and maintain good public relations program.
2. Suggestions for changes in report cards.
3. Discussion of Christmas programs.
4. Parent-Teacher Conference discussion--personal application of conference techniques, and evaluation of practical conference.
5. Discussion of sick leave practice and selection of budget committee.
6. Open House plans.
7. American Education Week plans.
8. School Psychologist discussed sociometric tests.
9. Achievement tests discussed.
10. Library usage meeting.
11. Immunization discussion and exceptional child survey.
12. Social Security legislation for teachers.
13. Planning the science program for the year.

All of these examples would of course be of real value to a teacher.

The question that followed the previous one was: "Could the matters discussed in meetings have been taken care of in bulletins?" Twenty-five per cent of the schools reported, "yes," 75 per cent reported, "no." A conscientious teacher knows that many things have

to be discussed as a group and decisions reached together in order to have a good, unified staff.

An overwhelming 95 per cent of the schools reported, "no," to the question, "Do you resent the extra time teachers' meetings take?" Five per cent said, "yes." Most teachers agree that if there is a need for a meeting, or the subject is vitally important to them as professional people, they don't mind at all the extra time used.

According to the questionnaire, 88 per cent of the reporting schools had meetings in which the teachers had a part in the administrative planning. Twelve per cent of the schools did not. This shows that administrators realize teachers like to help think through the solutions to local problems, and as their plans for action are used, they take on more responsibility.

Ninty per cent of the schools reporting said there was a feeling of accomplishment at the end of the meeting. Ten per cent said there wasn't. Teachers dislike going to meetings where many things are hashed over but nothing decided. According to them, it is better to have a small agenda and definite decisions reached.

The last question in the survey was, "Do the meetings create unity in the staff?" Ninty-five per cent of the reporters said, "yes," 5 per cent said, "no." One reporter made this comment, "Each teacher should act in a meeting as mature as his or her education would indicate." Another said, "Everyone should pay attention so unity could be achieved--there should be a minimum of useless chatter."

Still another said, "There was unity in our meeting because everyone stuck to the subject and there was no idle gossiping to interfere."

The questionnaires were filled out by the teachers themselves and returned to the writer, so freedom of expression was insured.

PERCENTAGE CHART OF FIRST HALF OF QUESTIONNAIRE

	Principal	Teachers			Variety
1. Who conducts Teachers' meetings in your school?	75%		5%		20%
2. Who do you think should conduct meetings?	58%		20%		22%
	1 a week	every 2 weeks	each month		several a semester
3. How often are meetings held?	12%	68%	15%		5%
4. How often do you prefer they be held?	5%	70%	15%		10%
	Library	Office	Multi-lounge	Teacher	Other
5. In what room of the building are they held?	25%	5%	7%	36%	27%
6. Where do you prefer they be held?	23%	7%	7%	45%	18%
	Before school starts		Right after school		
7. What time of day are they held?		7%		93%	
8. What time do you think they should be held?		7%		93%	
	$\frac{1}{2}$ hour	1 hour	$1\frac{1}{2}$ hours		2 hours
9. How long do your meetings generally last?	15%	65%	20%		0%
10. How long do you prefer they last?	25%	68%	7%		0%

PERCENTAGE CHART OF SECOND HALF OF QUESTIONNAIRE

	Yes	No
11. Do the teachers have freedom of expression in your meetings?	98%	2%
12. Are your meetings well organized?	93%	7%
13. Do you feel too many meetings are of the "business" type?	30%	70%
14. Do teachers prefer the meetings that are conducted by teachers?	30%	70%
15. Do you believe the topics covered in Teachers' Meetings have real value?	90%	10%
16. Could the matters discussed in meetings have been taken care of in bulletins?	25%	75%
17. Do you resent the extra time Teachers' Meetings take?	5%	95%
18. Do teachers have a part in administrative planning at these meetings?	88%	12%
19. Is there a feeling of accomplishment at the end of a meeting?	90%	10%
20. Do the meetings create unity in the staff?	95%	5%

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

I. SUMMARY

A teachers' meeting should be what the words imply--a meeting together of members of the same profession--a gathering of people who dedicate their lives to the instruction of youth. The purpose should be to exchange ideas, to plan, to discuss, to grow. It should not be a deadly, boring session which tired teachers grudgingly attend because they are expected to, and which equally tired principals call because they feel they are expected to call them.

Faculty meetings are of great importance because it is through them teachers are welded into a unified working group. There is no greater satisfaction than getting desired results after group planning and working for that planned goal. Eighty-eight per cent of the sample schools had meetings where the teachers had an active part in administrative planning, 12 per cent did not. The plans should be centered around what the teachers want and not just ideas of the administrator. To do this there should be a planning committee selected, by the faculty, on which each grade level is represented. Some teachers could be selected as members of a system wide, elementary steering committee which could include some principals and central office personnel. Teachers who feel they are in on a worth-

while decision are usually the uncomplaining ones.

