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SUPPORTIVE PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MONTANA KINDERGARTENS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM	2
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	3
QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED	3
GENERAL PROCEDURES	4
DELIMITATIONS	5
DEFINITION OF TERMS	5
SUMMARY	6
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	7
WHY KINDERGARTEN?	7
CURRENT PROGRAMS	8
CHILD DEVELOPMENT	10
IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM	11
IMPLICATIONS FOR STAFF	15
SUMMARY	18
3. PROCEDURES	20
PROCEDURE ONE	20
PROCEDURE TWO	20
PROCEDURE THREE	24
SUMMARY	25
4. RESULTS OF SURVEY	27

Chapter	Page
SUPPORTIVE STAFFS CHOSEN BY TEACHERS	28
Supportive Staff Selected Most Frequently	30
Most Essential Supportive Personnel	31
ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL SUGGESTIONS AND OTHER COMMENTS	32
SUMMARY	33
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	35
SUMMARY	35
CONCLUSIONS	39
RECOMMENDATIONS	42
REFERENCES	46
APPENDICES	47
Questionnaire	48
Cover Letter Accompanying Questionnaire	51
Point System For Questionnaire	52

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to discover the best use of supportive personnel in public kindergartens. A review of literature was conducted to explore the needs of five-year-old children in the eyes of experts in child psychology and early childhood education.

From this literature a list was compiled to include all the personnel recommended in the various programs reviewed. This list was made into a questionnaire which was used to survey practicing kindergarten teachers and obtain their opinion of which would actually be most beneficial.

The child's needs emphasized in the literature review were enriching experiences as a background for later cognitive learning and the developing of a strong personality with a positive self-image that would enable him to gain the most from all his future school experiences. Primary importance was placed on student-teacher relationships that showed individual caring for each child and also provided the child with exposure to many different adult roles. Another important point made was the need for early detection and therapy for special problems.

These same needs were reflected in the results of the teacher survey which held the respondents to a hypothetical budget in choosing the best personnel for a supportive staff. First priority was given to sufficient time for the teacher to do the best for each student by an adequate program of paid aides or by small class load or a combination of the two. Second in priority were medical personnel to screen children for disabilities and provide consultation whenever needed. The following supportive staff members were also recommended in this order: volunteer parents for teacher aid and enrichment programs; speech therapist for screening and therapy; psychologist for testing when requested and resource teachers to work in the classroom with children found to have special problems; and enrichment personnel first in the fields of music and physical education and secondly in the field of art.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the 1973 session of the Montana State Legislature an amendment to Section 75-7507 of the Codes of Montana was passed. The original bill gave the trustees of a school district the right to establish free preschool programs for children between the ages of three and six. It stated that if such programs were established, they would be an integral part of the elementary school and governed accordingly. Financing, however, could not be supported by funds available through the state equalization fund. The amendment changed it to provide for financing of the kindergarten programs through the state foundation program (Guernsey, 1973).

Although fifty-six districts in Montana had formed kindergarten programs before state aid became available, most of the districts had not. In the first year after the amendment sixty-six districts added kindergartens, and it has been estimated by the State Department of Public Instruction about fifty more will add them this year. As of February, 1974, thirty-one requests for new kindergarten additions had been granted and others were known to be working on the feasibility of doing so (Eggum, 1974).

The passing of this amendment shows the growing concern of Montana's public toward the early education of its children. General knowledge and acceptance of psychological theories of human development

have focused the attention of the nation and state on early childhood. On one end of the economic scale more families were sending their five year olds to private kindergartens and putting forth more conscious effort to provide their pre-schoolers with enriching experiences. On the other end of the scale more government programs were effected to provide these same things for the economically disadvantaged. In the middle were the many families who could not afford the former and could not qualify for the latter. These families needed the passing of the state amendment, and they need local approval to establish the free kindergartens.

