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How Does the Principal Use Classroom Observations to Improve Instruction?

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HOW DOES THE PRINCIPAL USE CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS
TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION?

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

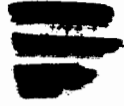
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The role of the elementary school principal is changing because of changes in the nature of education, changes in the nature of the instructional program, and changes in the commonly-held concept of democracy. Throughout the last century and the early part of this one, the management of the school was his most important function. Since World War II, management has become less important, and supervision of teaching has become a major function. Among the techniques to improve instruction, supervision through classroom observation has been practiced more frequently than any other supervisory device.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study: (1) to review the periods in the history of supervision; (2) to discuss the types of supervisory visits; and (3) to present some methods of classroom supervision of which both teachers and principals can approve.

Importance of the study. The position of the elementary principal as an instructional leader has developed gradually. In the early days he was responsible for the organization and management of the school, the control of pupils and buildings and grounds, and the ordering of educational and maintenance supplies. Until the close of the nineteenth century, supervision was concerned mainly with inspection to maintain standards. The principal visited some classes, quizzed the pupils, and paid some attention to the physical condition of the school.

Today the main function of the principal is to facilitate and coordinate a good teaching-learning situation for children. He holds the key position in the program of instructional improvement; he receives the over-all reaction of the parents to the school's effort, is able to study the effectiveness of the school program upon the children's growth and development, has frequent contacts with teachers, and is able to insure continuity of the instructional program.¹

The autocratic supervisor of the past was not popular. The teacher felt frustrated by the mechanical and inspectional aspects of the principal's visit to the classroom. Spears said, "The teachers

¹Harold Spears, Improving the Supervision of Instruction (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), pp. 184-85.

expected to be visited periodically, to have their work inspected, to be called in for a conference, and to be told exactly what was wrong."²

As a result of this autocratic supervision, a search began for a new supervisory program. This was the beginning of the period of democratic school administration. The teachers began to work in group meetings and to engage in cooperative planning. This new concept of supervision by-passed the classroom.

Before long educators realized that classroom visitation must be a basic feature of the educational program. The classroom is the heart of the teaching-learning situation, and the center of instruction. Teachers and pupils may move in and out to other work and play areas, but almost three-fourths of the day is spent in the classroom. Supervision, therefore, should not be forced upon it from the outside, but should develop out of the classroom itself. After teachers have worked as a cooperative group on a problem, the effectiveness of their work is tested in the work of the teacher with the pupils in the classroom, and the success is often dependent upon the supervisory follow-up by the principal in the classroom.

The principal, in a good supervisory program, works with all the teachers on a year-to-year program of instructional improvement. He also works with any one teacher, beginning or experienced,

²Ibid., p. 265.

who desires help on a specific problem. Since supervision through classroom observation is one of the better techniques for improving instruction, in this study an attempt will be made to show how classroom visitation can be pleasing and profitable to the teacher and the principal.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Laissez-faire supervision. This concept of supervision was most prevalent during the days when a teacher was rated or inspected, but it is still in use today. The principal observes a teacher and her pupils for the purpose of rating or inspecting, but nothing constructive is done to help the teacher improve. Such a principal usually neglects to assume the responsibility for the school program, so all school activities are carried on without any planning or guidance. He is proud of the fact he doesn't tell his teachers how or what to teach, and lets them do as they please as long as their pupils measure up to standards on achievement tests. While this principal says he is democratic, he is evading his responsibility as the professional leader of the teaching-learning situation in his school.

Coercive supervision. Supervision of this type, which has been in use since public education began in the colonial period, is closely connected with the subject matter curriculum and the graded

school. All children in a given grade are taught the same thing at the same time. No thought is given to child growth and development. A principal who has this concept of supervision believes in using authoritative methods in getting teachers to teach in the prescribed subject matter areas according to the method he believes is best. Such supervision is undesirable from a democratic point of view. No principal is capable of deciding what all children in his school should learn or of prescribing the best method of teaching. Coercive supervision has been criticized for not respecting the personalities of the teachers, and for failing to include them in planning the instructional program for their classrooms.

Democratic supervision. Under this concept of supervision, the principal is concerned with the improvement of the total teaching-learning situation. He focuses his attention, not on improving the teachers, but on supplying the leadership which will help his teachers study, analyze, and find out how the learning situation can be improved.

The laissez-faire, or coercive, principal's activities were more or less limited to classroom visits, demonstrating to the teachers a better way of doing some aspect of their job, and rating the teacher. Today the democratic principal and his teachers work together in planning and organizing the school program, selecting and

purchasing textbooks and other instructional materials, determining methods of pupil evaluation and reporting to parents, and deciding on promotion policies.

Democratic supervision is a cooperative endeavor. It is based on the principle that all persons shall have a part in formulating policies which govern their daily living. Such supervision, therefore, involves the operation of group processes, contributions from members, and developing leadership on the part of all members. Cooperative study and decision-making by the group develops an understanding of the policies and procedures that are adopted. Teachers who have had an opportunity to work in a democratic manner with their principals are more likely to use democratic methods in their classrooms, too.

Since democratic supervision is much broader in its scope than the usual type of supervision, the principal utilizes the classroom visit as one of his supervisory techniques. This visit is made as an outgrowth of a group study, in answer to a felt need on the part of the teacher, or to identify those problems which will be of concern to many teachers. The principal who supervises in this manner, instead of being an authority, is thought of as one who has been relieved of teaching responsibilities in order that he may coordinate and facilitate the staff's efforts to improve its work. Believing there is more than one way of teaching, he leads the teachers in their search for more effective ways of doing their job.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much has been written concerning the use of classroom observation as one of the supervisory techniques for the improvement of instruction. This study will deal with the various types of classroom visits, and how the principal and his teachers may use these visits to improve the teaching-learning situation in a specific school.

I. LITERATURE ON HISTORY OF SUPERVISION

The development of supervision in the public schools is marked by four quite distinct periods.

Inspectional control by laymen. The first period, which was mainly inspection for sake of control, originated in the New England colonies. Early colonial leaders, feeling that the future welfare of the state was dependent upon the education of each child, placed the responsibility for this education upon the town as a whole. This was the beginning of free and compulsory education for children; it was also the beginning of school supervision. Since there was not enough money for professional overseers, the selectmen accepted

the responsibility. Accompanied by ministers and other prominent citizens in the inspection of the school, the emphasis was placed on observing rules and maintaining standards. Although supervision in this period tended to be a superficial appraisal of the school, it made possible an easy transition from laymen to professional administrators.¹

Inspectional control by school administrators. The limited supervision of the laymen, which was too inadequate to meet the complex school problems of a rapidly growing nation in the nineteenth century, brought forth the need for professional school administrators to develop techniques of supervision and to assume responsibility for the school program. Therefore, according to Spears, four new positions were created: the principal, the state superintendent of schools, the county superintendent of schools, and the superintendent of the local school district.²

As the towns grew in size, the one-room school became a larger school where two or three teachers were needed. One teacher, known as the head teacher or principal teacher, was in charge and

¹Harold Spears, Improving the Supervision of Instruction (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), p. 40.

²Ibid., p. 43.

reported directly to the trustees. After the term of teacher was dropped from his title, the duties assigned him remained clerical, disciplinary, and administrative. Although he was the first administrator in the organization of the school, he was the last to obtain any responsibility for the improvement of instruction. His early supervisory duties emphasized inspection of the classroom, and the responsibility for the improvement of instruction was not given him until the twentieth century.³

In the early part of the nineteenth century, because of a growing concern about the limited efficiency of the public schools, it was decided that each state should accept responsibility for public education within its own state. Leaders of our country believed that the schools must educate the children to be future leaders in the perpetuation of good government. As soon as provisions had been made in the constitution for a state system of education, state superintendents of schools were gradually appointed in all the states. With very little personnel or money at their command, these men were leaders in the fight for better schools in order to obtain better instruction for the children. They tried to visit some schools in every county, in order to gain firsthand impressions of educational conditions in the state. However, owing to the heavy demands on their time, their work

³Ibid., p. 48.

had to become a broader type of supervision. Long hours were spent enlightening the public on the benefits of the public schools and the needs of the underprivileged. As they traveled throughout the state, these men recommended enriched courses of study, free schools for all children, compulsory attendance laws, and better training for teachers.

