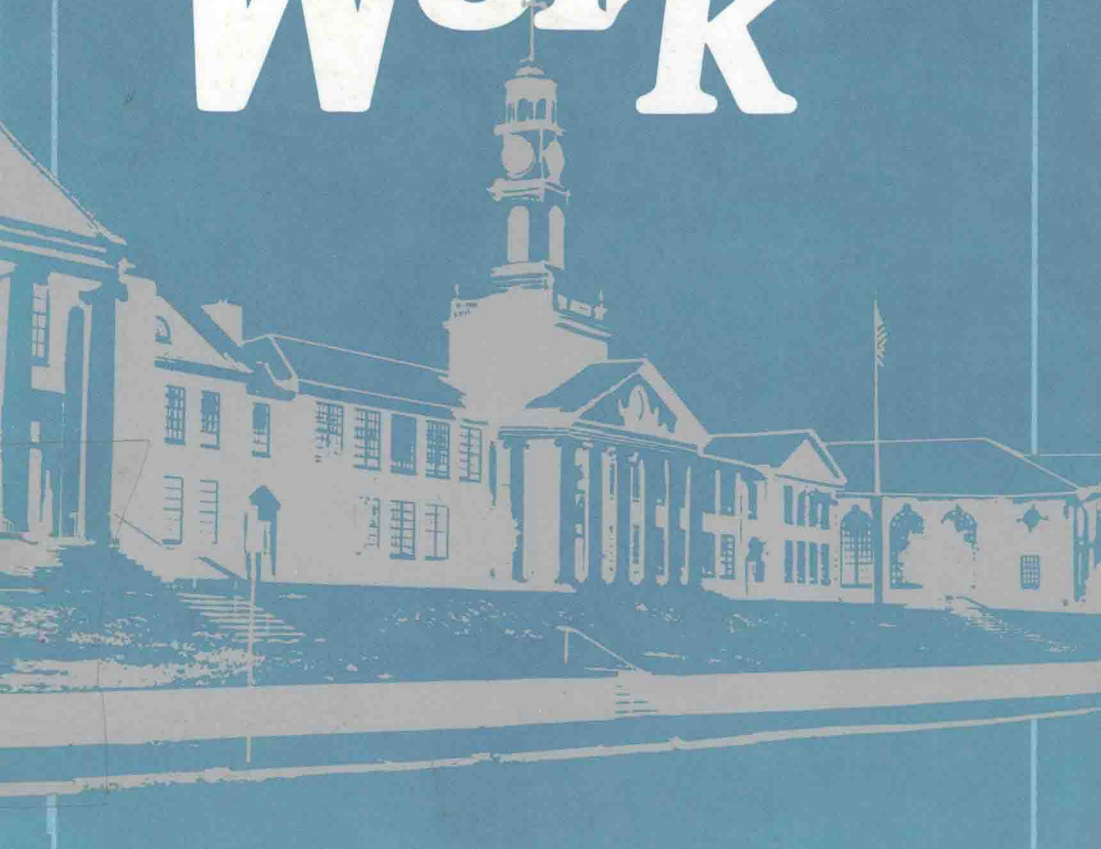
BETSY LEDBETTER HANCOCK

School Social Work



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BETSY LEDBETTER HANCOCK
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To
Jack, Regina, and Mike

Preface

School social work has long been recognized by the National Association of Social Work as a specialized area of social work. In the past few years there has been a drive for certification which has been passed in over thirty of the fifty one states. As school systems have become big business enterprises, expanding services in many directions as well as acting as agents of social change, there is an even stronger realization that school social workers need more training and more specialized preparation in order to function in these complex systems. The material needed for the education of school social workers has been scattered throughout journals, in notes from workshops, bits of chapters in child welfare and psychiatry books, government bulletins, and the like.