The present survey brought out the definite need of an agenda, placed in the hands of the teachers in time for them to study it and develop ideas on each topic. Preferably, the teachers should have a part in selecting the agenda. This could be done by having them write on the bulletin board things they would like to have discussed, or a survey of teachers' interests could be conducted through a questionnaire, and the results used in staff meetings.

Active participation in each meeting is absolutely necessary if teachers are to take a real interest. Most teachers want a share in the improvement of instruction and in the plans for better conditions. They want to be able to give honest opinions and to be able to express themselves freely and without fear of retribution. In other words, they want democratic meetings where everyone takes part, not just the principal reading routine announcements, or giving administrative ultimatums. Bulletins can take care of routine things so precious meeting time should be used for planning and growth.

Another important criterion of a meeting mentioned was brevity. That was usually accompanied by the statement that sticking to the point in discussion was helpful and that teachers generally wouldn't care if a meeting was long, if they knew in advance it would be. They felt that promptness and setting and keeping a time limit were important so that they could make other plans accordingly. Ninety-five per cent reported they did not resent the extra time teachers' meetings take. Ninety-three per cent of the schools reported that

their meetings were held immediately after school or after the last bus, while 7 per cent said theirs were held before school. It is difficult to have meetings before school because bus children often get there early and consequently teachers on yard duty would not be able to attend. Many teachers also want to do last minute preparations for the day. Usually teachers are tired at the end of the day, however, and don't feel like planning for the curriculum or studying other important matters. In some schools children are dismissed early from school and the meeting held entirely or partially during school hours. Teachers do not resent meetings at all when that is the case.

The importance or need of a meeting is an important criterion as shown in this survey. Teachers don't mind the extra time if they know a meeting is of vital importance to them and the school. If it is needed, timely, and important to the whole staff, meetings will not be resented. If it is not important to the whole staff, only the grade or level it applies to should be asked to attend. Regular grade level meetings are helpful and informative. Teachers can get together, compare notes and experiences, and discuss the problems of their particular group.

Reaching a set goal at the end of the meeting was also considered important. Most teachers felt there should be a feeling of accomplishment. They didn't like the idea of leaving a meeting with questions still left dangling and decisions left unmade. They agreed that the agenda should be shorter and everything finished rather than

vice-versa. Ninety per cent of the sample schools reported a feeling of accomplishment after a meeting.

Informality or sociability is an important factor in a good meeting. If it is held at the end of the school day, teachers are tired, and maybe tense and irritable. A cup of coffee or some other refreshment will help relax them and put them in the right mood. An "easy," friendly atmosphere should prevail in order to establish the right rapport between teachers and principal and to bring about the harmony needed for a successful meeting. Teachers get to know and understand one another better during these informal social sessions before the serious part of the meeting starts, so a feeling of unity is developed which later differences of opinion will not change. Besides refreshments for relaxation, the chairs should be comfortable, and arranged in a circle or square so that the teachers can easily see one another. Any other arrangement is fine just as long as it is informal. The meeting place, then, should not be a classroom (except for demonstrations where special equipment is necessary) but a more comfortable place like the teachers' lounge or the library.

Variations in the types of meetings help to make them remembered with pleasure. As in everything else, change is important and teachers can get very bored with the same kind of meeting time after time. A good idea is to make use of trained specialists like the librarian, guidance director, music teacher, nurse, and audio-visual supervisor. It might be well to have a business

meeting one time, a planning meeting at another time, and an improvement-of-instruction meeting at another time. The important thing to remember is not to have a meeting just for the sake of calling a meeting, but because of a real need. They should be carefully planned in advance, no matter what type they are.

Evaluation of a meeting is important. The chairman, whether principal, supervisor, teacher, or trained specialist, should allow enough time for him to give a good summary, so that all the topics discussed and the decisions reached are crystallized in the minds of the people present. They should discuss the merits and the weaknesses of the meeting. The next day typed minutes should be sent to everyone for reference when needed.

Seventy-five per cent of the schools used in the state-wide sampling had principals conduct the meetings, 20 per cent had a variety of chairmen, and 5 per cent had teachers conduct. Fifty-eight per cent preferred to have the principal conduct, 22 per cent preferred a variety and 20 per cent preferred teachers. This shows a trend toward teachers wanting a larger role in the conducting of meetings.

