

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

by

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PREVIEW

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Origin of the Problem . . . . .	1
The Problem . . . . .	4
Delimitation of the Problem . . . . .	4
Discussion of the Problem . . . . .	5
Importance . . . . .	7
The Plan of Procedure . . . . .	11
Organization of the Study . . . . .	14
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	15
Administrator-Teacher Relations . . . . .	15
Practices in Informing Teachers . . . . .	22
Teachers' Meetings . . . . .	24
Workshops . . . . .	42
Committees . . . . .	54
Teachers' Handbooks . . . . .	62
Bulletins . . . . .	65
Teacher Conferences . . . . .	73
Experimentation . . . . .	84
III. PRACTICES IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADMINIS- TRATORS AND TEACHERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS FROM SEVERAL MID-WEST STATES . . . . .	89
Teachers' Meetings . . . . .	92
Workshops . . . . .	95
Committees . . . . .	99
Teachers' Handbooks . . . . .	100
Bulletins . . . . .	102
Teacher Conferences . . . . .	103
Experimentation . . . . .	105
Summary . . . . .	106
IV. PRACTICES IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADMINIS- TRATORS AND TEACHERS IN NEBRASKA CLASS III SCHOOLS . . . . .	109
General Practices in Communication between Administrators and Teachers . . . . .	111
Teachers' Meetings . . . . .	112
Workshops . . . . .	118

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	PAGE
Committees . . . . .	121
Teachers' Handbooks . . . . .	123
Bulletins . . . . .	124
Teacher Conferences . . . . .	127
Experimentation . . . . .	129
 V. COMPARISONS OF PRACTICES IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS . . . . .	      132
General Practices . . . . .	132
Teachers' Meetings . . . . .	135
Workshops . . . . .	140
Committees . . . . .	143
Teachers' Handbooks . . . . .	146
Bulletins . . . . .	148
Teacher Conferences . . . . .	151
Experimentation . . . . .	154
 VI. CONCLUSIONS, PRINCIPLES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	 156
Conclusions . . . . .	156
Teachers' Meetings . . . . .	157
Workshops . . . . .	158
Teachers' Handbooks . . . . .	158
Bulletins . . . . .	161
Principles . . . . .	161
General Principles . . . . .	162
Teachers' Meetings . . . . .	164
Workshops . . . . .	165
Committees . . . . .	165
Teachers' Handbooks . . . . .	166
Bulletins . . . . .	167
Teacher Conferences . . . . .	168
Experimentation . . . . .	169
Recommendations . . . . .	170
General Practices . . . . .	171
Teachers' Meetings . . . . .	171
Workshops . . . . .	172
Committees . . . . .	173
Bulletins . . . . .	174
Teacher Conferences . . . . .	175
Experimentation . . . . .	175

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	PAGE
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	177
APPENDIX . . . . .	181

PREVIEW

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. General Practices in Communication Between Administrators and Teachers in Ten Selected Schools . . . . .	91
2. Teachers' Meetings in Ten Selected Schools . .	93
3. Workshops in Ten Selected Schools . . . . .	96
4. Committees in Ten Selected Schools . . . . .	99
5. Teachers' Handbooks in Ten Selected Schools .	101
6. Bulletins in Ten Selected Schools . . . . .	102
7. Teacher Conferences in Ten Selected Schools .	104
8. Experimentation in Ten Selected Schools . . .	105
9. General Practices in Communication Between Administrators and Teachers in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	111
10. Teachers' Meetings in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	113
11. Workshops in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	119
12. Committees in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	122
13. Teachers' Handbooks in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	123
14. Bulletins in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	125
15. Teacher Conferences in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	127
16. Experimentation in Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	129

## LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

TABLE	PAGE
17. Comparison of Responses from Ten Selected Schools and Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools in General Practices in Communication Between Administrators and Teachers . .	133
18. Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to the Desirability of General Practices . . . . .	135
19. Teachers' Meetings in Ten Selected Schools And Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools	136
20. Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to the Desirability of Teachers' Meetings .	139
21. Workshops in Ten Selected Schools and Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . .	140
22. Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to Desirability of Workshops . . . .	143
23. Committees in Ten Selected Schools and Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . .	144
24. Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to Desirability of Committees . . . .	145
25. Teachers' Handbooks in Ten Selected Schools and Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . . . . .	147
26. Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to Desirability of Teachers' Handbooks . . . . .	147
27. Bulletins in Ten Selected Schools and Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . .	148
28. Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to Desirability of Bulletins . . . .	150
29. Teacher Conferences in Ten Selected Schools and Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools	152



## LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

TABLE		PAGE
30.	Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to Desirability of Teacher Con- ferences . . . . .	153
31.	Experimentation in Ten Selected Schools and Eighty-Eight Nebraska Class III Schools . .	154
32.	Percentage Comparison of Responses in Regard to Desirability of Experimentation .	155

PREVIEW

## LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	PAGE
A. Letter to Chief School Officers in Mid-west States . . . . .	181
B. Selected schools and Administrators as Recommended by Chief School Officers in Seven Mid-west States to Whom Questionnaires Were Sent . . . . .	183
C. Questionnaire of Practices in Communica- tion Between Administrators and Teachers .	186
D. First Letter to Selected Schools in Seven Mid-west States . . . . .	203
E. Second Letter to Selected Schools in Seven Mid-west States . . . . .	204
F. Letter to Nebraska Class III Adminis- trators . . . . .	205
G. Alphabetical List of Nebraska Class III Schools Which Replied to the Question- naire . . . . .	206

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Origin of the Problem

Nebraska's educational system is a rapidly changing picture. Some of the problems which face our state's educators which are and will be discussed among lay and education leaders are such topics as school district re-organization, the proper size of an administrative district for the best educational advantages, school finance, new forms of revenue in financing education as sales or state income taxes, methods of reporting to parents, salaries and salary schedules, transportation problems, the latest trends in buildings, accreditation and approval of schools by the State Department of Education, certification of teachers, federal aid to education, and others too numerous to mention here.

Cressman and Benda discuss the need of understanding educational problems:

If there is mutual understanding of the great purposes of education and if the people are called upon to sit with the members of the profession, there will be little opportunity for selfish demagogues to come in and to fan existing prejudices. Leaders of business, industry, and the professions are realizing

that in this field of co-operative effort and better understanding lies a great and promising area for future development.<sup>1</sup>

United States Steel Corporation is an example of an organization which has recognized the value of getting favorable information to the general public about its business through its own workers. This corporation often advertises in magazines, by radio, and television that their company is a family organization. They show pictures of families who all work for United States Steel. They state that their company is the best company in their line, and the best company for which to work.

Since World War II public schools of Nebraska have made great strides. A great deal had to be done and has been done. During the depression years of 1930-1938, personal and business incomes fell off decidedly. Tax collections decreased significantly. The public and officials of taxpayers' associations began to search for ways of reducing expenditures. When they turned to the schools, they eliminated positions and services which they felt were the least important.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George R. Cressman and Harold W. Benda, Public Education in America, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., N. Y., 1956, p. 446.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Robert Searby, A Survey and Analysis of Public Relations Programs in Representative Public Schools in Seven States, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1950, p. 2.

Chamberlain and Kindred in discussing school finance said:

Boards of education and superintendents previously took the position that finance was not a concern of the instructional personnel. . . .

This point of view has been modified a good deal during the last two decades. For one thing, it has been influenced by the activities of local, state, and national teacher organizations because of the keen interest they have taken in all financial matters affecting the welfare of their members. For another, the growing acceptance of democracy in education has reduced differences in status levels among school personnel and has brought about increasing participation on the part of teachers in the administration of the total program.<sup>1</sup>

A well informed staff who support and understand the policies or program of the school will be effective in working toward the success of it. Reber pointed out that it is essential that everyone within the organization itself be in accord.<sup>2</sup>

It is at this point that the problem of the study can be pointed out, to discover the best means of communication between administrators and teachers.

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<sup>1</sup>Leo M. Chamberlain and Leslie W. Kindred, The Teacher and School Organization, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949, pp. 483-484.

<sup>2</sup>Donald D. Reber, "The Principal Interprets His School," National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 32, 1948, pp. 73.

## The Problem

The problem of this study is to determine good methods of informing teachers of current problems and trends in education. The writer has undertaken the investigation of good practices in communication between administrators and teachers and the extent of their use in Nebraska Class III schools. Basic principles, conclusions, and recommendations are then made on the basis of what is found existing in the above mentioned situations.

### Delimitation of the Problem

This study will be limited to Class III districts as defined by the laws of the State of Nebraska. Other selected schools, chosen by heads of state departments of education in seven mid-west states as schools who use good practices in communication between administrators and teachers, will be studied in order to determine good practices in informing teachers of current problems and trends in education. The method of the selection of these schools will be discussed in detail later in the section of this chapter titled procedure.

## Discussion of the Problem

This study will show how the faculty can be informed of current problems and trends in education, so that they can, when they have the opportunity, support sound educational ideas in their contacts with lay people. Reber<sup>1</sup> stated that the principal's chief role should be that of providing leadership within the group by:

1. Setting up a democratic administration.
2. Setting up the means through which all members of the organization can be informed about what the schools are doing so that they can report intelligently to the public.
3. Setting the necessary machinery in motion via committees, bulletins, staff meetings, and the like.

Jacobson, Reanes, and Logsdon<sup>2</sup> discussed ways faculty meetings may profitably point toward improvement of instruction. The principal or superintendent may use faculty meetings to inform teachers of current trends in education and the policy of the school. He may use these meetings to stimulate the teachers to work on the problem of improving instruction in their school, or at least

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Paul B. Jacobson, William C. Reanes, and James D. Logsdon, Duties of School Principals, Prentice-Hall Inc., New York, 1950, pp. 509-510.

learning the facts of current educational trends so that they may discuss them intelligently.

Alexander and Saylor pointed out some ideas for in-service education for teachers:

Committee work on some vital project is widely used for in-service training. Demonstrations and visitations are also used. One effective method of improving understanding and skill while on the job is experimentation with new methods, new procedures, new materials, and new approaches in teaching traditional subjects, or experimentation with new units and new types of experiences. . . .

The workshop is a recent development in the area of in-service education. . . . On an individual basis, teachers may continue their own education by reading, by taking advanced study at colleges or universities.<sup>1</sup>

Douglas<sup>2</sup> said that bulletins are issued for supervisory and administrative purposes. School bulletins may be used to keep the teachers up to date on the latest practices, laws, and ideas in education related to the local school's problems.

These practices in informing teachers of current problems in education are the areas to be studied. The writer is in search of the best practices or methods of keeping teachers informed, so that the teachers may take an

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<sup>1</sup>William M. Alexander and J. Galen Saylor, Secondary Education, Rinehardt and Company, Inc., 1950, pp. 28-29.

<sup>2</sup>Harl R. Douglas, Modern Administration of Secondary Schools, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1954, p. 108.



active part in improving the school and its program.

### Importance

Good teachers are eager to improve their teaching effectiveness and to make their school the best possible school. They are therefore eager to learn about school policies, ideas, projects, and problems. They will want to know about new methods and means to improve instruction.

Today, as in past generations, the good teacher is honest, sincere, intelligent, industrious, and morally upright. Today more than ever before he must be open-minded, alert, tactful, sympathetic, courageous, and cooperative. He is trained definitely for the profession of teaching. He is a social being and participates effectively in the social and civic life of his community. He seeks to exemplify in himself, and to develop in his students, such habits, attitudes, and ideals as will serve best both the individual and the body politic.<sup>1</sup>

It has been inferred that before teachers can be effective, cooperative members of the school staff, they must be informed of current problems and trends in education. The job of the superintendent or principal is to get teachers information and keep them up to date on the latest developments in the policies and educational ideas of the state and local school.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Teacher and Public," Eighth Yearbook, Department of Classroom Teachers, N. E. A., February, 1934, p. 100.

Wiles said:

People are willing to work together when they are fully informed. They lose the desire to work for the achievement of goals they have helped establish if they are not kept acquainted with the progress that is being made. Channels must be kept open both ways. If the people who are carrying out the program have no means of pointing out their difficulties to those who are in charge, the difficulties may assume such importance in the minds of the teachers that progress will stop.<sup>1</sup>

Educators need to be clear on purposes of their teaching or schools. Gilchrist, Dutton, and Wrinkle stress the importance of this idea.

Are those of us in the teaching profession clear concerning the job of the school? If asked, "Why do we have secondary schools?" some prospective teachers and even teachers in service might answer, "I don't see why I should be worried about the purposes of secondary education. I am going to teach science. . . ."

This illustrates the point that some teachers do not have a clear idea as to why they are teaching what they teach.<sup>2</sup>

Administrators are obligated to discuss such problems as school district re-organization, providing for a broader tax base, teacher retirement, salaries, tenure, and certification with their teachers.

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<sup>1</sup>Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools, Prentice-Hall, N. Y., 1955, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Robert S. Gilchrist, Wilbur H. Dutton, and William L. Wrinkle, Secondary Education for American Democracy, Rinehart and Company, Inc., N. Y., 1957, pp. 42-43.

Teachers should fully understand a new method of reporting before it is set into motion, so that they can use it effectively and answer any questions students or parents may ask.

Douglas said that teachers have had inadequate pre-service education and therefore he points out the need for increased communication between administrators and teachers and the need for in-service training.

An examination of pre-service training programs in institutions of higher education today reveals that high-school teachers are given very meager, spotty, superficial preparation for the work they are expected to do as high-school teachers. They are rarely given an adequate understanding of the nature of child growth and development in adolescence . . . prospective high-school teachers are usually given little or no actual training in the preparation of courses of study, other than some lesson-planning in connection with their student teaching. . . . Little or no training is given in the matter of dealing with the public. For these reasons, much of the training of the teacher for high-grade service on the job, must be gotten in service.<sup>1</sup>

The administrator of a school should take part in community affairs also, but often he finds himself in a position of a leader or an officer in community organizations. Communities accept administrators in community groups in a sort of officer class with other professional men. He is a leader, and does not have the opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas, loc. cit.

find out what the rank-and-file citizen is thinking about problems.

Investigators have pointed to the strategic position of the teachers as public relations agents. Teachers have more opportunities for rank-and-file participation in community and group affairs than do administrators.<sup>1</sup>

Teachers are closer to the ordinary citizen. They are more often accepted as members of groups rather than those a bit above their level with whom it would be unwise to disagree.

Because of the existing situation mentioned above the teacher has more influence in many cases than the administrator in creating a good public reaction to the problems of current importance to education in the local area. The teacher then must be well informed.

Gilchrist, Dutton, and Wrinkle said:

The big point is that the teacher's position should be one of leadership; it is his job to help educate the public as well as youth; he must know the direction in which education ought to move and then stimulate public opinion in that direction. It is not enough to know the best answers. Teachers individually and collectively must work to create the desired public opinions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Walter S. Monroe, Editor, Encyclopedia of Educational Research, MacMillan Company, New York, 1950, pp. 901.

<sup>2</sup>Gilchrist, Dutton, and Wrinkle, op. cit., p. 71.

It has been shown in the preceding pages that the teacher has a very important place in the school as far as improvement of the school and its instructional program is concerned. It is important that the teacher be informed of current educational problems and trends.

The writer also tried to show that in some cases there is a need for a better program of informing teachers of current problems and trends.

The next step in the study is to plan the procedure of evaluating the activities of the administrators in Nebraska in informing their teachers on current problems in education in Nebraska and to plan for improvement of these activities.

### The Plan of Procedure

In an attempt to determine the best means of communication between administrators and teachers in creating understanding of current problems and trends in education, the procedure followed by the writer was:

1. The literature was reviewed for two purposes. The first was to acquaint the writer with the literature in the field and to help in the identification of the problem. The second purpose was to help in finding principles of good practice in regard to methods of transmitting information from administrators to teachers on current educational

problems. There was an investigation of the literature to discover what types of activities have been used in the past to inform teachers of current problems in education by school administrators. In addition, the writer sought pertinent information which would clarify present trends and developments in the area. From the literature investigated the writer made a tentative list of good practices in informing teachers to be used as guides in forming a list of accepted practices to be used to evaluate current practices in Nebraska.

2. Current practices in communications between administrators and teachers were studied in selected schools, which were located by means of recommendations from the heads of Departments of Education of seven mid-west states in which the selected schools are located. The heads of the Departments of Education were asked to list a few schools in their state who use good practices in communication between administrators and teachers. Of the schools listed by the heads of the Departments of Education, those whose district population was smaller than 50,000 people were used in the investigation. The administrators of the selected schools were then contacted by letter and requested to fill out an accompanying questionnaire. The returned questionnaires were then analyzed to determine good practices in communication between administrators and teachers.

3. A list of good practices in communication between administrators and teachers to serve as guides in forming a good program of informing teachers of current problems in education was formed. These practices were selected as a result of the study of current practices in the literature, and also before final drafting they were submitted to the administrators of the above selected schools for evaluation and suggestions. A list of principles in communication between administrators and teachers was also formed, with the literature as the most important source.

4. A study of current practices in communication between administrators and teachers was made in Nebraska Class III schools by means of a questionnaire sent to teachers and administrators of Class III schools of this state. The responses of this questionnaire were then compared with the responses from the selected schools from seven mid-west states.

5. The responses on the questionnaires from the selected schools from seven mid-west states were compared with the responses from Nebraska Class III schools. The strengths and weaknesses of the programs of communications between administrators and teachers were pointed out. Presentation of recommendations concerning the program of informing teachers of current problems and trends in

education in Nebraska are made in the light of what has been determined in the four steps listed above.

### Organization of the Study

In Chapter II the writer will review the literature for the purposes listed above under the Plan of Procedure. Another purpose for reviewing the literature will be to gain a better understanding of the problems of communication between administrator and teachers.

Chapter III will be concerned with the study of the selected schools in order to form a list of good practices in informing teachers of current educational trends and problems.

Nebraska Class III schools will be studied in Chapter IV in order to evaluate their programs in communication between administrators and teachers.

Chapter V will be concerned with the comparison of the responses of the selected schools in seven mid-west states and Nebraska Class III schools as checked on the questionnaire.

In Chapter VI conclusions as to the strengths and weaknesses of the programs in communication between administrators and teachers will be made. Recommendations for improvement in the Nebraska Class III schools will be listed.