By 1829, when the state superintendent's job was becoming too large for one person and there seemed to be no desire to enlarge the state department of education, the county superintendent was appointed to be the state's representative in local school matters. He collected the information about the local schools that the state superintendent needed, apportioned state school funds, and checked to see whether or not legal requirements concerning the organization and operation of the schools became effective. The county superintendent's duties today are often supervisory as well as administrative.

Even after the office of the county superintendent was established, the local school district felt the need for more supervision than the state or county could give. About 1840, therefore, the local school superintendent appeared on the scene. When he was hired, the school directors decided to keep such duties as business administration, appointment of teachers and other school employees, and supervision of the school plant. To the superintendent they delegated the

responsibilities of administration of the curriculum and supervision of teaching. He spent many hours in the classrooms in an effort to improve instruction, and held various types of teachers' meetings for the purpose of bringing in new ideas and methods of teaching to stimulate the thinking of the teachers who were responsible for the education of the children. The superintendent today, although he spends less time in the classroom, exerts more influence than in the past and has helped the schools grow. The creation of this position was an outstanding event in the improvement of American education.⁴

Close supervision of the classroom. In contrast to the first two periods of school supervision which were instructionally meager, this period was characterized by an intensive interest in the organization of the classroom and the provision for more supervisory personnel in the state department and in the local schools. During this era of supervision, the supervisor considered himself a superior that was above the teacher and the pupils. The spotlight was on the teacher, and it was a reflection on the ability of the supervisor if he couldn't find some weakness that needed improvement.⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 58.

⁵Loc. cit.

This was the period when the curriculum was made up of a number of subjects and skills which were taught in the same way and at the same time to pupils whose abilities varied, and it brought with it a formal method of supervision. Neither the teacher nor the supervisor had any knowledge of child growth and development, and out-of-class activities for children were considered to be of no educational value.

The classroom visit of the supervisor was a mechanical process which followed a uniform procedure. A check list, with many items, was used to measure such things as who recited and who didn't have an opportunity to recite, how much the teacher talked, whether or not the shades were adjusted, and if there were growing flowers in the room. Objective tests, which were constructed and used to discover the strengths and weaknesses of an individual or of the group, were also used to compare the success of one teacher against another. The conference which always followed the visit tended to be a critical analysis of the classroom procedure, and the supervisor inferred that he knew all the answers.

Some of the weaknesses of this supervisory period were that it was based on opinions, it disregarded the value of good human relationships, it left the impression that the supervisor was superior, the educational program was not planned cooperatively by the supervisor

and the teachers, and it was limited to observation of classroom activity.⁶

The strengths of this program, however, should not be overlooked. Through the sincere efforts of the supervisors, shortages in teacher training and classroom facilities were overcome, instructional methods were improved, objective methods of testing were devised, and supervision was recognized as a valuable administrative function.⁷

Democratic supervision. School administrators, in examining the former periods of supervision, were agreed that in this democratic program of supervision the improvement of instruction was still their major objective, but that it must be expanded to reach beyond the classroom, and it must be more concerned about human relationships.

Difficulties were encountered in developing this democratic approach to supervision. New positions, such as guidance and curriculum directors, were created as the school's concern was extended to encompass the total environment of the child.

In discussing this period, Spears said, "Supervision has gradually moved from the improvement of instruction to the improvement

⁶Spears, op. cit., p. 76.

⁷Ibid., p. 77.

of learning."⁸ During the former periods, improvement of instruction had focused its attention upon the teacher, and any help given the teacher was limited to the teaching act in the classroom. The pupil's development receives the emphasis during the present period, and help goes far beyond the teaching act. Such supervision demands leadership in many fields, such as psychology, public relations, testing and evaluation, and personal orientation, in order to help the teachers become aware of educational needs and to become sensitive to their own individual teaching strengths and weaknesses.

Perhaps the most important change of this period which is with us today is the great concern for good human relationships. In the past schools considered procedure more important than personality, and the teacher was expected to use the approved techniques passed down to him. Today working conditions have improved, and the selection of methods and materials has become a cooperative endeavor of teachers and administrative personnel.⁹

II. LITERATURE ON CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Although many schools have a general elementary supervisor who cooperates very closely with the principal, in the last analysis

⁸Ibid., p. 90

⁹Ibid., pp. 93-95.

the principal is responsible for the instructional program in his school. In the case of a school which does not have money to employ special supervisors, the whole duty of supervision revolves upon the principal. The greatest need in the elementary school today is for more and better supervision, and it is regarded as the major function of the principal.¹⁰

The principal's techniques of supervision should be many and varied, and one of the oldest and most valuable is the visit to the classroom by which he is able to see the teacher and the pupils at work. By utilizing this firsthand information, he can analyze the factors affecting the teaching-learning situation, and use the results to help the teacher improve instruction or solve a problem.¹¹

Classroom observations should not be made until rapport has been established between the teacher and the principal. The teacher must know the principal as a friendly and sympathetic person who is available to help with any problem, large or small. The principal must take time to get acquainted with the members of his staff, so that he will realize each is an individual who differs from the others in

¹⁰George C. Kyte, The Principal at Work (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1941), p. 241.

¹¹Harold P. Adams and Frank G. Dickey, Basic Principles of Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1953), p. 107.

interests and aptitudes, as well as in types of training and experience. Any fear that the observation will be used to rate the teacher will be dispelled if the teachers are invited to participate in the planning and operation of the observation program. The principal and his teachers should discuss such questions as the following:

1. Shall visits be scheduled and announced?
2. How far in advance of a visit should the teacher be notified?
3. Should the teacher always be notified?
4. How much time should the supervisor devote to on-call visits?
5. How can this be controlled so that all teachers will receive service?
6. How should the problem of the supervisor's taking notes be handled?
7. Should reports of observations be made by the supervisor? If so, to whom and for what purpose?¹²

Studies show that when supervision is well done, it is welcomed and actively sought by the teachers as part of the program for improving instruction.¹³

Planning for the visit. The principal, before making a classroom visit, must make adequate plans, as an effective observation needs to be carefully planned and related to a supervisory problem.

¹²Ibid., pp. 109-110.

¹³William H. Burton and Leo J. Brueckner, Supervision (third edition; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 4.

At the beginning of the year visits are usually exploratory in order to get acquainted with the teachers and pupils, to discover their needs for materials or equipment, to learn their special interests or talents, and to encourage the teachers by visiting at a time when he and the pupils can show to the best advantage. Later visits are made as an outgrowth of some group activity being carried on at that time, in answer to a felt need of a teacher, at the invitation of a teacher to see a special activity, or to identify a classroom problem with which many of the teachers are struggling.¹⁴

After the purpose of the visit has been determined, the principal plans his visit in terms of the problem to be considered. He must be aware of the variations in the training, experience, and ability of his teachers. The beginning teacher usually needs guidance, encouragement, and an opportunity to receive help with various classroom problems; the experienced teacher who is in a rut may need stimulation or new materials; and the experienced teacher who needs to develop her great potential must also be supervised. A good principal aims to promote the growth of every teacher.¹⁵

¹⁴Willard S. Elsbree and Harold J. McNally, Elementary School Administration and Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1951), pp. 419-420.

¹⁵Adams and Dickey, op. cit., p. 111.

Although an individual conference may, or may not, be held before the classroom visit, the principal's specific preparation must be based on sound educational purposes. In analyzing the data, he studies the teacher's program and the lessons to be taught, the ability of the pupils and their social and economic backgrounds, and the notes from previous conferences or observations before he lists a few significant points to be observed when he enters the room.¹⁶

Types of visits. According to Briggs and Justman, in their discussion regarding types of observational visits, a casual and unplanned visit is of no value in the improvement of teaching. The best visit is always mutually planned by the principal and the teacher, and is a valuable part of the supervisory program. Many principals feel that a scheduled type of visit promotes good teacher attitudes toward visitation. At the beginning of each school year, therefore, the principal asks the teachers to indicate on a sheet of paper whether or not they would like to have him make a get-acquainted visit. They are also asked to state the day and hour most convenient to them. After he has made the first round of observations, he will be in a better position to decide whether or not the next scheduled visits should be to teachers of a certain grade or subject, or to those

¹⁶Kyte, op. cit., p. 245.

revealing special needs. Educators who favor the scheduled visit state that it usually relieves tension, is saving of the principal's time, and shows the strengths of the teacher. For some teachers, as the scheduled visit causes tension and anxiety, the unannounced but nevertheless planned visit would be better. In order to be successful, the scheduled visit must be planned with the teacher in answer to a felt need, and it must be so flexible that it will not prevent another teacher from getting help that is urgently needed at that time.¹⁷