School districts now incorporating kindergartens or contemplating doing so are faced with unique problems. Since it is a brand new program, everything must be planned from the beginning: the curriculum, the materials, the staff, and even the physical plant in many cases. Any one study could not investigate all these areas. However, if different studies are done on each problem area and compiled, even first-year programs can be implemented with a firm base in research.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The problem of this study will be to discover what supportive personnel are recommended by experts to staff a kindergarten, and to find out which of these are actually most beneficial according

to the view of classroom kindergarten teachers in a class AA school in Montana.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The school board of Helena School District No. 1 voted to add a kindergarten level to their public schools in the fall of 1974. This study is meant to help contribute to the over-all planning of this new program by suggesting the types of special help, in addition to the classroom teacher, that will be most helpful. Although the immediate purpose of the study is to facilitate the adoption of the Helena program, the information should be helpful to the many other Montana schools that are now or soon will be involved in the same problems.

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. What does the literature show to be the principal needs of kindergarten children?
2. What personnel is suggested to fulfill these needs?
3. What is the relative cost to the school district of each of these different types of personnel?
4. How does a classroom teacher view the priority of hiring this supportive personnel, weighing not only the importance of each to the children, but also the cost of each to the school district?

5. In the opinion of the classroom teachers are there any special needs that did not appear in the questionnaire?

GENERAL PROCEDURES

The first step will be to review the literature to see what the experts in early childhood development and education see as the main needs of the children. Where personnel are suggested to meet these needs they will be noted, and where they are not they will be inferred by the nature of the children's needs.

When a list has thus been compiled of the types of supportive personnel needed, Mr. Louis Strand, Elementary Co-ordinator for the Helena School System will be interviewed to get an estimate of the cost and availability of this personnel. Ideally the needs alone would dictate the hiring of the specialists, but realistically their cost and availability must be considered in deciding on priorities.

A questionnaire will be designed asking classroom teachers to show their choice of the kinds of help they find actually most beneficial to their children. Personnel will be weighted according to their cost, and teachers will be asked to limit their choice to a particular budget. There will also be room for the teachers to comment on any type of need they felt was left out of the questionnaire and to suggest other types of personnel they might wish to recommend. All answers will be shown individually and anonymously.

Then the returned questionnaires will be analyzed together to determine which type of help was deemed most beneficial by the majority of the teachers.

DELIMITATIONS

The review of literature will be limited to the use of the Montana State University Library and personnel in the Bozeman and Helena areas. The classroom teachers will be all from a Class AA System in Montana since this would correspond closely to the Helena System.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Supportive personnel: Anyone working with the children, whether in an academic or non-academic area, both paid employees and volunteers.

Certified instructors: Anyone holding a valid Montana Teaching Certificate for Elementary Education is certified by the state to teach kindergarten (Eggum, 1974).

Classroom teacher: A teacher presently in charge of at least one session of kindergarten daily.

Practicum students: College students in an organized phase of their teacher-preparation programs.

Student-aides or student-tutors: Students from within the

school system, either elementary or secondary, used to help the kindergarten students.

SUMMARY

The 1973 passing of an amendment to Montana Law making state aid available to public kindergartens has effected a great increase in the number of kindergarten programs that have been added to public schools. Many more are evaluating the feasibility of adding such programs. Successful implementing of these new programs requires research in many areas. This particular piece of research is to explore the best use of supportive personnel and is designed specifically to help the Helena School System in establishing their program for the fall of 1974. The design of the study provides for first obtaining the recommendations of experts in early childhood education and then having these recommendations evaluated by practicing kindergarten teachers. The following chapter is devoted to a survey of related literature to obtain the expert opinions mentioned above.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although education of five-year-old children is by no means a new concern of mankind, it is none-the-less a very current and continuing concern both in our country and abroad. With over a hundred years of formal kindergartens behind us, we are still questioning and defining the needs of kindergarten age children, not to mention the best and most feasible means of meeting these needs. Therefore in this literature review, theories of needs and programs developed to meet them will be put together to find the best implications for attacking the problem of staffing our current Montana public kindergartens.

WHY KINDERGARTEN?

At a time when our nation is critically evaluating itself on all fronts, we inevitably arrive at the critical analysis of the citizen himself. After all, our government is that one made "Of the people, by the people and for the people". The individual citizen is the basis for our strength or our weakness and the billboards right now are reminding us that "America works only as well as we do". So where are we as citizens failing?