School Social Work attempts to bring this information together to provide an overview of this area of social work. Although it is not intended as a book on methodology, there is the intention to present practical applications of textbook theory. The assumption is made that the reader is acquiring or has acquired a knowledge of the dynamics of behavior, but some discussion of dynamics is included. Case examples are used, not in the manner of in-depth studies, but as a means to demonstrate a point. The examples are superficial and contain as many variables as are needed for a comprehensive illustration. The purpose of the book is to acquaint the school social worker who is new to the field with some of the problems, issues, and situations which confront school social workers. Emphasis is placed on ideas and solutions that school social workers, or others in similar disciplines, have used and found helpful.

There are thirteen chapters which are separated into six parts. Part One gives a brief resume of the history of school social work and presents the school setting in which services are provided. The bureaucratic aspects of the school, the

need to establish formal and informal lines of communication, and the need for understanding the roles of other workers in the school are discussed.

Part Two considers two of the problems associated with elementary school children, acting out and school phobia, and presents detailed procedures which the social worker may follow upon referral of a child presenting a behavioral problem. There is emphasis in this section on the family as a resource.

Part Three is concerned with families having special needs and the ways that school social workers may endeavor to meet those needs. Abusing families, families with children who have disabling conditions, and families undergoing changes in life styles are included in this section.

Part Four turns to the problems which are most often associated with adolescence: teen-age pregnancy, alcohol, and drug use. These chapters deal with some of the present-day stresses which confront adolescents and the need for alternative choices.

Part Five responds to special needs of special children: the very young child, the (culturally or racially minority different) child, and the geographically isolated child. The use of groups, and specific examples of groups conducted by school social workers, is also discussed as a means of resolving certain kinds of problems.

Part Six concludes the book with a chapter on the future of school social work and briefly considers several current issues. This final chapter also attempts to clarify the ways in which the social worker "makes a difference" in the school and renders a totality of services which is offered by no other professional.

An overview such as this prohibits in-depth treatment of any of the topics. The intent of *School Social Work* is to provide a basis on which the beginning school social worker may continue to build knowledge, according to the needs and demands of the individual working situation.

AKNOWLEDGMENTS

A book, any book, is the sum of a great many efforts by a great many people, from the editors who assist throughout, to the family whose patience must be inexhaustible. I would like to express my appreciation to Edward H. Stanford, Prentice-Hall Social Work Editor, and to Neil Gilbert and Harry Specht, Consulting Editors, for their ongoing help and suggestions and to Professors Norma J. Baker and J. M. Galloway, Belmont College; Professors Robert B. Rowen and Joe C. Eades, University of Tennessee School of Social Work, Nashville; and to Linda Moon, Education Specialist, Tennessee State Department of Education, for their help with resources and suggestions. Very special thanks must go to Hazel Eddins, Coordinator of Metro Nashville School Social Work Services, for many hours of consultation. I am indebted to school social workers Peggy Armstrong-Dillard, Suzanne Rains, and Donna Robert Metro Nashville School Social Work Services; to medical social worker, Mary C. Murray, Vanderbilt Hospital, for reading and commenting on various chapters; and to countless other social workers from diverse fields who generously shared their expertise. Belmont College students and students from the University of Tennessee School of Social Work, Nashville, were also very helpful critics. Lastly, my thanks go to Lorene Morgan for her help as a typist in preparation of the manuscript.

Contents

PART ONE
HISTORY AND SETTING

CHAPTER ONE
FROM VISITING TEACHER TO SCHOOL SPECIALIST

What do modern school social workers do? Over the last twelve years various studies have been conducted analyzing the roles and functions of school social workers and suggesting alternative models of practice. Three general models have been identified: traditional-clinical, social change, and community-school. The first model can be seen in the analysis of Costin's 1968 survey of school social workers, a landmark study that examined how professionals functioned on each of 107 tasks.[1]

Costin raised two questions:

(1) How do professional school social workers define the content of school social work and the relative importance of its parts?
(2) Does such a definition of school social work provide a promising basis for experimentation in assigning responsibilities to social work staff with different levels of education and training?