The on-call visit was developed out of the reaction against the rigid schedules and visits of the earlier part of this century, in the hope of making the supervisory program more flexible and better adjusted to the individual needs. Through this type, visits are limited to those requested by teachers who feel the need of help, or those who have something they think is especially worthy of displaying to the principal. In the use of the on-call visit, there is a danger that some teachers will call frequently and monopolize the principal's time, and others will get none at all. The Ayers-Peckham check list of desirable supervisory practices indicates that neither the regularly scheduled visit nor the on-call visit is sufficient by itself, and that visits should

¹⁷Thomas H. Briggs and Joseph Justman, Improving Instruction through Supervision (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), pp. 325-327.

be made partly on an on-call basis and partly on a regularly scheduled basis.¹⁸ Discussing supervisory visits, Spears says that any principal, who has made his instructional leadership democratic and helpful, should always find a welcome sign outside the classroom, and should feel free to go in at any time.¹⁹

The classroom visit. When a principal enters the classroom for an observation, he must not forget that he is the visitor and that the teacher is the host. If it is the scheduled visit, he should plan to be in the room when the class starts. If it has begun, he should nod pleasantly at the teacher, and then take a seat toward the rear of the room and on the side, so he can see the pupils' interaction with the teacher, the other children, and the instructional materials used. He should appear interested, as it will encourage the teacher and pupils to do their best. As the principal's role is that of a visitor, he remains silent and does not make any oral contributions unless he is invited to do so.

Having a specific purpose in mind for each visit, as he observes and interprets the teaching-learning situation, he will also notice the emotional climate of the classroom, the pupil-teacher

¹⁸Fred C. Ayer, Fundamentals of Instructional Supervision (New York: American Book Company, 1953), p. 396.

¹⁹Spears, op. cit., p. 268.

relationships, the primary aim of the teacher, the attitudes of the pupils toward their work, the needs of the pupils, the teacher's instructional techniques and procedures, and his greatest potentials for professional growth.²⁰

If, during the cooperative planning of the observational program, the purpose of note-taking and the use to which it would be put were discussed, it is advisable for the principal to take notes. However, if he notices that his note-taking is disturbing, he should discontinue taking notes, and write them up as soon as he leaves the room. The notes that are taken should make a fairly complete record of the lesson, and should be filed in the cumulative folder of the teacher. They are very useful in supervisory conferences in order to show the teacher the professional growth he has made, and to help him develop his strengths and overcome his weaknesses.²¹

The visits may vary in length, but, as a general rule, the principal should plan to stay for the entire class period, and at times return for the next two or three days to see the culmination of the unit. If the principal drops in for a few minutes and then departs, the visit is merely an inspection, as it is too short to learn anything about the

²⁰Adams and Dickey, op. cit., p. 119.

²¹Briggs and Justman, op. cit., pp. 332-333.

teacher and his needs. When the principal must leave before the period is over, having explained the situation to the teacher in advance, he may smile and slip out quietly. If he remains until the close of the lesson, he should make one or two favorable comments to the group before he leaves.

The reactions of teachers, who have experienced observations by a principal which have contributed to the improvement of teaching and learning, indicated that the classroom visit was a valuable supervisory technique. One teacher said his principal always offered him specific suggestions and help in obtaining better instructional materials. Another remarked that the principal had obtained a thorough picture of the teaching-learning situation in the classroom, and after the observation, had served as a real guide and inspiration to the teacher in improving some of his weaknesses.²²

Through these visits the principal learns, not only the needs of the individual teacher, but also the needs that are common to several members of the staff, and is able to plan group activities to help them solve the problems. The visits are also a wonderful opportunity for him to accumulate many excellent teaching techniques and procedures which may be modified to improve the work of another

²²Adams and Dickey, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

teacher, and the principal grows as the teachers grow. Adams and Dickey, in their discussion, feel that the most important contribution of these visits is that they enable the principal to see the over-all instructional pattern of the school, to identify curriculum or instructional problems of common concern to many teachers, and to unify and coordinate the instructional program.²³

The individual supervisory conference. These conferences can be a vital force in the principal's program of instruction improvement. The individual conference which precedes teaching is used in such instances as the initial conference with a new teacher, to assist the teacher in planning a new unit of learning, or to help him with a problem. The supervisory conference that follows an observation is more commonly used, and is an outgrowth of the principal's visit to the classroom. There are times when no follow-up conference will be necessary, as the purpose of the observation may have been to become acquainted with the teacher and his class, it may not have yielded anything of sufficient importance to warrant a conference, or it may have been part of a series of conferences on a unified problem that will be discussed with the group.²⁴

²³Adams and Dickey, op. cit., pp. 120-122.

²⁴Briggs and Justman, op. cit., p. 360.

Although a conference is usually held after school hours, it may also be held during the noon hour or a free period. When it follows an observational visit, the teacher and principal should arrange to meet while the impressions of the lessons are still clear. The length of the conference, which may vary from fifteen minutes to an hour, should be sufficient to insure an adequate discussion of the points to be covered.

In arranging a meeting place, the principal should plan to have the conference in a room where an air of informality, and no superiority, may be maintained so that the teacher will feel at home and secure enough to assume an equal part in the discussion. Adams and Dickey stated that the first conference held with a teacher should be in the teacher's room rather than the principal's office, as all vestiges of formality are removed, the teacher feels free to talk and is more likely to let her hair down, and there will be no distracting interruptions. When rapport has been established, the conferences may be held any place.²⁵ While Kyte agrees that the classroom is a very suitable meeting place, he feels the principal's office is sometimes better because privacy is insured, needed materials are readily available, and personalities enter in and the attitude of the teacher calls for a formal and serious atmosphere.²⁶

²⁵Adams and Dickey, op. cit., p. 132.

²⁶Kyte, op. cit., p. 258.

Sufficient time should elapse between the observation and the follow-up conference to permit the principal to make careful preparation, so that the interview will be satisfactory. In reviewing all pertinent information about the observed lesson, he should pay particular attention to the pupil activities and the teacher's purpose for the lesson. He should note the teacher's strong points and how they can be utilized for growth, as well as noting the weak ones and how they can be improved, and also decide whether or not the teacher has made an effort to profit from former suggestions. After listing many points that could be discussed, he must decide on four or five important points to emphasize in the conference, being very careful to omit the points that are trivial or irremediable, and deferring the points which he feels the teacher is not ready to consider until he gains more confidence in himself. Then, before the planning is over, the principal locates references and plans concrete suggestions he can offer the teacher, as most teachers appreciate specific suggestions of something to do immediately.²⁷

The success of the whole supervisory program, as well as the individual conference, often depends upon the maintenance of good human relationships. The principal must show respect for the teacher's opinion, or he cannot expect to gain the respect of the members of his staff. As a rule, sincere praise should be offered for the teacher's

²⁷Briggs and Justman, op. cit., pp. 361-363.

strong points before criticism is offered. Differences of opinion may be expressed, and as there is more than one satisfactory method of solving a problem, the teacher should be permitted to use the method in which he has the most faith. As the conference continues, the principal should center the discussion around the teaching-learning situation, and not on the activities or traits of the teacher as a person, as this permits him to "save face" and retain his self-respect. Then the teacher will realize that the principal is interested in helping him grow instead of criticizing his weaknesses.²⁸

As the main purpose of the individual conference is to help the teacher determine and analyze his own problems, skillful questioning should lead the teacher to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the situation and how they can be improved. In this way the teacher is helped to grow in professional maturity, instead of becoming increasingly dependent on someone else.²⁹

Every conference should end with a definite conclusion, so the teacher will not have the feeling that nothing was accomplished, and therefore, it was a waste of time. The two of them should agree on the next steps to be taken, in order that the teacher may leave with

²⁸Adams and Dickey, op. cit., pp. 133-136.

²⁹Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 261.

the feeling that his work is satisfactory and that he has the ability to carry out the proposed steps for improving his instructional practices. As soon as the conference is over, the principal should make a record of the agreements and of his own commitments, so he can refer to them later. Failure to live up to promises that he has made will lessen the teacher's confidence in the principal. Last of all, he must remember that high standards of professional ethics demand that everything that is discussed in an individual conference be highly confidential.³⁰

A well-planned individual conference is one of the most effective supervisory techniques, as it provides an opportunity for the principal to work individually with the teacher on personal or professional problems, to learn to know and understand the teacher as an individual, to get help from each other as they solve problems together, and to help the teacher to become self-directive and grow professionally while in service.³¹

³⁰Adams and Dickey, op. cit., p. 139.