Whatever field of failure is to be explored, problems work their way down to man's earliest stages of development (Maier, 1969).

Whether you adhere to the psychoanalytic school of Sigmund Freud or its near opposite school of strict behaviorism or even the existential view of psychology, you will find much importance placed on an individual's childhood.

Since this time of life is most closely associated with the home, we find much concern about this institution today and justifiably so. However, the private domain of the home makes it difficult to reform and innovate, so the nation has turned to the next powerful institution in a child's development (and one over which the public has some control) the public kindergarten. The focus of the nation is on our five year old. He is our hope for cures to all problems from drug usage to unskilled labor who can not find jobs, from inability to read to rising crime rates (Widmer, 1967:210).

CURRENT PROGRAMS

Although there is not perfect agreement on what sort of education the kindergarten should offer the American child, most people concerned with this field seem to agree that the focus should be on the whole child, appreciation of the individual, and commitment to an experience-based way of learning (Hymes 1967:159). Whereas European schools stress academic achievement, leaving character building to the home; our preschools stress independent thinking as well as group living (Boehm, 1957). This seems consistent with the

writer's view that the home remains a stronger institution in Europe. Widmer (1967:212) points out that many advocates of American kindergartens have claimed measurable and lasting achievement in reading and other academic areas as well as personality development and social adjustment due to the kindergarten experience. Others question whether kindergarten contributes in a lasting way to these areas; but all agree that a good beginning is important. Both sides of this question agree then that where kindergarten exists, it has an especially important part in the education continuum because it sets the stage for present success on which future success can be built. This year begins the all-important basic attitudes which children will have toward educational programs and school in general. Implied here as well is the fact that if the stage is set for failure in the kindergarten, future failures will build upon it.

Most elementary schools start right in first grade to follow quite set curricula and measurements of achievement in these set curricula. On the contrary, most educators in kindergartens think the child should be spared this rigidity. Less concern is spent on measuring achievement and more spent on promoting growth. Widmer (1967:215) says:

Growth takes time and worth-while learning takes time. It includes time out for wonder, for interest, for satisfaction of old curiosities and stimulation of new curiosities--this kind of thinking is not as likely to happen when a child is rooted to a chair and desk with stacks of books and

workbooks to master and sheets of paper to fill. This kind of thinking can happen when he has the freedom and time to move, to question, to probe, to use his five senses to the ultimate, to experience fully.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Henry W. Maier (1969) presents the psycho-analytic theory of Erick H. Erickson as it pertains to this stage of development which he terms a realization of purpose. This is phases III of his five stages of childhood. He also calls this state acquiring a sense of initiative and overcoming a sense of guilt. According to this psychologist the child has learned some measure of conscious control over both himself and his environment in the previous stage where he was primarily dependent on home and family. He is now ready to move forward to new challenges in an ever-widening social and spacial sphere. Whereas the family was sufficient in the first two stages, he now needs other people in order to experiment with various alternative of his behavior. He is generally inquisitive and adventurous and wants to find out about his world.

Nursery school, kindergarten and the primary grades are the major social institutions to help him do this exploring. Along with the church and home, the school also indicates to the child the range of initiative appropriate for him. Erickson implies that individual potential capacity to work and to achieve economic success within the

the social economic order depends upon his mastery of this developmental stage, the period of realizing a sense of purpose.

This same author (Maier, 1969) in the same book discusses Jean Piaget's description of this stage of development which he calls the phase of intuitive thought. He agrees with Erickson that the most important influence at this stage is the widening social interests. He too stresses the importance of contact with others and points out that this reduces the child's egocentricity and increases social participation.

The importance of experience is stressed as Piaget says that all development must begin with concrete experience. Only after this concrete experience is mastered can the corresponding abstraction develop. This is true both for personality development and intellectual development. Piaget exemplifies the latter by saying that a child must first actually do whatever activity is involved in a certain learning process. This leads to doing the activity with knowledge; the final step then is the conceptualizing of what he has done.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM

Certainly the first implication is an emphasis of what has been stated in previous sections: experience. The child is ready and eager for it, and he needs it to base his further socialization

and intellectual skills.