The results of the survey showed that the primary focus of the service was on the individual child in relation to emotional problems and school adjustment. The direct emphasis on casework services that had begun in the forties had continued into the sixties even though the schools were undergoing some drastic changes. Answers on the survey indicated that school social workers had very little involvement with leadership activities in the community.

The results of the Costin study indicated that school social workers were

[1]Lela B. Costin, "An Analysis of the Tasks in School Social Work," *Social Service Review*, 43, no.3 (September 1969),pp. 274-85.

not responding to the rapidly changing society or to the changes in the school, but were primarily using the model that is generally called the *traditional-clinical model.* This model focuses on individual children who have social or emotional problems that interfere with their education. The school social worker uses social casework methods based on psychoanalytical theory and ego psychology. The school is not considered as being part of the problem. Alderson summarizes the activities of the school social worker in the traditional-clinical model as follows:[2]

1. Casework services to the child having difficulty in school.
2. Intra-professional relationships with teachers and other school personnel.
3. Casework services to parents.
4. Work with community social agencies.
5. Interpretation of the program to the community.

The literature of the seventies reflects the challenges to school social workers to consider other models and to examine the underlying premise that the problems of children stem from personality defects or inadequate parenting. There are suggestions that the school may be the client rather than the child with every employee in the school a possible target for intervention. In this concept, the goals are "to alter dysfunctional norms and conditions. . . those conditions that seem to pose barriers to enhancing the social and educational functioning of students and that actually serve to exacerbate or even create the students' difficulties."[3] This model, which centers on school dysfunction, is described by Alderson as the *school change model* in which school social work intervention brings about change in the school system.

There is emphasis on broadening school social work to include more outreach activities and to improve community understanding of the school. Alderson describes this community-school model as one that focuses on schools with disadvantaged populations or on communities and schools in the midst of change, as are most of the public schools today. School social work in this model is involved with developing greater school-community understanding, providing outreach activities, and implementing new programs.[4]

Pawlak presents an argument for looking at behavior from the perspective of labeling theory and suggests an ombudsmen-advocate role for the school social worker.[5] Stuart favors use of behavior modification techniques "to increase or redirect the teacher's influence within the classroom [which] would replace the notion of sickness within the child with the notion of a less than optimal teaching/learning environment". He calls this role "educational technologist".[6]

In 1969 the theme of the National Workshop in School Social Work, spon-

[2]John J. Alderson, "Models of School Social Work Practice," in *The School in the Community,* ed. Rosemary C. Sarri and Frank F. Maple (Washington, D.C.: NASW, Inc., 1972), p. 63. Reprinted with permission.

[3]Ibid., p. 64. [4]Ibid., pp. 66-70.

[5]Edward J. Pawlak, "Labeling Theory and School Social Work," *The School in the Community,* pp. 136–47. © 1972, National Association of Social Workers, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

[6]Richard B. Stuart, "Behavior Modification Techniques for the Education Technologist," in *The School in the Community,* p. 134. © 1972, National Association of Social Workers, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

sored by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the National Institute of Mental Health, was "Social Change in School Social Work in the 1970's." The workshop was presented with the dual purpose of stimulating change in school social work practice and urging school social workers to take on leadership roles in time of social and cultural change. Other workshops followed in other areas of the country. In 1975 to 1976 NASW conducted a naitonal survey to determine the status of school social workers. This survey revealed that social workers in schools were continuing to spend the majority of their time in direct services to youngsters and their parents or on activities related to these services.[7]

Two years later, in 1977, Mears reported the results of a survey similar to that of Costin in which school social workers were surveyed in regard to 84 of the 107 tasks originally included in Costin's study. Mears concluded that school social work was in a stage of transition "that falls somewhere between a traditional casework approach and the systems' change model or those involving school-community relations."[8] She found little emphasis on critical analysis of the school.