³¹Ibid., p. 125.

CHAPTER III

THE METHOD OF APPROACH

When the writer used the Card Catalog, Educational Index, and Reader's Guide to locate literature about the principal's role in supervision, he was impressed with all that is involved in developing a good program of supervision in an elementary school. Many supervisory techniques for improving the teaching-learning situation were discussed, and the writer found several he would like to use in developing a better program of planned supervision in his school. He realized, however, that it would be impossible to delve very deeply into more than one technique in his research paper. Therefore, he chose to concentrate on the principal's use of classroom observations as one of the supervisory techniques to improve the instructional program. As he studied and analyzed what he read about classroom observations, he began to see things he should do to make his visits to the classrooms, in the elementary school of which he is the principal, more worthwhile.

At the beginning of the school year, he planned to list those things he found effective in building good human relationships with his new teachers, as well as those which lead to the creation of that wholesome emotional tone which a school needs if it is to become a

happy working place for everyone in the building.

In the grade group meetings, the teachers were invited to participate in the planning and development of the observation program. The principal planned to have the teachers help him develop an observation check list. Since individual and group conferences with teachers were suggested as part of the program to make classroom visits worthwhile, he planned to enlist the cooperation of his teachers in developing that part of the program, too.

When the writer began visiting the classrooms, he noted the types of visits he made, and whether or not initial or follow-up conferences were necessary. He planned to compare observations and conferences with the initial planning in written form with those that were carried on without notes of any kind.

In conclusion, the writer summarized the value of classroom visits as one of the supervisory techniques for improving instruction.

I. UNDERSTANDING THE TEACHERS

The principal is responsible, according to present day educational leaders, for the development of a sound instructional program in his school. In order to do this, he must provide a pleasant, stimulating atmosphere in which the teachers have opportunities to work together and share ideas as a faculty group. The principal, therefore, must take time to become acquainted with his

teachers, recognizing the fact that each teacher is different from any other teacher. Understanding them aids the principal in establishing a friendly feeling without which cooperation and maximum growth are impossible. He must be concerned about them and their problems, and consider carefully the ideas and suggestions the teachers give, so that he may have staff meetings where each person feels free to offer an opinion.

Through personal interviews. Becoming acquainted with all but one of his new teachers for the year 1957-1958 during the previous school term was a wonderful experience for the writer, as it permitted him to become aware of personal, as well as professional, problems that existed: health, economic worries, and family conflicts.

Teacher A had taught first and third grade in this school previously, and had also substituted in the building during the years she was not on the faculty. She was familiar with the philosophy and program of the school, and continued to join us whenever the teachers had any type of social get-together.

Teacher B was also a former teacher and substitute. Last January, when she realized her youngest child would require years of medical care, she decided to return to teaching in order to supplement her husband's salary. She telephoned for an appointment with the superintendent and principal, in order to explain the family problems.

During the rest of that school year, she often contacted the principal about correspondence courses she was taking. In this way she learned a great deal about the curriculum, the textbooks, and the instructional materials in the school. She often dropped in at the teachers' afternoon coffee break, and several times brought some Scandinavian pastry.

Teacher C taught in a school not far away. Last spring her husband bought a fruit ranch in our school district. She had a personal interview in March, and called several times during the summer months whenever she wanted some information. She was highly recommended by her superintendent and principal, college instructors that the principal also knew, and classroom teachers who knew her personally.

Teacher D was interested in teaching in our district, as her husband and his partner had started a new venture near by. She had taught in one of the schools in the valley, came for a personal interview, and saw the school facilities.

Teacher E was a former teacher in Montana, and was interested in teaching again. During the years her sons were in the primary grades, she became well acquainted with the school's facilities, the teachers and the principal, and entertained many of the teachers at her farm home. She contacted the principal a year ago when she wished

to take several extension courses. During the winter and spring quarters she attended college at Ellensburg, and often stopped at the school for information or materials she could use in some course. Through these visits to the school, she met many of the teachers, and became acquainted with instructional materials and supplies available. In June she stopped at the school to get her room assignment. She also received a list of her pupils, as well as suggested groupings of the children for reading instruction at the beginning of the year. Copies of many of the basic texts were given her, so that she could become familiar with them, and build some teaching aids during the summer months.

Teacher F was a student at Washington State College when she stopped to apply for the position of elementary music teacher. This gave her an opportunity to discuss the school's music program, and to see the instructional materials available for music. She also met some of the teachers, and learned something about the city and its available housing. During the summer she corresponded with the principal concerning apartments or houses available in the section of town where she wished to live.

Teacher G was a student at Seattle Pacific College. As she wished to teach on this side of the mountains, her placement director referred her to us, as our district had had many of their graduates

for their first year of teaching. After a personal interview and a tour of the building in April, the principal took her to a classroom in which a former college acquaintance was teaching. Teacher G also corresponded with the principal during the summer months. When she arrived in August, she decided to rent an apartment in the same building where the principal lives. This provided an opportunity for him to learn more about her and her family background, and for her to ask the questions that seemed so necessary when she was away from the school building.

Teacher H, hired at the last moment to replace a teacher who resigned in August, was the only teacher whom the principal had not met before pre-school workshop. However, as he had read her references on file in the superintendent's office, he knew something about her previous teaching experience, the loss of her husband, and the three children she was left to support.

Through pre-school workshops. The spring planning for the pre-school workshop in August, which is held to help the new teachers get settled and to help all the teachers get ready for a successful start, was a most profitable experience for the teachers and principal this year. The decision to add kindergarten to the school program had been made. All the new teachers for the coming school term had been obtained, and it had been possible to give all grade and

room assignments. As some of the teachers in each grade group were acquainted with the new teachers for that grade, a more successful orientation program could be planned to help the new teachers get acquainted with their colleagues and the program.

The writer believed that one of his major responsibilities was the orientation of new teachers, whether it was a beginning teacher or an experienced one with a new assignment, as it built the foundation for the pattern of conduct which would be established in the classroom for years to come. He helped those under his direction become happily adjusted to their new environment.

This year, as almost all of the new teachers had established homes in the community and were acquainted, the principal had only one teacher to take to the first meeting for the new teachers. Before the meeting started, he had an opportunity to greet all of his new teachers, and help them get acquainted with others who were new to the district, too. The general policies and philosophies of the local district were explained by the superintendent, the new teachers were introduced, and the special service people discussed the help they could give the teachers.

Then the two elementary principals took their new teachers on a trip around the school district, so that they could learn the resources of the community, and become oriented to its business, social, political,

and religious life. The principals believed that this helped the teachers understand more clearly the individual differences of the children for which provision must be made in the instructional program. Sending the daily and weekly newspapers to new teachers, and taking them to the Labor Day parade and festival, had also proven to be of great value.

After lunch the principal took his new teachers on a tour of their building, pointing out the supplies and equipment available in the rooms they went through. They were shown where their rooms were, and what would be found in each room. A returning teacher was introduced as a helper for each new teacher to help her learn the methods of operation in the school. Care was taken in selecting a helper of approximately the same age, as that would make it easier to ask questions and make friends with others on the staff.

Having seen the school's facilities, the principal and the new teachers had an informal meeting in which the philosophy of the school, the goals it strives for, and the way in which it operates were discussed, so that the new teachers would have complete knowledge of the conditions of their employment. Curriculum guides, and the new building handbook, revised the previous year by the primary teachers, were distributed and explained. Each teacher was then given her pupil list and the folders with the cumulative records of the children,

along with tentative reading groups suggested for the beginning of the year. At the close of the meeting, plans were made to meet again on the last day of the workshop to clear up any uncertainties which beset the beginning teacher in her planning for the first day. The principal also mentioned that they should feel free to call on him at any time they desired help.

Believing that one of the best ways to build friendly relationships among staff workers is to have socializing experiences, the first grade teachers provided refreshments for an afternoon tea, so that the returning teachers could meet the new teachers before the general teachers' meeting the next morning.

The school directors and the civic leaders of the town were introduced and gave short talks at the general meeting, and the new teachers were also introduced. After a coffee break, the Wapato Educational Association held a short meeting to introduce the new officers, to discuss health and other group insurances, and to acquaint the new teachers with the purposes of the local organizations. The new teachers, and their families, were invited to attend the all-school personnel dinner which is always held on the third day of workshop. Plans were also made for the airplane ride to Mt. Rainier that the association sponsored for its prospective new members.