Dr. Willis Vandiver (1974) used the term consistently in discussing four skills important in reading readiness: (1) perception of oral context, gained through experiences with stories being read or told which develop a child's ability to follow a sequence and increase his attention span; (2) visual discrimination, gained through experience with alphabet toys, Sesame Street and similar activities; (3) language skills, developed by experiencing conversations, talking and being listened to (4) left to right progression, acquired by such experiences as being read to and fingering the words or following picture sequences. He summed up this statement by stressing the importance of experiences in general. Children need to handle all sorts of things, visit all sorts of places, so that when they begin to read about them; they will not be decoding only meaningless symbols of things unknown to them.

Along the lines of personality development, much is being discussed and proposed in the teaching of values. As Melvin Ezer (1967:39) states, we do not have the right in public schools to teach what is right and wrong; the individual has the right to determine this for himself. However, we do have the very important obligation to help him learn to do this well. He needs to learn to look at all alternatives, foresee consequences, and evaluate the choices. Whereas understanding the value problem as fully as possible

is the first issue, the student needs also to become involved emotionally--that is, to learn to put himself in another's position to discover how that person feels.

Even though we do not have the right to impose our values on our students, we can be sure that we do influence the values they adopt just by our close association with them during these formulative years. Particularly in the early school years, the teacher serves as an important model. It matters very much what the teacher's values are and even more so how she arrives at these values. The recommendation follows that a teacher continuously clarify her own values to herself so she does not present a confusing model to the child (Wolfson, 1967).

This practice could do much to eliminate a common criticism of youth concerning the values of the establishment, that we profess one set of values but live by another. If we are not aware of this need for constant clarification, it is indeed easy to slip into this pattern almost unknowingly. An example in our profession as teachers is to profess a belief in the merit of fostering creativity and initiative in students and then turn right around and stunt both by rigid curricula and classroom standards of behavior.

One of the break-downs in our value system today is the lack of concern for others, the "not wanting to get involved" feeling of today's citizen. Keliher (1966:5-6), in discussing this problem of

the faceless crowd that watches crimes and does nothing, cites one specific stabbing murder of a girl over a thirty-five minute period observed by thirty-eight persons; and not one even called the police. She questions how we can combat this lack of sensitivity and proposes that this impersonalization might result at least partially from the lack of sufficient personal contact and concern of the teacher to the young child. This she relates directly to the oversized class load that nearly all carry. When the five year olds arrive for their first exposure to school, do the teachers promote their self concept by valuing each as an individual; or is it possible that the "faceless crowd" concept is sometimes begun right here in the expedient lumping together of an overload of students?

In exploring the ratio of teacher to child, or more accurately adult to child, Keliher (1966) points out that the consensus is that twenty-five students is the maximum load for an elementary teacher. However, in the case of the disadvantaged (Head Start standards) the maximum ratio of adult to child is five to one with no more than fifteen in the group headed by a fully certified teacher. She raises the very simple but leading question of why the small ratio, to which anyone would answer; for more individual attention. Then she emphasizes her viewpoint by asking another obvious yet profound question: if we feel that this individual attention is so beneficial, why not offer it to all of our children. If it does so

much for the handicapped, think of what it could do for the others.

In the type of curriculum described, what sort of child will fit? What standards of readiness would be appropriate? Let's look again at what has been implicated for curriculum: experiences on which the child can build as he further develops his potentialities of personality and intellect. Is it not true that any child can use such experience? As Dr. Vandiver (1974) asked when referring to readiness, "Readiness for what? Isn't every child ready for something?" Widmer (1967:215) corroborates this view in his "now philosophy". We should fit the curriculum to where the child is now, what he is ready for now, what he can handle now. We focus both on where he is now and the future, but not the future in terms of demanding goals that must be met; instead we should think in terms of experiences that fit him now and will lead him to more development in the future.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STAFF

None of the literature shows a conflict with the view of Vandiver (1974) that the teacher is the first priority in staffing, because it is she who is actually with the child the most. (He did add that this is with the exception of the parents who have the greatest influence of all but again are not within the realm of public control.) Although this need for the best in teachers is

implied in the literature by stressing what a vast influence she has on a child at this stage and consequently in all future stages of his development, it seems surprising that this fact is not stated directly more often and more vehemently.