Research data indicate that school social workers have only recently moved to some extent from the traditional casework model of practice toward a model that is much broader in scope. This may be due, in part, to the emphasis in the literature on the need for school social workers to assume a stronger advocacy role, to become more involved in community outreach, to look analytically at the school, and to use varied means of intervention. This is only a partial answer to the question, "What do modern school social workers do?" To understand more fully the roles and functions of school social workers in the eighties, we must go back to the turn of the century and trace the development of social work practice in the school setting.

History of School Social Work

The turn of the twentieth century was marked by changes of many kinds. The slower paced agricultural community was evolving into a mechanized, industrial society. Cities were bounding in growth with the influx of immigrants from Europe and, as the cities grew, tenements burgeoned. Colleges and universities reflected the changing spirit of the times. Curricula were revised and included sociology courses, or courses such as the "Ethics of Social Reform," which the students labeled "drainage, drunkenness, and divorce."[9]

In the late 1800s the first *psychological laboratory* in the United States was headed by G. Stanley Hall at Johns Hopkins University. One of his students was a bright young lad named John Dewey who became much interested in Hall's psychological theories. In 1890 William James' book *Principles of Psychology* caused a stir among his colleagues and marked the beginning of the first American school of psychology: functionalism. In 1897 Sigmund Freud unbe-

[7]Lela B. Costin, *Social Work Services in Schools: Historical Perspectives and Current Directions* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Social Workers, Inc.,n.d.), p. 70.

[8]Paula Allen Mears, "Analysis of Tasks in School Social Work," *Social Work,* 22, no. 3 (May 77), p. 201.

[9]Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 38.

knownst to the rest of the world, began the self-analysis that was to have a staggering impact on American institutions a few decades later. In 1896 John Dewey opened his laboratory school in Chicago, promoting a freedom of movement and exploration of ideas based on actual experience that was to revolutionize educational practice and shift the emphasis on intellectual learning to experiental learning. The first settlement houses in the United States were established: University Settlement in New York (1886); Hull House in Chicago (1889); South End House in Boston (1892). Settlement houses would prove to be instruments of social change. The concept of the *visiting teacher* originated in settlement houses in New York.

In 1906 two visitors were assigned to three school districts from two settlement houses, Hartley House and Greenwich House, in New York City. Mary Marot, a teacher and resident of Hartley House, became an early leader in emphasizing the close relationship between home and school. About a year later the Women's Education Association in Boston established a *home and school visitor* in the Winthrop School for the purpose of bringing about greater cooperation and better understanding between home and school. That same year in Connecticut visiting teacher work was started by the director of the Psychological Clinic in Hartford. This teacher was first called a *special teacher* and was an assistant to the psychologist, making home visits, obtaining social histories, and acting as liaison between the clinic and the school.

In these three cities there had come about an awareness of the need for some link between the school and the home. Although the situations that evoked the awareness were different, the results were the same. The most influential of those beginning groups was that of Hartley House in New York. The Public Education Association became interested in their work and requested that the visiting teacher committee formed by Mary Marot at Hartley House become the Committee of the Public Education Association. A visiting teacher was employed in 1907 and the staff had increased to seven by 1911. The Public Education Association publicized the visiting teacher concept throughout these early years and they are given credit for influencing the adoption and establishment of visiting teacher services, which were instituted by various boards of education from 1913 to 1921.[10]

During the time the visiting teacher movement was getting underway, other social reforms were being sought as well. The large influx of immigrants into the cities and the crammed, deplorable living conditions of both immigrants and blacks were causes of great concern. Prejudice toward blacks created a spirit of unrest culminating in race riots. After a vicious race riot in Springfield, Illinois in 1908, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was organized by three settlement house workers: William English Walling, a southerner from Kentucky; Henry Moskowitz, a Jew; and Mary White Ovington, daughter of an abolitionist.[11]

Prior to this time there had been little concern about the effects on poor children of being separated from their families because their father died, or of

[10]Julius John Oppenheimer, *The Visiting Teacher Movement,* 4th ed. (New York: Joint Committee on Methods of Preventing Delinquency, 1925), pp. 1-9.