These days also offered the principal an opportunity to stop in the various classrooms, answer questions, suggest books and other

materials beginning teachers might want, and visit with each of the returning teachers. He also helped each teacher select textbooks according to the interests and abilities of her children.

The principal held the first general meeting for all of his teachers on the last day of the workshop, as he has found it is more meaningful for the new teachers. Special service people for this school were there, gave out materials, and received help in planning their schedules. Final plans for the first day were formulated, too.

At the close of that meeting, the principal met with the new teachers. Again he illustrated and explained details that were not quite clear, such as attendance and lunch records, bus tags, lunch serving in the classrooms, play areas to be used, and the use of the lavatories.

Before the new teachers left that day, the principal looked at their lesson plans for the first day of school, found enrichment materials that might make the first day more interesting, suggested independent activities for various groups, and answered questions about details that were still hazy for one or two of them.

Throughout the year. The writer believed that many opportunities presented themselves throughout the year, by means of which he was able to gain more insight into the strengths and

weaknesses of his teachers, help them cope with situations as they arose, or prevent difficulties before their inception. Informal chats in the classroom, or on the playground during the day, as well as coffee breaks as soon as the children were dismissed, all helped to build better working relationships among the staff. It paid to be an attentive listener, and to draw out hidden potentialities or fears.

Whenever a need arose, the principal held an informal meeting, over a coffee cup, with the new teachers to discuss coming events, reports to fill out, reporting to parents, grading, and clarification of procedures. This was also a place where he felt that the "buddy system" had been of great help.

Opportunities to meet the parents of a new teacher, or the college supervisor, have helped him gain a deeper insight into the needs of his beginning teachers.

The principal has been invited to be a guest of some of his teachers at various educational and social events, and has invited them to accompany him to educational meetings, such as the Washington Organization for Reading Development. These meetings have been of great value as a means of seeing each other in different surroundings, and gaining additional devices and techniques for improving the teaching situation.

The principal, by spending time to get better acquainted

with the members of his staff, realized that each teacher differed from the others in interests, aptitudes, training, and experience. The teachers felt that he was friendly, sympathetic, and willing to help solve any problem, regardless of how insignificant it might be.

II. DEVELOPING THE OBSERVATION PROGRAM

The principal must have a thorough understanding of the teachers' problems, needs, and interests, if the program of supervision is to be successful in its efforts to improve instruction. The teachers want a leader who works hand in hand with them, helping them solve their problems cooperatively. As they work together, the principal is able to determine the areas in which the teachers need or desire assistance. Then the teachers are more likely to accept responsibility for planning program changes, and for putting their ideas into effect in the classroom. The observational visit is often used by the principal to see the specific methods and techniques a teacher uses, and to note those areas in which she may need or desire help. It should never be used until wholesome relations have been established between the teacher and the principal.

The writer, in his research, found some important principles upon which good observational visits should be based. Using these as a guide, he invited his teachers to participate, in their

grade level meetings, in the planning and operation of an observation program that would be mutually satisfying to everyone.

Types of visits preferred. In response to the types of visits they preferred, the majority of the teachers favored a combination of the scheduled and "on-call" visits used in previous years, as they felt the principal would see them and their children doing their best work. A few of the new teachers favored the unannounced, but planned, visit where the principal moves inconspicuously around the room. They stated that an announced visit, where the principal sits still and observes, was apt to make them nervous and upset.

All of them believed that his visits should be purposeful, and planned with the teacher. They liked the scheduled visits for getting acquainted with the general teaching conditions, coordinating the work of the teachers on a grade level, and identifying instructional problems which apply to more than one teacher. Every group preferred the "on-call" visit whenever a teacher felt a need for help in analyzing a problem about one child or a group of children within the classroom, or wished to have the principal see a project on which she and her children were working.

They felt that a day's notice was sufficient for most visits, as the teacher was usually in on the initial planning. For others, such

as observing the behavior of a certain child, very little advance notification was necessary. They expressed the opinion that, while they like to be notified, the principal should feel free to come in at any time.

The classroom visit. Again the majority of each group favored having the principal come in quietly, take a seat in the back of the room, or at the side, where he could observe the pupils, and remain as a silent observer of the lesson being taught. A few felt more at ease when he moved quietly around the room. They realized, however, that there would be times when the nature of the activity, or the problem, might necessitate moving among the pupils.

Most of them felt that too much note-taking had a tendency to be disconcerting, but that it did not affect them much if they were notified in advance, and were sure that the notes would be used in an individual or group conference later. They indicated that a check list, for the principal to use in his observations, might be another cooperative venture to be developed during the year.

When discussing the length of a visit, emphasis was placed on arriving on time for the beginning of the class, and remaining until the end. They indicated that the observation program should be flexible, so that it would not interfere with a teacher getting the help she needs at a certain time, nor would it prevent a teacher or principal from

postponing an appointment it would be inconvenient to keep. At times they thought it might be necessary to stay for more than one class period. The purpose for which the visit was planned would determine its length and the number of visits that were made.

Conferences. The teachers did not think it was necessary to schedule individual conferences before the classroom visit was made. They said that the planning was often done in a previous group meeting, or else through informal chats beforehand.

They did believe, however, that scheduled conferences, individual or group, were valuable after some observations where the principal helped them analyze the situation and formulate procedures for improving the work. For others, a short informal chat was all that was needed. They did not want to lose the informal chats they have had in the past whenever anyone felt the need for assistance or advice. They preferred taking care of their problems as each one arose, rather than saving several of them for a scheduled conference.

Teachers new to the district preferred having conferences in the classroom, while the returning teachers believed that the place for the conference was determined by its purpose. It might be in the classroom, the textbook room, the library, or the office if it was of a confidential nature. Well-planned conferences, according to the

returning teachers, provided an opportunity to get help from others in solving problems, and to grow professionally while improving the instructional program.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION OF DATA GATHERED

The principal, as a result of his research, was convinced that his supervisory responsibilities were as important as those related to administration, that his primary concern was the improvement of the total teaching-learning situation, and that his supervisory techniques must be many and varied. One technique he wanted to use more effectively was the visit to the classroom where he could see the teacher and the pupils at work. In order to dispel any teacher's fear of classroom observations, he took time to become acquainted with the teachers, and was available to help with any problems they might have. Then the principal invited them to participate in the planning and development of an observation program that would be satisfactory to everyone. As the teachers and principal continued to plan together for meeting the needs of the pupils, the foundation was laid for planned and purposeful visits to observe children in action.

I. CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

During his visits to the classroom, the principal made use of the three types of visits the teachers said they preferred. He used

the scheduled visit for getting acquainted with general teaching conditions, and for identifying instructional problems which applied to more than one teacher. The on-call visit was made whenever a teacher felt the need for help. At other times, the principal used the unannounced, but nevertheless planned, visit which the teachers called a drop-in visit, as they knew the day but not the exact time that the principal would arrive. The data with regard to the number and type of visits the principal made to the twenty-five classrooms in his elementary school during the first semester of the school year are presented in Table I.

TABLE I
CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL
WAPATO, WASHINGTON
DURING THE FIRST SEMESTER, 1957-1958

Type of Visit	Drop-In	On-Call	Scheduled	Total
Kindergarten	6	4	3	13
First Grade	11	2	7	20
Second Grade	4	6	13	23
Third Grade	0	4	1	5
Total	21	16	24	61

In the kindergarten. The principal used six drop-in, four on-call, and three scheduled visits to the three kindergarten rooms, making a total of thirteen visits as indicated in Table I, page 45.

The teachers, knowing it was difficult for the principal to follow a definite time schedule the first week of school, suggested that he stop in whenever he had a free moment to see the children at work and play. The drop-in visits were used to become acquainted with the children, and to become familiar with the daily program of the kindergarten. Later on, the principal made on-call visits to help the teachers cope with the social-emotional problems of some children. Three visits were scheduled at a definite time so the principal could notice the wide range of abilities in each room.

In the first grade. Just before school began, one of the nine first grade teachers resigned. As pre-registration indicated a smaller first grade enrollment than usual, the board of directors asked one of the special service teachers to teach for a few weeks until they could decide whether or not it would be necessary to fill the vacancy. At the beginning of the third week of school, the first grade teachers met with the principal and the superintendent. The group agreed that the children could easily be handled in eight classrooms. The teachers indicated that, since some classrooms seemed to have more children with mental or emotional handicaps, they would like to have the principal visit all the rooms that week before those children would be assigned to the other rooms.