Hymes (1967) spotlights his concern in four areas which are definitely connected to staffing. His first is parents, their support of school programs and the school's appreciation of total family life. This suggests a way of perhaps extending the influence of the school into the home. The teacher can do much in promoting this communication; but to carry this idea to its fullest would involve a real social worker. Certainly many programs in which the parents assist the school have been successful too. They range from those in which the parents volunteer aid on a regular basis to one time participation for special events.

The second area of concern was again class size and pupil-adult ratio. Various types of staff personnel can help to lower this ratio, ranging from student tutors and volunteer citizens to college practicum students and trained, paid aides. Hyme's third concern: social, emotional, and physical health ties right into his fourth concern which was teamwork among educators, psychologists, psychiatrists, pediatricians, nurses, nutritionists and social workers.

A Title III Project at Bucks County Public Schools, Doylestown, PA (Colarusso, 1973) developed some significant contributions

to the efficient utilization of supportive services personnel such as the ones listed above plus guidance counselors, speech therapists and adaptive physical education therapists. The goal of the project was to help prevent the growth of academic and emotional problems; and one of their developments was a model for early identification of kindergarten and elementary pupils who have or likely will develop some type of educational difficulty. The screening device is a twelve statement questionnaire which is based on simple observation and is easily administered. The computer uses these to divide the students into three groups. Group I, about 65 percent will get along fine, generally, without the help of corrective specialists. Group II, about 30 percent, have some type of arrestment in their development that will call for some special help directly from a specialist or indirectly through the teacher. Group III, about 5 percent, consists of those with severe problems definitely requiring specialist help and primarily needing a one to one type of instruction with teacher, aide, or student-tutor.

Not mentioned in the above study, enrichment specialists can also add much to the kindergarten staff. The most common areas for these are music, physical education and art. Besides adding their depth of experience in a specific area, these specialists can help in two other areas of concern: the pupil-adult ratio problem and the child's need for contact with more different persons at this

stage of development. This social development is further broadened if the specialist happens to be of an age group, sex, or race different from the regular teacher. These enrichment personnel need not always be limited to the three areas mentioned nor always be hired specialists of the school district. Again the field of volunteers is rich with people who have special talents and knowledge.

From the view of a classroom teacher of kindergarten (Rumely, 1974), the most beneficial of all supportive personnel is the full-time aide, consistent dependable help to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio; which she felt was ideal at one to ten. Her other strong recommendation was for a resource teacher such as had recently been added to the learning disabilities team at her school. This teacher comes to the classroom two or three times a week to work directly with the children that have been diagnosed as having some learning difficulties and consequently in need of some special instruction.

SUMMARY

In all areas of human development; mental, physical, social and academic; the early stages have a radical effect on the eventual outcome. Consequently in trying to improve human development we should focus on these stages. A preventative approach is not only more effective in dealing with human problems than a corrective one, but it is also much less expensive in time, money, and pain.

In our country, programs are trying to improve the quality of the child's home life, recognizing the large and lasting effect these first years have on him. However, the home is a private institution generally not to be invaded. The school then, is the first institution that offers the opportunity to see that each individual American child is given his best chance to develop to his full potential; and kindergarten is the first step in that schooling.

Children come into kindergarten with a wide range of capabilities and problems. At whatever point they are when they arrive, all need experiences to advance their development; and all need personal concern of people who care for them. We need then to study these needs and from them to build a curriculum of varied and enriching experiences and a staff of caring people to make the curriculum fit the individual child. In addition to excellence in classroom teachers, specialists are needed for diagnosing and treating special problems, for adding special enrichments to the children's experiences, and for helping the teacher find the time to do her best for each child.

This supportive personnel indicated by the literature in the review will be further examined in the following chapter. Procedures will be outlined there for an investigation into the practical value of the various kinds of personnel as evaluated by classroom teachers.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

This chapter will discuss the procedures followed in arriving at recommendations for kindergarten supportive personnel. They will appear in chronological order.