Meetings were held in 12 per cent of the sample schools once a week, but the preference on that frequency was 5 per cent. Sixty-eight per cent reported meetings every two weeks, 15 per cent every month, and 5 per cent several times a semester. The preference remained nearly the same except in the case of once a week as

previously mentioned. The overall feeling, however, as expressed in notes and letters, was that meetings should be called only when a real need arose, as felt by the principal, faculty, or both. The frequency did not seem to matter as long as there was a real need.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

	As is	Preferred
One-half hour	15%	25%
One hour	65%	68%
One hour and a half	20%	7%
Two hours	0%	0%

The above table clearly shows the feelings teachers have concerning length of meetings. Those favoring the one-half hour meeting increased 10 per cent; those favoring the one and a half hour meeting decreased 23 per cent. By far the most popular meeting length was an hour, as most people realize that not much planning can be done in thirty minutes. If all meetings are short, they soon become routine and used for administrative announcements. Meetings must be longer than half an hour for policy formation, curriculum changing, and other long-term planning. A one and a half hour meeting, on the other hand, makes it quite late in the afternoon before the teachers would be able to leave. It was stressed that the setting and keeping of time limits was very important. If the teachers know in advance how long the meeting will be, they won't resent extra time. They appreciate promptness in

both the starting and ending of the session.

Ninety-eight per cent of the sample schools said the teachers had freedom of expression in their meetings. This would indicate that present day principals are conscious of the need for teacher help in the area of planning and administrative problems.

Ninety-three per cent of the reporters said their meetings were well organized. Organization is very important in a good group process. Committees should know the work they are to perform, how to perform it, and how each committee fits into the whole organizational structure. There must be a plan of organization that helps the work of the committees, otherwise they will soon feel that the policies they formulate are never given consideration by the administration in making the over-all policies. There shouldn't be too many committees with overlapping duties as teachers can become too overburdened with that type of work. The work should be timely and vital, also.

Seventy per cent of the teachers felt that meetings were not too much of the business type. Modern administrators realize that announcements and office details should not consume the meeting time, so that type of meeting is gradually decreasing. Bulletins and bulletin-board announcements can take care of most of the routine matters, leaving the meeting for serious discussion and planning.

Ninety-five per cent reported that meetings created unity in the staff, 5 per cent said they did not. If the meeting is of vital interest to everyone, if every teacher has his or her say in it, and

democratic discussions have been reached on the presented issues, a meeting can't help but create unity. The trend is away from the type which was really a reporting of the administrator's decisions, to meetings which are discussions of "our" problems as a faculty. The principal will understand the teachers better and the teachers understand the principal's problems better after they have planned and worked together for a common purpose.

Do teachers dread faculty meetings or are they a welcome chance for friends to get together?¹ Teachers should be able to enjoy a meeting and look forward to the day it is to be held. It should be relaxing as far as tired bodies are concerned, but stimulating as far as new ideas, cooperative thinking, sharing, and planning are concerned. Most meetings should be held early in the week before too many obligations burden the teachers. An important thing for an administrator to remember, also, is never to call one the afternoon before a holiday or on a Friday afternoon. Teachers want to feel free to leave early on those days, and it's an imposition to expect them to stay.

More and more teachers are being assigned to various committees that are responsible for the operation of different phases of the school program. Various kinds of problems come to the attention of these committees as self-appraisal of schools, curriculum revision, lunch programs, equipment, transportation, and salary schedules. This type of work gives them the right and the responsibility to explore

¹Charlotte H. Ishom, "Faculty Meetings," Grade Teacher, 74:87, January, 1957.

new ideas and they gain a better understanding of the whole school program. By studying procedures in other schools, trying out new ideas, and getting acquainted with the latest materials, these teachers grow in professional stature and become more valuable to their pupils, to their school, and to their district.

The old type of teachers' meetings with the principal as dictator, is fast disappearing. In its stead, and gaining great popularity, is the modern type of faculty meeting where leadership ability is developed in the teachers. In addition to that, democratic procedures are used, irritating school problems are resolved, and each staff unified into a strong team for improving the quality of education in general.

II. IMPLICATIONS

The findings which are drawn directly from the data of this survey imply conclusions which, while not supported from the data, are nevertheless suggested from the findings.

Is it not a credit to principals that 93 per cent of the teachers felt meetings were well organized? Today's educational institutions, with their modern methods and special staffs, seem to prepare administrators to be true leaders in every phase of their work.

Ninety-five per cent of the reporting schools said, "No, " to the question, "Do you resent the extra time teachers' meetings take?" This is evidence that teachers, trained in modern, democratic, college classes, also realize the urgent need of teachers' meetings.

They know that administrators and instructors must discuss their general problems, occasionally revise the curriculum, and make plans together in order to have a successful and smoothly operating school.

The majority of teachers didn't resent meetings, and believed they should last an hour. Doesn't that give a favorable impression of the Fifth Year Teachers of the State? Their professional interest seems to be improving and there are indications of higher caliber persons in the profession.

The high percentage of schools showing democratic participation, teacher planning in administrative affairs, and unity as a result of meetings, permits the present writer to assume that more and more administrators recognize the need of teacher help in all areas of school planning. Educators, whether administrators or teachers, realize they are all working for a common goal. They are dedicated, according to the implications of this study, to improvement of the educational system, in order to give the most advantages to those in whom they are so intensely interested--the children of the State of Washington.

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