Of the twenty visits made to the first grade rooms, Table I, page 45, shows that eleven were drop-in, two on-call, and seven scheduled. Nine of the drop-in visits were made, at the request of the teachers, during the third week of school to become acquainted with the types of children in each classroom, their abilities, and their interests. The other drop-in visits were made to a new first grade teacher who had stated she preferred them, as a scheduled visit made her nervous.

Two of the teachers asked the principal to call at a specific time to observe some children. The teachers wanted to plan special programs for these children to provide for their individual differences, and wanted to invite the parents in for a conference.

The teachers, after readiness tests had been given and the results analyzed, were concerned about many of the children in their rooms. The tests and the teachers' observations indicated that these children were of average intelligence, but were lacking in oral language abilities. Seven scheduled visits, and one drop-in, were used by the principal to observe these children in small groups before several meetings were scheduled to plan ways of coping with the problem.

In the second grade. The data in Table I, page 45, shows that the principal made twenty-three classroom observations in the second grade. Four of them were drop-in, six were on-call, and

thirteen were scheduled.

In the kindergarten and first grade, the principal utilized drop-in visits to become acquainted with the children during the early part of the school year. In the second grade, however, the drop-in visits were made later in the year to obtain a general picture of the classroom organization and teaching techniques of two teachers.

The on-call visits were requested by second grade teachers so the principal could become fully aware of the problems of a child, or of a group of children, in a classroom, before the principal and the teacher discussed materials, teaching techniques, and parent conferences that might be helpful in solving the problem.

In this grade, eleven of the thirteen visits that were scheduled were made to the classrooms of two of the new teachers, so the principal might become acquainted with the general teaching conditions in each classroom, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers.

While there has been a general tendency for the principal to make more visits each year to the kindergarten and first grade classrooms to help teachers understand a child or solve a problem, Table I, page 45, indicates that he made more visits in the second grade because of the special needs revealed by two teachers.

In the third grade. The principal, as he looked at Table I, page 45, noted that he had made no drop-in visits, four on-call visits, and one scheduled visit in this grade during the first semester. The principal felt that he had made fewer visits at that grade level because he was better acquainted with the children by the time they reached third grade, and the assignment of big sisters had proved very beneficial to the new teachers. His frequent contacts in previous years with the two new teachers had helped establish good human relations, and informal or group conferences made it possible for these teachers to cope with situations as they arose.

II. CONFERENCES WITH TEACHERS

Classroom observations would be of little value in improving the teaching-learning situation, if the principal did not confer with the individual teachers before and after he visited a classroom.

When the teachers discussed the types of conferences they preferred in a supervisory program, they said they did not want too many formal conferences scheduled before or after observations. They felt that formal conferences would leave little time for the informal, unscheduled conferences used in previous years in answer to a specific problem, or as a form of progress reporting. The data in Table II, page 50, indicate that 191 informal conferences followed classroom

TABLE II

CONFERENCES THAT FOLLOWED CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL
WAPATO, WASHINGTON, IN THE FIRST SEMESTER, 1957-1958

Type of Conference	Formal				Informal				
	Grade Placement	K	1	2	3	K	1	2	3
I. Locating individual differences									
A. Getting acquainted						6	9		
B. Social-emotional needs						4	3		
C. Needs of a-typical children						3	5	3	2
D. Analyzing and using test results						2	10	2	2
II. Providing for individual differences									
A. Planning a daily program				4					
B. Meeting a wide range of abilities				2		3	10	5	4
C. Locating materials				2		2	2	3	2
D. Selecting textbooks				4		3	10	21	23
E. Planning independent worthwhile activities				3			1	5	
F. Introducing a lesson or unit			1	3	1		1	4	
G. Planning with pupils and evaluating their work				2			4	3	5
H. Improving techniques			1	7	1		4	6	3
III. Reporting to parents		1	1	2	4	3	9	2	2
Total		1	3	29	6	26	68	54	43

visits, in comparison with thirty-nine formal conferences. Twenty-nine of these formal conferences were scheduled with two of the teachers in the second grade, where the principal felt informal conferences would not produce satisfactory results.

Although the informal conferences were usually held after school hours, it was possible to have some during the noon hour. A few were held on the playground where the principal and teacher were observing the behavior of a certain child. While the length of the informal conferences varied from ten minutes to half an hour, the time required for a formal one ranged from twenty minutes to an hour.

The formal conference was usually held in the classroom because the teacher was more at ease, there were fewer distractions, and the materials that they wished to refer to were close at hand. The informal conference was held in other places, too, such as the library or textbook room, the teachers' lounge, or on the playground.

Most conferences were held the same day as the observation took place. Before a conference, the principal planned his daily schedule so he would have time to prepare for it. First, he reviewed the notes, which he usually jotted down after leaving the room. There were times, however, when he took notes as he was observing, because the teacher had asked him to observe certain children. These notes were always shown to the teacher when the two of them discussed the visit. As he used his notes to review the observed lesson, he recalled

the teacher's purpose for the lesson and the activities of the pupils. He noted the teacher's strong points that could be used for growth, as well as the weak ones that could be improved. In rooms where he made more than one visit, he looked to see whether or not the teacher had made an effort to profit from former suggestions. After he had listed many points that could be discussed, he decided on four or five points to emphasize in a formal conference, and one or two for an informal one. He avoided points that were trivial, and deferred those which he felt the teacher was not ready to consider. He jotted down specific suggestions he could offer, and located references if any were available.

Since the success of a conference depends upon the maintenance of good human relationships, the principal offered praise for the teacher's strong points before he offered criticisms in the conferences with one or two teachers where he needed to be critical. The principal tried to center the discussion around the teaching situation, and not on the traits of the teacher as a person. In this way the teacher realized the principal was more interested in teacher growth than in criticism. The principal felt the conferences that were most successful were the ones where he could get the teacher to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the situation, and suggest how it could be improved. Before a conference closed, the two of them agreed on the next steps to be taken. The principal kept a record of any commitments he made.

The principal, as he discussed the contents of Table II, page 50, brought in group conferences that were a result of a series of classroom visits and conferences on one grade level.

In the kindergarten. The teachers and the principal held one formal conference to discuss reporting to parents, and twenty-six informal ones to locate and provide for the individual differences of the children in their rooms. Six of the conferences were used to acquaint the principal with the types of children enrolled, nine of the conferences dealt with children who were emotional or behavior problems, and eight of the conferences discussed ways of providing for individual differences in ability.

The principal made several scheduled visits to one room to observe a child who was a severe behavior problem. A conference with the school psychologist revealed the cause of the child's problem, and also the fact that the psychologist had made case studies on two of the older children during the previous year. The psychologist did not believe there was any value in having him enter the case, but he did give the teacher some pertinent information about the parents and the other children in the family. The teacher created opportunities for the mother to help with activities in the kindergarten, and accepted an invitation to have dinner with the family. Professional books increased the teacher's and principal's understanding of social-emotional children,

and described how they could help children adjust more easily from various types of home situations to a large group at school, where all of the children are vying for the teacher's attention.

Another kindergarten child, whom the principal observed, did not talk to anyone in the room. The school nurse was contacted, and informed the teacher that the child had a severe hearing loss. The speech therapist was consulted and a conference arranged with the parents. Arrangements were made for the child to attend a hearing clinic. He now has a hearing aid, reacts more favorably in a classroom situation, and is beginning to participate in oral language activities. The parents have been contacted again, and this child's school program is now being planned for the coming school year.

In the first grade. The data in Table II, page 50, indicate that the principal had three formal conferences and sixty-eight informal conferences with his teachers. Most of these conferences were held after standardized readiness tests had been given, and centered around the fact that there was at least a five-year difference in the maturity of the children in the first grade. The school program had to be adjusted to provide for the mental and social-emotional needs of all the children. Some of the children were ready for reading, while others needed a prolonged period of reading readiness activities. The teachers knew that many of the children who seemed socially and linguistically retarded

had plenty of native ability, but did not understand the vocabulary of the teachers because the children had not had the experiences dealt with in the tests and in the textbooks.

Some children, who were unable to adjust to the school situation, had potential average ability which had never been developed due to lack of adequate experiences at home. These children were referred to the psychologist, who suggested that they be placed in kindergarten for half of the day to obtain those experiences of a motor and social nature that had never been developed. The balance of the day was to be spent in the regular first grade room, as nothing would be gained by sending them home. Individual conferences were arranged for the parents with the teacher, school psychologist, and principal. The parents agreed that the children would benefit from such a program, and that they should remain in the first grade next year.