PROCEDURE ONE

The first step was to examine the literature to determine what personnel is indicated for this level of childhood education. Personal interviews as well as journals and books were consulted and reviewed in Chapter Two. From this information, a list was compiled of all types of personnel felt to be important in some aspect of the kindergarten program. It includes:

1. Parents
2. Community volunteers
3. Student tutors and aides (elementary and high school)
4. College practicum students
5. Paid aides
6. Psychologists
7. Guidance counselors
8. Resource teacher for students with learning problems
9. Social worker
10. Speech therapist
11. Enrichment specialists in Music, Art and Physical Educ.
12. Pediatrician
13. Psychiatrist
14. Nurse

PROCEDURE TWO

After compiling the above list of suggested personnel, the

next step was to discover how classroom teachers viewed these suggestions in the light of their own experience. A questionnaire was designed to show teacher opinion in a concise and simple form. It was decided to ask the teacher to assume she was in charge of hiring the staff herself, and in Item I to choose accordingly the personnel from the compiled list. To keep the results economically realistic, she would be asked to keep within a hypothetical budget.

The list of suggested personnel was then discussed with Mr. Louis Strand, one of the administrators of the Helena School System. Approximate cost was discussed in order to assign a value to each of the services to be presented in the questionnaire. The average teacher salary for this district for the 1974-75 term was used as the base for figuring costs. This average salary is \$10,716. This was divided by 186 to arrive at a daily figure so it could be compared with aides who are paid by the hour. Since the outcome is to be an approximate comparative weighting and not actual cost, this figure was rounded off to \$60. The psychologist's salary was figured separately since this would involve a Doctorate Degree; and using comparatives, 150 percent of the average teacher salary was arrived at, or \$90.

From the three basic daily salaries of \$20. for aides, \$60. for certified teachers, and \$90. for a Doctor of Psychology,

proportions were figured according to the amount of their time required for particular services. For example: if an aide spent half a day each day with a class that would account for one half of her total salary. If she spent an hour daily with one class that would be equivalent to one eighth of her total salary.

The point system for weighting costs was figured by taking a daily salary of any particular person and multiplying it by the proportion of his time needed to accomplish a particular service. A complete example then would be: having a resource teacher in a classroom for the entire session one day weekly would take one fifth of her time. Since her daily salary is approximated at \$60, her point value is twelve. All points will be rounded off to the nearest whole with any cost at all equal to a minimum of one point.

For the services rendered by psychologist, guidance counselor, and social worker, the divisions were not by hours per week but by the types of student problems they would handle. The two categories of approach were to handle all children the teacher felt needed some kind of testing or assistance or to handle only the students with severe problems. Figures from the study done by Colarusso and Green (1973) were used to determine the number of students each approach would involve. From their findings they predict that 65 percent of the students can do nicely with no corrective specialist, 30 percent will need some special help, and 5 percent will have severe problems needing

specialist treatment. Therapy time was figured at one hour weekly (two hours for severe problems), and class size was figured at twenty students per half-day session.

Dollar values will not be mentioned on the questionnaire, only the point system. The purpose is not to show cost per se but only to weigh cost comparatively in selecting the best staffing within budget allowances. A complete list of figures for arriving at the point system can be found in the appendix (page 51).

The budget allowance of forty points was arrived at by the researcher. Having spent nine years in the school district, knowing both the school system and the community well, the researcher felt this figure to be in the realm of a reasonable request for staff. This again was expressed according to the point system, and teachers were asked to abide by it in choosing the most helpful supportive programs. Respondents were simply to check the staffing personnel and programs they would choose if they were actually in charge of hiring. The point system was used to keep them in the budget limits considered reasonable; however, there was no minimum points that must be used. Item II asked the respondents which services they find most essential. Finally, there was a place to add extra information concerning personnel that the questionnaire did not mention but that the respondent feels is important.