[11]Davis, *Spearheads for Reform,* pp. 100–101.

working excessively long hours in unsanitary conditions, or of failing to attend school. When compulsory education laws started being enforced to a greater extent and classes started growing larger, children could no longer be sent home indefinitely when their behavior presented problems to the teacher. Social workers were learning through settlement house work the effects of environment on individuals and were experimenting with ways to alter the environment and provide new experiences. Visiting teachers were developing methods to deal with the problems of the children as they worked in the liaison role. All of these were factors that spurred the visiting teacher movement along.

The first step toward public recognition of the need to consider the prob lems affecting children and the impact of these problems on them as individuals was the White House Conference on Children in 1909. This conference generated strong support for the principle that no child should leave his home for financial reasons. No actual provisions were made for the needy child until 1911, at which time widows' and mothers' pensions were provided so that mothers could keep their children and stay at home with them.

In the period from 1913 to 1921, boards of education began hiring visiting teachers throughout the country, a sign that the movement had been sanctioned by educational authorities. Rochester, New York claims the first employment of a visiting teacher by a board of education.[12]

This period also marked the expansion of the visiting teacher movement into the midwestern states, as well as an expansion of services from elementary school into junior and senior high schools. The emphasis, particularly in the Chicago area, was on scholarship and vocational guidance. The National Association of Home and School Visitors and Visiting Teachers was formed in 1916. The newly formed national association held two conferences, in 1916 in conjunction with the National Educational Association, and in 1919 in conjunction with the National Conference of Social Work, which may suggest that they were not sure whether they belonged in education or social work, but may have felt a part of both fields of service. Topics under discussion at the first meeting included the prevention of retardation and delinquency through visiting teachers' work and the place of the visiting teacher at school. Emphasis during the second conference was on the relationship of the visiting teacher to community welfare. During this period of time there were other events taking place that affected and would affect visiting teacher work. The second edition of Dewey's *The School and Society* was published, reflecting the continuing and increasing interest in his theories of education. The theories of Freud and the dissenting views of his colleagues, Jung and Adler, were having effects on psychiatric thought. A significant event for social workers was the publication of *Social Diagnosis* by Mary Richmond in 1917, a major contribution to social work practice.

The Twenties and the Visiting Teacher Movement

This was the era in which great efforts were devoted to the prevention of delinquency. The key words to the literature of the time were *maladjustment,*

[12]Oppenheimer, *The Visiting Teacher Movement,* p. 5.

delinquency, and *mental hygiene.* References in social work literature were made to psychiatry and psychological thought. Attention was beginning to shift from the school and the community to an emphasis on the needs of the individual child.

In 1920 the first meeting of the National Association of Visiting Teachers was held in New York. Discussion centered on the organization and administration of the visiting teacher work and the role of mental hygiene to visiting teachers. In 1922 the main topic at the annual meeting dealt with the diagnosis and treatment of behavior problems in the delinquency study of the Commonwealth Fund,[13] a trust fund incorporated in New York in 1918 for the promotion of physical and mental health. In that same year a survey of visiting teachers was conducted by the National Association of Visiting Teachers and Home and School Visitors. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information for use by those who were organizing visiting teacher work in new localities, or by visiting teachers who wanted to know what others were doing in the field. Data of the study are interesting to examine as some of the findings show similarities to school social work today. For example, the work was on a ten month basis with hours intended to coincide with school hours but extending to evening and weekends; cases were referred by principals and teachers; and the visiting teacher represented the school when conferences were held with members of other social agencies. Visiting homes occupied a large part of the day, but a large part of the time was also spent at the school with a "brief" amount of time on record keeping. The need for a private place for interviews with children and parents was expressed.

It is interesting to note that the first measure used by the intervening visiting teacher was *personal influence,* which must be the precursor to *relationship* in the thirties. The six main reasons given for referrals were: maladjustment in scholarship, adverse home conditions, irregular attendance, lateness to school, and physical condition of the child, each of which continue to be a problem today.

This report pointed out that most of the recreation for the children in the community was originated by the visiting teacher, for example, boys' and girls' clubs, hiking ventures, excursions, and ordinary play, for "especially among foreigners...the children have to actually be taught to play."[14] The education of the respondents was surprisingly advanced for the time: twenty-three of the fifty-eight respondents held college degrees, seventeen had had teacher training, and twenty-nine were training at schools for social workers. The courses that these workers felt were most needed were in psychology, psychiatry, mental testing, psychoanalysis, analysis, and casework.[15] Emphasis on these courses bears out the emerging interest in the mental health of the child and the initial orientation toward individual treatment, although the visiting teachers still were more involved with home and community.

This era of the twenties was a time of new impetus for visiting teacher ser-

[13]Ibid., p. 13.

[14]*The Visiting Teacher in the United States, A Survey by the National Association of Visiting Teachers and Home and School Visitors,* 2nd ed. (New York: Public Education Association of the City of New York, 1923), p. 29.

[15]Cf. 23-29.

vices. The administers of the Commonwealth Fund became interested in discovering the causes of juvenile delinquency. The aim of the Commonwealth Fund was to extend the work in the community and to make whatever knowledge was gained available to any other schools interested in organizing such programs. In a preliminary report to the study, visiting teachers were identified as preventive workers in maladjustment of children. As part of the Commonwealth Fund study the Public Education Association and the National Committee on Visiting Teachers placed thirty visiting teachers in thirty communities for a three-year demonstration. Five visiting teachers were placed in schools in New York City. These teachers were affiliated with the Bureau of Children's Guidance, which conducted a psychological clinic that was used by the New York School of Social Workers for training social work students.[16] Three visiting teachers were also placed in rural centers: Monmouth County, New Jersey; Huron County, Ohio; and Boone County, Missouri. The latter two presented more typical rural conditions. As there had been no precedent for rural visiting teacher work, one of the visiting teachers, Agnes E. Benedict, was assigned to prepare a volume based on the study of case records of maladjusted rural children in order to provide a model for work of this type. The cases are written almost in the manner of short stories and point up the isolation of rural children and the lack of medical, financial, and social resources for these children.[17]

The assignment of teachers to different communities was done with the proviso that each community would take complete responsibility for the program at the end of the demonstration if the services proved to be of value. Of the thirty demonstration sites, twenty-one retained their positions at the end of the Commonwealth Fund support in 1930. Evidently impressed with the visiting teacher services,other school systems added this program during the twenties, and by 1930 there were 244 visiting teachers in thirty-one states.[18]

The enthusiastic report that appeared in *School and Society* in February 1929 demonstrates the perceived efficacy of the visiting teacher program in the prevention of juvenile delinquency. Commissioners in California, Wyoming, and New York State were quoted as highly recommending the continuation of the visiting teacher program or, as the California commissioner phrased it, "additional visiting teachers are absolutely essential to the carrying forward of any constructive program looking towards the prevention of delinquency."[19]

What were visiting teachers doing at that time that created so much enthusiasm?

In a paper presented at a round table conference held in connection with the annual meeting of the Harvard Teacher's Association in March 1926 the visiting teacher was described almost lyrically:

> Her activities are many and varied. Usually she has office hours at the school during which she is available to teachers, pupils, and parents. Much of her time, however,

[16] *The Visiting Teacher in the United States,* p. 6.

[17] Agnes E. Benedict, *Children at the Crossroads* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund Division of Publications, 1930).

[18] R.H. Kutz, ed., *Social Work Yearbook,* New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1960), p. 521.

[19] "State Commissions' Recommendation for the Extension of the Visiting Teacher Service" *School and Society,* 30, no. 781 (February 1929), p. 816.