Conferences were held to plan a program where the teachers and principal could work cooperatively with the non-English speaking children who needed instruction in language. Using a Spanish boy in the second grade as a helper, the principal worked with the children one period each day, and developed vocabulary in concrete situations whenever possible. Pictures and picture charts were used to learn the names of farm animals, toys, colors, furniture, fruits and vegetables, things that mother and father do, and so forth. Games were played to

develop meaning for verbs, adverbs, prepositions, and adjectives. The teachers were kept informed of the progress made, and provided opportunities for the children to use the words and phrases as they learned them. This group is now able to profit from reading readiness experiences, and will continue with the first grade reading program next year.

The teachers were interested in scheduling individual and group conferences to cope with the problem of the larger group of children who were socially and linguistically retarded. Books and pamphlets were used to plan a language program which provided opportunities for the children to develop a rich, functional vocabulary from concrete firsthand experiences. These children learned to speak and understand the language of the books they would read later in the year. Since the principal had worked with a group of children last year who presented a similar instructional problem, he arranged his schedule to give these children a program of varied experiences during one of their seatwork periods. Whenever a teacher felt one of her children did not need this extra attention, another child was sent in his place. As a result of this prolonged readiness period in the first semester where the children obtained a rich background of experiences and a larger, more meaningful vocabulary, these children now enjoy reading and will read fluently in primers before the close of the year.

Several projects were direct outgrowths of the conferences where the principal and teachers discussed the varied needs of the children. One teacher, who noticed that many of her children had poor listening habits, told how the teacher's supplement that accompanies The Weekly Reader had given her some valuable suggestions. She discovered that the other teachers were experiencing the same problem, and were interested in finding ways to improve this important language skill. Many worthwhile ideas which offer practice in listening were found in books and magazines. A booklet is now being compiled on ways to help children become better listeners.

One of the most worthwhile projects began with a meeting in September to which parents were invited. The teachers and the principal explained the first grade program, their methods of teaching, and problems that might affect a child's work or attitude at school. The teachers wanted the parents to understand that one child may be ready to read or write before another, as all children develop at different rates of speed. Many parents, as they commented favorably about the meeting, stated that they had been afraid to teach their children anything before they started school, and wanted the teacher or principal to help them plan ways in which they could help meet the developmental needs of these children.

Several of the teachers decided to invite some of the parents to visit at a definite time when they could see their child in his reading

group and in other school activities. The parents were invited to be the teacher's guests for lunch. While the children had a supervised noon play period, the teacher had an opportunity to acquire insight into the child's relationship with his parents, uncover clues to the child's behavior, and show the interested parents how they could help their child with a certain subject or skill. As so many parents were interested in learning how they could help children develop before they started school, the kindergarten and first grade teachers developed a pamphlet of worthwhile home activities and experiences for five- and six-year-old children. This pamphlet will also be given to parents when the school has registration in May for children who will be in kindergarten or first grade next September.

Although many of the conferences dealt with problems which involved a group of children, the teachers often conferred with the principal about the special needs of one child. One teacher was very disturbed by the frequent visits of a mother who was upset by her son's stories that he did not have any playmates at school, and that he was not allowed to participate as freely as other children in classroom activities. The principal gave the teacher pertinent information about the family background. After he had observed the child working satisfactorily in the classroom, the teacher and the principal watched the child during supervised play periods. They had several conferences

with the mother. They learned that the father worked long hours every day and had little time to give to his son, that the family lived in a neighborhood where there were many girls with whom the daughter could play, but no boys for the son, and that the mother was the leader of her daughter's Bluebird group. During the conferences the principal and teacher brought out the characteristics of a six-year-old. The mother began to realize that the school was interested in helping her child develop socially, as well as mentally, and that her son's play activities were similar to those of other boys his age. She followed suggestions the school gave for planning activities in which the entire family could participate, and provided opportunities for her son to play with other boys outside of school hours. The boy's behavior at home changed gradually when he felt that his parents were as interested in him as they were in his sister.

Another teacher was concerned about a girl who was extremely nervous and had difficulty adjusting to a classroom situation. Reading readiness tests, as well as an individual intelligence test administered by the principal, indicated that the girl had superior intelligence. The Goodenough Draw-A-Man Scale confirmed the teacher's observations that the child had poor muscular coordination, and that she needed to increase her visual abilities. As the principal was acquainted with the parents, he was able to give the teacher a

detailed account of the family background. The parents were invited to visit school. Since the mother was unable to get time off where she works, the father came alone. In the parent-teacher interview that followed, the teacher gained insight into the girl's relationship with her mother, and the experiences she had missed at home. The teacher suggested that the parents have their child checked by the family physician. By working with the physician, the school helped the mother plan home activities that would give the girl the needed experiences, and also develop a closer relationship between the mother and daughter. Pressure to excel was removed, and the girl was permitted to remain in a reading group where she was comfortable. School activities were planned to help the girl develop better coordination. The girl is happier and feels more secure, has better control of her large and small muscles, and does much better work at school.

Before the end of the first nine-week period, the teachers felt that parent-teacher interviews, as well as report cards, should be used with the parents of some children to discuss their progress. The principal had nine informal conferences with the teachers to help them prepare for some of the interviews, so that the teachers could tell the parents with definiteness where their children showed strengths and weaknesses as judged by normal expectations of children of their ages. As the teachers talked with the parents, they recommended ways

in which the children could be helped to overcome weaknesses and use their strengths more effectively.

In the second grade. The principal, according to the data in Table II, page 50, had twenty-nine formal conferences and fifty-four informal conferences with second grade teachers. While informal conferences continued to prove satisfactory with most of these teachers to discuss instructional problems, the principal found it necessary to hold formal conferences, as well as informal ones, with two second grade teachers who revealed many special needs. One of these teachers was a recent graduate, while the other had taught several years before coming to Wapato. After the principal visited their classrooms, he realized that these teachers needed help in organizing their rooms for effective teaching.

Classroom housekeeping and the establishment of a general routine for the day were the first problems the principal discussed with the teachers. He helped them organize their classrooms, so that there would be space for moving around and for interest centers where the children could work independently. The pamphlet, Children Can Work Independently, was exceptionally valuable when he discussed centers of interest for primary rooms.¹ It also suggested ways of helping the children evaluate their work, make daily and long-range

¹Constance Carr, Children Can Work Independently (Membership Service Bulletin. Washington, D. C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1952-1953).

plans, and set up their standards for work, so that the children could learn to work alone with a reasonable degree of quiet. The principal stressed the importance of helping children develop the art of becoming good listeners during class, and when directions or assignments were given.

Many conferences centered around helping the teachers plan a daily program to provide for the needs of all the children, and helping them with long-range planning in the basic subject matter areas. The principal helped them select books and materials to meet the differences in ability which existed in their groups of children. He helped the teachers plan material that would be a valuable follow-up of the reading and number activities, and gave them pamphlets which illustrated many types of seatwork for each subject.

As the principal continued to observe and confer with these teachers, he realized that they did not know what constituted a good reading lesson. Time was spent in explaining the length of the period, the use of the chalkboard to introduce new words, and how to guide the silent and oral reading so it would be purposeful. The principal arranged to teach several reading groups in their rooms during the first months of school. After these demonstrations, he discussed varied techniques the teachers could use to develop comprehension and word attack skills.

Seven conferences were scheduled during the first semester to help these teachers evaluate the children's work, in order to find their strengths and weaknesses before the time arrive for reporting to parents. The principal read the written comments which were to be put on the report cards, and helped the teachers reword those which were not satisfactory. For the children for whom a parent-teacher interview was necessary, the principal helped the teachers plan the points to cover in the interview. As a result of the conferences that followed classroom observations during the first semester, the inexperienced teacher improved the total teaching-learning situation in her room. The other one made very little progress, as she seemed unable to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a situation, or to follow suggested ways of improving it.

As indicated in Table II, page 50, there is a general tendency for the principal to spend more conference time helping the teachers select textbooks to meet the needs of groups of children in the second and third grades than in the first grade. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that a textbook room, filled with co-basic and supplementary materials, has been built to provide for the needs of the slow learner and the gifted in all the basic subjects, and the teachers are not as familiar with these books as they are with the basic texts that are in their classrooms.

When the principal helped one of the second grade teachers select books for two groups of children, she invited him to visit at a definite hour so he could observe the children when they were reading. In the conferences that followed, the principal helped the teacher identify the particular kind of reading skills each child needed to acquire. He spent one period a day with one of these groups to help them overcome some of these difficulties. The two of them worked together to discover techniques and materials which would help the children attain a meaningful vocabulary, develop various comprehension skills, and become effective oral readers.

In the third grade. The principal, in reviewing the data presented in Table II, page 50, noticed that he held six formal conferences and forty-three informal conferences with the third grade teachers in the first semester. As in the second grade, most of the informal conferences were related to the selection of instructional materials and textbooks to provide for the wide spread of ability in the basic subjects that always exists in the third grade.

Some interesting conferences were held with one teacher as a result of a visit to observe an Indian girl in a classroom situation. The girl lives with a white family, as does her older brother who is doing most satisfactory school work. The girl's work is below average, and the foster mother wondered if special help could be given the girl

to help her progress more rapidly. The principal and the teacher reviewed the information in the cumulative records which confirmed the belief that the girl is a slow-learning child, according to the tests based on a white man's culture, and becomes frustrated and belligerent when expected to do difficult work. In the conferences that were held with the foster mother, the principal knew she was not fully convinced that the right analysis had been made, so he suggested that the school psychologist be permitted to administer an individual intelligence test.

A conference was then arranged with the foster mother to discuss the results of the test. The psychologist informed her that the girl is a dull-normal child, and that her difficulties are considered to be of a cultural nature. He suggested that the foster parents take her on trips, and have her draw pictures of what she has seen, as the girl has more of an aptitude for drawing than she does for talking. He also said that the girl should be given considerable training in housework type of activities, as these are the experiences which will probably be most valuable to her when she grows up. The teacher is now able to relax with the child, and pay more attention to her social and emotional development rather than just her academic achievements. The child has been given little jobs in the classroom, and is learning to work and play with groups of girls her own age.

Shortly after the school term began, the two teachers who had never taught third grade before asked the principal to visit their rooms. They wanted him to pay particular attention to their methods of teaching reading, and to the great spread in ability in their lowest reading groups. In the conferences that followed, the principal gave a few suggestions that would help them improve their methods. Most of the time, however, was spent discussing the varied needs of the twelve children whose reading abilities appeared to range from one to two years below grade level.

The teachers decided they would like to have the principal give a reading test to help determine their strengths and weaknesses. As the teachers analyzed the tests with the principal, the suggestion was made that they might arrange to have the formal reading classes for the slow learners in both rooms at the same hour each day. Then one teacher could take the children who were able to progress more rapidly, while the other could take the ones that needed to remain a longer time on each reading level. The teachers asked the principal if he would be willing to work with the children for a few weeks before the new groups were formed, so that the teachers would be more certain they were placing each child in the right group.

After two weeks of close observation of the children by the teachers and the principal, the three met to divide the children into

two reading groups, and to plan the reading program for each group. At the same time, instructional materials were located to provide for the needs of these children in spelling and arithmetic. At the present time, one group has made a year's growth in reading, while the other group has made very slow progress. Many of the children in the better group can take some of the spelling words from the third grade spelling lesson for that week, in addition to their words from a second grade speller. The other group is able to spell and use words from a first grade basic vocabulary list. All of the children have learned to enjoy library books, or supplementary books, on their reading level.

Working so closely with these two teachers has enabled the principal to know the children so well that he has been able to help the teachers plan interviews with the parents to discuss the child's progress, and to tell the interested parents how they can help at home.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was: (1) to review the periods in the history of supervision; (2) to discuss the types of supervisory visits; and (3) to present some methods of classroom supervision of which both teachers and principals can approve.

From the review of literature, it seemed that the development of supervision in the public schools was marked by four quite distinct periods: inspectional control by laymen, inspectional control by school administrators, close supervision of the classroom, and democratic supervision. The laymen of the New England towns, as they inspected the schools, placed the emphasis on observing rules and maintaining standards. As the first administrator in the local school during the second period, the principal was assigned clerical, disciplinary, and administrative duties; a little later, the superintendent was hired, and was delegated the responsibility for the improvement of the curriculum and the supervision of teaching. During the third period, which was characterized by an intensive interest in the classroom and the provision for more supervisory personnel, the spotlight was on the teacher. The democratic program of supervision was

developed when the administrators realized the weaknesses of the close supervision of the third period. As this democratic approach developed, the supervisor focused his attention on the development of the pupil, and helped the teachers become sensitive to their own teaching strengths and weaknesses.

The authors of professional books indicated that an observational visit was a valuable part of the supervisory program, if it was mutually planned by the teacher and the principal. These authors also indicated that visits should be made partly on an on-call basis and partly on a scheduled basis. The scheduled visit usually relieved tension and showed the strengths of the teacher. The on-call visits were limited to those teachers who felt they needed help.

It would appear that the teachers of the Wapato Primary School also preferred purposeful visits, scheduled and on-call, that were mutually planned. The teachers used the scheduled visits when they wanted the principal to get acquainted with general teaching conditions, to identify instructional problems of concern to many, or to coordinate the work of the teachers on a grade level. The on-call visits were requested whenever the teacher wanted help in analyzing a problem of one child, or of a group of children, or wished to have the principal see a project in her classroom.

One of the new teachers favored an unannounced visit, as

she said a scheduled one made her nervous. Later in the year, this teacher began to make use of the scheduled and on-call visits, as she wanted the principal to observe the entire lesson for each group. In an informal conference she remarked that this was the first time she had experienced observational visits that were helpful, rather than inspectional and critical. This type of visit, which the kindergarten and first grade teachers called a drop-in visit, was used by the principal in order to get acquainted with the children in those grades during the first two weeks of school, as increased administrative duties made it impossible to schedule a definite time. The principal also found it advisable to use the drop-in visit with one teacher to identify the mistakes in organizational and personal management that led to ineffective teaching. This type of visit seemed satisfactory for getting acquainted with new children early in the year, but it did not give the principal an opportunity to see an entire lesson in any classroom.

According to the conclusions drawn from the materials the principal read, as well as those drawn from his study, it seemed that teachers preferred to have the principal arrive before the class started, take a seat where he could observe the class, and remain a silent visitor unless he was invited to participate. A few teachers disagreed with the others, and said they were more at ease when the

principal moved quietly about the room.

The results of the study indicated that the individual conference which preceded the observation was very seldom used, but that the conference which followed an observation was more commonly used. While the informal conference appeared to be used more frequently than the formal conference with returning teachers, formal conferences were usually held with new or inexperienced teachers.

Through the use of classroom visits, the principal seemed to get a clearer picture of the teaching-learning situation, which helped him prepare for the individual conferences where he worked cooperatively with the teacher on a personal or professional problem. In some instances, the principal located literature, or offered concrete suggestions, that would help the teacher solve an instructional problem. To cope with the social-emotional, physical, or academic needs of a child, the teacher often referred the child to the nurse, psychologist, or speech therapist, and a joint conference was later arranged with the parents. At other times, the principal worked with one child, or a small group of children, in order to further analyze a problem. Then he helped the teacher find teaching procedures and instructional materials that provided for the individual differences of the group. Sometimes, for an inexperienced teacher, demonstrations by the principal appeared to be the most effective way of introducing new

teaching techniques. As the principal observed in the classroom, he often noted excellent teaching devices which that teacher could share with others who had similar problems. When an instructional problem concerned most of the teachers on one grade level, formal group conferences were usually held so the teachers could share techniques and materials.

As a result of his study, the principal is inclined to share the opinion of the authors of the books he reviewed. They implied that the success of the observation program, as well as the conferences, depended upon the maintenance of good human relationships. The principal respected the teacher's opinion, offered sincere praise before criticism, and permitted the teacher to use the method in which she had the most faith, if there was more than one satisfactory method of solving the problem. The topics discussed at the conferences centered on the improvement of the teaching-learning situation, rather than the weaknesses of the teacher, so the teachers realized the principal was interested in helping them grow professionally.

The study just completed indicates that an area for further study might be the personality adjustment of individual children, so that the teachers and the principal could acquire a deeper understanding of behavior in general and exceptional behavior in particular, and apply that understanding in the daily work in the classroom. Since many

behavior problems have resulted from failure to achieve in school, several teachers have already suggested that some meetings next year should be devoted to developing a greater variety of independent activities at each grade level. These activities would help a child develop a feeling of having accomplished something worthwhile. As many classroom problems required the school to understand and work with the parents, it appears that the teachers and principal could participate in an on-going study of finding better techniques of working with the individual parent in the interests of the individual child.

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