The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter to state

the purpose of the study and other needed details. Copies of both can be found in the appendix (pages 48 and 50). The two forms and return envelope were sent to eight kindergarten teachers at a school chosen by the researcher. The school chosen was a class AA Montana system to coincide with the Helena system. Results of the survey were made available to respondents if they indicated that they wanted them on the place provided on the questionnaire.

To assure that the meaning of the directions was clear, the instrument was given to a graduate student at MSU and a classroom teacher. Their reactions to and interpretation of the instrument was discussed with the researcher to see if the intended meaning was actually communicated to the reader.

PROCEDURE THREE

The results of the teacher survey will be compiled in the following ways. Each of the responses to Item I will be shown individually by drawing up the actual staff that has been indicated. A sample list of personnel will then be used to tabulate how many times each item was checked on the respondents' questionnaires. A final sample staff will then be drawn up to include the items marked most often: again the forty point limit will be imposed. Answers to Item II will be listed for each respondent. Again a sample staff will be made up of those services listed as most essential by classroom teachers.

Comment will be made considering differences and similarities between this sample staff and the one composed from the results of Item I.

Comments made in Item III concerning personnel not mentioned in the questionnaire will be included as worded by the respondents. This section will be used in its original form for the interest of the reader and the recommendations of the researcher.

SUMMARY

One of the problems faced by the Helena School System in instituting a new kindergarten program was deciding what sort of personnel other than the classroom teacher was needed to meet the needs of the five-year-old student. To begin work on developing a policy for this type of staffing, a review of literature was first done to establish the needs of the children according to experts. Having compiled a list of the types of personnel indicated by the various sources as being necessary or helpful, the next step was to get the opinion of classroom teachers. It was desired to know which kinds of extra personnel are perceived as being beneficial in practice and what combinations and schedules worked best.

A questionnaire was designed listing all the suggested personnel and assigning each a point value based on their cost to the district under each type of scheduling. Kindergarten teachers from a comparable district were chosen as respondents and asked to choose a staff

from the list that would be their optimum. A hypothetical budget based on the point system was imposed on their choice to keep it reasonable economically. Teachers were also asked to indicate which of their chosen auxiliary staffs they viewed as most essential. The last item on the questionnaire allowed comment on any personnel the teachers felt had been excluded.

Results of the questionnaire will be compiled anonymously showing each individual staff chosen as well as two staffs made up from all opinions returned. One of these would be made up from items simply checked the most often; the other would be made up of those items listed as most essential. Both of these two staffs made up of the various opinions of respondents will also be shown in relationship to the hypothetical budget. The results of these procedures will be shown in chapter four.

Chapter 4

RESULTS OF SURVEY

This chapter will present and discuss the results of the mailed questionnaires described in Chapter 3. Of the eight questionnaires sent to kindergarten teachers six were answered, constituting a 75 percent return. These six respondents will be referred to anonymously as A, B, C, D, E, and F.

The responses to Item I, where the teachers chose what they felt to be the best supportive staff for kindergarten within a hypothetical budget of forty points, will first be shown individually. Each of these six staffs will be shown in their entirety. Then a seventh staff will be composed of the personnel listed most often in the preceding six.

The next section will deal with the personnel that the teachers felt was most essential as indicated in Item II of the questionnaire. These responses will again be listed individually and then combined to form a final sample staff including those members listed most often.

Finally, this reporting chapter will conclude with any personnel the teachers mentioned in Item III; that is, anyone they felt should have been included but was not given as one of the choices on the questionnaire. Any pertinent extraneous comments will also be added here.

SUPPORTIVE STAFFS CHOSEN BY TEACHERS

Staff A

Respondent A used 39 of the possible 40 points in choosing the following staff:

- Volunteer parents for special occasions
- Community volunteers for special occasions
- Paid aide full time
- Registered Nurse to screen all children for hearing, vision, and physical defects and for consultation when needed throughout the year
- Pediatrician for screening and for consultation with RN
- Psychologist for testing and therapy of children with severe learning problems
- Speech therapist for testing and therapy
- Music specialist to teach the class once weekly
- Art specialist to teach the class once weekly

Staff B

Respondent B used thirty-four of the possible forty points in choosing the following staff:

- Volunteer parents on a regular basis
- Community volunteers for special occasions
- College practicum students full time
- Registered Nurse for screening and consultation with pediatrician on request of RN
- Psychologist for testing and therapy of children with severe learning problems
- Resource teacher to work in classroom with children who have learning problems two days a week
- Social worker liason with the home for severe problems
- Speech therapist for testing and therapy
- Music specialist to teach the class once weekly
- Physical Education specialist to teach the class once weekly
- Art specialist to help teachers plan their own program

Staff C

Respondent C used thirty-nine of the possible forty points in choosing the following staff:

Paid aide full time
 Registered Nurse to screen all children for hearing, vision,
 and physical defects and for consultation when needed
 throughout the year
 Resource teacher to work in classroom with children who have
 learning problems two days a week
 Social worker liason with the home for severe problems
 Speech therapist

Staff D

Respondent D used twenty-four of the possible forty points in choosing the following staff:

Volunteer parents for special occasions
 Community volunteers for special occasions
 Paid aide full time
 Registered Nurse to screen all children for hearing, vision,
 and physical defects and for consultation when needed
 throughout the year
 Pediatrician for screening and for consultation with RN
 Speech therapist

Staff E

Respondent E used all forty of the possible points in choosing this staff:

Paid aide full time
 Registered Nurse for screening and pediatrician available when
 requested by RN
 Pediatrician also for screening and consultation throughout
 the year
 Psychologist for testing and therapy of children with severe
 learning problems
 Speech therapist for testing and therapy
 Music specialist and Art specialist to teach class once weekly
 Physical Education specialist to teach the class once weekly

Staff F

Respondent F used all forty of the possible points in choosing this staff:

Volunteer parents on a regular basis
 College practicum students half time
 Paid aide full time
 Registered Nurse for screening and consultation with pediatrician on her request
 Guidance counselor to work with severe learning problems
 Resource teacher to work in classroom with children who have learning problems two days a week
 Speech therapist

Supportive Staff Selected Most Frequently

The following supportive staff exceeds the forty point limit by eight points to include all personnel who were selected by three of the teachers (50 percent). The personnel listed above the solid line were selected more than 50 percent of the time. If only these were used, twenty-three points would be used up. It should be remembered that the speech therapist did not use any budget points on this particular questionnaire because of the aid available to the Helena School District for this service. Of course the parent and community volunteers also used no budget points in this survey.

Paid aide full time
 Speech therapist for testing and therapy
 Registered Nurse to screen all children for hearing, vision, and physical defects and for consultation when needed throughout the year
 Pediatrician also for screening and consultation when needed
 Volunteer parents: most preferred on special occasions but one preferred on a regular basis

Community volunteers for special occasions
 Psychologist for testing and therapy of children with severe
 learning problems
 Resource teacher to work in classroom with children who have
 learning problems two days a week
 Music specialist to teach the class once weekly
 Physical Education specialist to teach the class once weekly

Most Essential Supportive Personnel

In Item II of the questionnaire the teachers indicated which of their chosen staff they felt to be most essential to a good kindergarten. They could list no more than two here, and in each case they did list two. The results were as follows:

- A Psychologist and paid aide full time
- B Speech therapist and Resource teacher
- C Paid aide full time and registered nurse to screen for hearing, vision and physical defects and for consultation throughout the year
- D Paid aide full time (frees teacher to do more for class)
Good school nurse and a pediatrician available
- E Full time aide and a pediatrician
- F Full time paid aide and resource teacher

If all of the personnel listed by any one teacher as being most essential were combined to form a staff, it would go only four points over the budget of forty points and would look like this:

Paid aide full time
 School nurse and available pediatrician
Resource teacher
 Speech therapist
 Psychologist

The personnel listed below the solid line were named only once. If these were not used, the budget point value would drop to thirty-five. Because the speech therapist in this district does not affect the budget, the staff could include all but the psychologist and still remain within the hypothetical limits.

ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL SUGGESTIONS AND OTHER COMMENTS

Teachers were asked in Item III to suggest any additional supportive staff they would want that had not been mentioned in the survey. