

THE ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

BY

FRANKLIN W. JOHNSON

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



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PREFACE

The material in this book has as its background the author's experience during a considerable number of years as principal of secondary schools, including a public high school and a coeducational private school in New England and a boys' boarding school and a coeducational day school conducted by The University of Chicago, followed by five years of close supervisory relationship with the secondary schools of Teachers College, Columbia University. In its present form it has been organized for courses in high-school administration given by the author during a period of ten years in the School of Education of The University of Chicago and in Teachers College, Columbia University. The material for such a course is for the most part scattered through a wide range of journals and the proceedings of various associations. It has never before been brought together in a single book for the use of classes or for the reading of the principal in service. It is hoped that the present volume will be found serviceable for both these purposes.

Whatever unity the book possesses is based upon the principle of use. The topics selected and the manner of their presentation have excluded theoretical considerations except so far as these are regarded as essential to sound practice. Concrete illustrations and suggestions for definite procedure are based on the author's experience or are drawn from the practice of other principals. The problems and questions at the end of each chapter are intended to stimulate thought, whether the book is used as a text or for private reading. The bibliographies are carefully selected with a view to their usefulness in connection with each chapter and to their accessibility for the reader.

High-school principals need to be skillful administrators of school routine, but they need even more to see the larger aims which give unity and meaning to their manifold tasks. The writer craves for high-school principals that administrative imagination, founded on sound professional principles, which will enable them to capitalize their abounding zeal and energy for the development of the untold possibilities of the secondary school in this generation.

FRANKLIN W. JOHNSON

TEACHERS COLLEGE,
NEW YORK CITY

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THE ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

THE HIGH-SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

The rapid expansion of the high school in the number of pupils and in the scope of its activities has made inevitable a change in the conception of the responsibilities of the principal and the manner in which he may most effectively spend his time. The principal was once a teacher among teachers, who, in addition to his teaching, carried certain responsibilities and performed certain additional duties which justified the larger salary which he received. This conception of the function of the principal still persists to a considerable degree. In smaller high schools the principal usually carries a fairly heavy teaching-program, and in some large city schools he teaches one or more classes daily. However, with the increasing complexity of the organization of the school, the principal has been forced gradually to transfer his activity from the classroom to the office, where, in his swivel chair, he has become buried in the multitude of administrative details that grow out of his relations with pupils, parents, teachers, superintendent and school board, and the general community. In this confusing whirl most principals find themselves at the present time. Although they are exceedingly busy, it is not surprising that many, perhaps most, are ineffective to a greater or less degree when the larger aims of the school are considered. To meet ade-

quately the demands which now confront him it is important that the principal have in mind certain fundamental guiding principles. Only thus can he determine the relative value of the tasks which surround him and demand his attention. Three such principles for the administration of the high school are presented in this chapter.

I. The principal is the responsible leader of the school.

As a responsible leader, the principal (1) should have a clear conception of the aims of secondary education and should see that his teachers understand these aims and are guided by them in the performance of their several duties; (2) he should organize the formal routine and the more informal social activities of the school to develop in the pupils right ideals, attitudes, and habits of work and of conduct which will be effective in mature life; (3) he should have intimate knowledge of the work of the lower schools from which his pupils come and should see that the work of the high school and that of the elementary school are closely coördinated; (4) he should be acquainted with the requirements for admission and the character of the higher institutions which will be entered by those pupils whose education will continue beyond the high school; (5) he should see to it that parents have such an understanding of the general aims of the work and discipline of the school as will secure their active coöperation in securing the fulfillment of these aims and in promoting the further development of the school; (6) he should keep the superintendent and board of education informed of the achievements of his school and should make constructive recommendations for its improvement whenever their approval or coöperation is necessary to bring about the improvements desired.

1. Of these five specific responsibilities of the principal as leader, the first is of paramount importance. Choice of materials suitable for instruction and methods of instruction and discipline are dependent upon the aims set up as desirable. Without clearly defined and understood aims the work of the

school is determined by choice or traditional practice and lacks the unity essential to its highest efficiency. It is safe to say that in most schools no such statement of aims has been formulated. The principal should meet his responsibility for leadership in this regard not by executive pronouncement. He is no Moses to bring down the tables of the law from the mountain top. In the smaller school through a committee of teachers, in the larger school through a council of his department heads, he should secure the extended discussion and deliberate formulation of aims which will represent various points of view besides his own. A later discussion and the final adoption by the entire faculty will bring these aims clearly before the teachers and will make them vitally effective throughout the school. It is also important that each department should formulate its own specific aims, consistent with the general aims set up for the school as a whole. These departmental aims might well be presented in a report to the entire faculty for criticism and suggestion. A series of meetings devoted to the discussion of such reports would contribute greatly to the professional growth of the entire staff, would bring about a better understanding of the relationships in the work of the different departments, and would make for greater unity in effort and accomplishment.

2. The principal's responsibility for leadership in social control, both in the formal routine and discipline and in the more informal social activities of the school, is related closely to the discussion of the previous paragraph. A broad statement of the aims of the high school cannot omit this important phase of school life and its possibilities for the development of ideals, attitudes, and habits which will be socially valuable in mature life. The methods of control, usually spoken of as discipline, should grow out of a clear conception of ends to be attained. The social life of the school in the form of clubs, athletics, and other types of extra-classroom activities should be so organized and controlled as to contribute to the achievement of

definite and worthy social ends. The contribution which the school can make through these agencies to the training of its pupils will depend almost wholly upon the quality of the aims and the degree in which they are understood and made effective throughout the entire school. Here, also, the principal will best meet his responsibility for leadership by securing the formulation of standards through group discussion. Moreover, as the intelligent coöperation of the pupils, as well as that of the teachers, is essential in attaining these aims, he should secure through the school council or other representative groups an understanding and acceptance by the pupils of the social aims and standards of the school.

3. The transition from the elementary school to the high school, with the attendant changes in subject matter and methods of instruction and discipline, has been responsible for tremendous waste in our system of public schools. The lack of acquaintance on the part of high-school teachers with the work of the elementary schools has been responsible for an unnecessary break in the progressive development of the pupils. It is customary for teachers of first-year classes in the high school to complain of the lack of preparation which their pupils have received in the lower schools, while they themselves have little definite knowledge of what their pupils have or have not been taught or of the manner in which instruction has been given. This situation results in a diminished effectiveness of instruction in the high school and an increased elimination of pupils. One of the reasons for the establishment of the junior high schools has been the expectation that it would make for a more coherent organization of the work at this period of greatest waste. The principal should himself be acquainted with the material and methods of the upper grades of the elementary schools and should see to it that the early work of the high school is conducted in such a way as to secure a sequential development at the period of transition to the higher school. The principal should conduct conferences

of his teachers of first-year classes for the purpose of acquainting them with the work of the lower schools and of securing a better adjustment of high-school instruction to the needs of first-year pupils. It would be advantageous to secure the participation of principals or teachers of the upper grades of the elementary schools in these conferences.

4. It is much more important that the principal should be acquainted with the work of the elementary school than with that of the college. On the whole, however, he has usually thought more of the latter. The curriculum and content of high-school courses have been influenced all too much by college requirements. It is still important that the principal should have complete knowledge of the requirements of higher institutions in order to meet the needs of the very considerable number who will continue their education beyond the high school. He should also know enough about the character of the different colleges to advise pupils in their choice. There are voluntary associations of schools and colleges in the different parts of the country, and secondary-school conferences are held at the various state universities and many private institutions. The principal should avail himself of these opportunities for keeping informed on all matters that are involved in the relationship of the secondary school and the college. He should also give to college officers such personal information as will assist them in dealing with each pupil who goes on from his school and should follow up the work of each pupil, at least during his first year in college, both for the purpose of discovering how well the work of his school prepares for the higher institution and for the help that he may be able to give his pupils in their adjustment to college work.

5. The fact that the school is an agency through which society undertakes to secure its own perpetuation and advancement places upon the principal the need of considering his relations to the community as a whole and to various

groups and individuals outside the pupils and teachers of his school. The principal's first responsibility is within his school, and to its internal organization and direction he must devote himself primarily; but if his interests and activities stop at this point, he will fall short of the achievement of the highest success. The most natural point of contact is with the parents of his pupils, and with these he will have relations of a more or less personal nature. The wise principal will strive to develop among the parents such an understanding of, and sympathy with, the aims and methods of his school as will secure their active coöperation and support. He should himself conceive of the school as a coöperative enterprise in which teachers and parents are engaged in securing certain desirable ends for children, and he should take every possible measure to secure this conception on the part of parents. He should not think of himself, nor should he allow the community to think of him, as an employee hired simply to administer certain prescribed treatment, disciplinary and instructional, to a group of children within the school building during an eight-hour day.

In contrast with the smaller community, the complex social life of a large city renders it more difficult in some respects for the principal to meet his responsibility in this regard. However, the wide variation in social experience and vocational needs represented by the pupils of a large city high school greatly increases the importance of the principal's leadership in this particular. In whatever community the principal finds himself he should study the characteristic social conditions and needs of his pupils and endeavor in appropriate ways to secure increased coöperation between the school and the community in meeting these needs.

6. In his relations to the superintendent and board of education the principal has not met his responsibility when he has complied with the formal requirements which are prescribed from above. His intimate acquaintance with the problems of secondary education as presented by his own school places

upon him the responsibility for influencing, through proper channels, those who are in charge of the larger policies of the entire school system. The principal should make a careful study to ascertain to what degree his school is meeting the present and future needs of its pupils. So far as the defects discovered are capable of removal with the facilities already available, he should apply the necessary remedy. For improvements which cannot thus be secured he should make constructive recommendations to those in authority and should employ all proper means to secure the adoption of his recommendations. In cities with several high schools a council of principals might well be formed for the discussion of general policies and methods of procedure, which would serve a useful function in disseminating information with regard to successful methods of administration and in securing desirable unity in fundamental aims and methods. There would be the additional advantage that recommendations to the superintendent or board of education from such a council would carry greater weight than if they came from an individual principal.

II. The principal is responsible for the direction of all the activities of the school. These activities may be classified under the following heads:

1. *The organization of curricula and the selection of the subject matter of instruction.* In a city with more than one high school, in fact in some cities with only one high school, the principal is not always directly responsible for the organization of the curricula offered in his school. He is in any case responsible for adapting the prescribed curricula to the needs of the pupils of his school. More than this: in case the curricula do not meet the demands set up by the aims of education as formulated by the faculty under his direction, it is his duty to attempt vigorously to secure such changes as will bring about conformity between curricula and aims. As regards subject matter of instruction his responsibility is more definite. He should see to it that the material of instruction employed in

the classroom is such as will meet the needs of the pupils. The fulfillment of this responsibility does not require that the principal possess expert knowledge of the subject matter of all courses offered in his school: it does require that he possess a clear knowledge of the principles underlying the selection of subject matter and that he see that the materials of instruction are chosen in accordance with these principles.

2. *Instruction.* The principal should have expert knowledge of the general methods of teaching and should see, directly or indirectly, that his teachers employ these effectively in their several subjects of instruction.

As in the case of subject matter, this thesis does not imply an expert knowledge of the special methods employed in teaching the various subjects. The training of high-school principals has not generally given them even the knowledge of general methods requisite for effective supervision of instruction. Moreover, it is the common practice of principals to carry such a weight of routine administration as precludes the possibility of giving sufficient time to supervision of teaching. The statement that teaching is the one activity of supreme importance through which the school performs its function needs no supporting argument. The manifold details of administration have as their ultimate aim the securing of the most favorable conditions for carrying on the teaching-process. Any material advance in the efficiency of the schools must be gained through the improvement of classroom instruction. The training and experience of high-school teachers do not warrant the assumption that they are good teachers. Provision for skillful supervision is a fundamental and almost universal need of our high schools.

It is not pertinent at this point to enter upon a discussion of the technique of supervision. The principal should recognize the improvement of instruction as the most important end to be secured. The amount of time that he himself shall devote to teaching and to the numberless routine details of

administration must be determined with reference to this fact. To secure the necessary assistance to relieve him from other less important duties, and to enter upon a task to which he is unaccustomed and for which he has not received special training, will require a very considerable degree of initiative and energy.

3. *Routine administration.* With the rapid increase in enrollment and in the scope of the subjects taught in our secondary schools, it is difficult for the principal to escape the pressure that inevitably tends to confine him to office routine. The position which he occupies and the salary which he receives should require from him the services of a professional leader, not of a clerk. Boards of education in their provision for the administration of the high school do not usually display the sagacity which they show in the management of their private business affairs. Inadequate provision is usually made for such administrative assistance as is necessary if the principal is to perform the professional functions required of him in a modern high school of maximum efficiency. Although he may succeed in delegating a large amount of detail administration to other members of his teaching staff, he will still, in most cases, be held down to a routine which prevents the attainment, even approximately, of the ideals which have been set up in this chapter.

4. *Social activities.* Another type of activity for the direction of which the principal is responsible is found in the social activities of the school. The important part which these activities may contribute to school morale as well as to the training in right social attitudes and habits makes necessary careful provision for their organization and control. The importance of the direction and control of these activities is increased by the fact that through neglect or wrong social ideals they have often come to be injurious in their effects. Examples of the undesirable results that sometimes attend these activities may be found in some schools in an undue emphasis upon athletics

and other forms of social life or in the introduction of the undemocratic fraternities. The principal is responsible for a program by which these activities may be made to contribute constructively toward the attainment of the aims of the school. It is particularly important that these activities be conducted on a democratic basis, which will offer opportunities for the development of social responsibility and leadership.

III. The principal should delegate to others, so far as feasible, the details of administration and should hold them responsible for the proper performance of the duties assigned. As has already been indicated, the principal is usually overburdened with the performance of administrative details. To indicate the extent to which this is true, the following quantitative facts are given from the reports made by the principals of the high schools of a large city as to the amount of time devoted to various routine duties each day. The maximum time reported by any principal is given: excusing absences and tardiness, 20 minutes; discipline, 60 minutes; interviews with pupils (not disciplinary), 60 minutes; interviews with parents, 45 minutes; interviews with teachers (not regarding methods of teaching), 120 minutes; correspondence, 120 minutes; showing visitors about the school, 120 minutes. In addition to these items of daily routine one principal reported a total of 464 hours spent each year in schedule-making and classification of pupils.

To secure the necessary time for more important professional duties the principal must delegate many of these tasks. He is fortunate if he can secure an assistant principal and an adequate clerical force. In most cases he will find it necessary to assign administrative duties to members of his teaching staff. This sharing in the performance of administrative tasks is a valuable experience for teachers unless, as is too often the case, it increases a load already heavy enough. The types of duties which may be delegated (not all of which are found in

every school) include the following: (1) departmental organization, in which heads are made responsible for departmental equipment, reports, courses of instruction, choice of textbooks, and for unifying and improving the work of their departments; (2) making the schedule of recitations; (3) excusing absence and tardiness; (4) routine discipline; (5) organization and direction of continuation classes; (6) vocational direction; (7) study-hall control; (8) control of extra-classroom activities; (9) clerical duties; (10) interviews with parents. Besides these, many other forms of routine, not easily classified, requiring occasional attention on the part of the principal, may be delegated to others. It is unfortunately true that anything that is nobody else's business is the principal's. The successful principal must delegate the greater part of this varied routine to others and must see that the duties thus delegated are performed in such a way as will promote the aims of the school as a whole.

Viewing this discussion as a whole, it is evident that there is demanded of the principal an unusual degree of ability in organization and direction. The manager of an industrial plant directs a group of workers in the process of turning inert matter of known properties into a product whose standards and uses are clearly defined. The principal has a far more difficult task. The raw material of the school consists of human beings, with an almost infinite variety of abilities and aptitudes, and the standards for judging the finished product and the uses to which it may best be put are not capable of easy definition. Traditional practice and the conception of school boards and the general public inevitably tend to make the principal a performer of routine tasks, whereas the position demands a professional leader, who shall direct with judgment and skill an organization of exceeding complexity. The principal must regard himself as a leader, responsible for organizing and directing his school so that the particular group of pupils under his charge shall receive the training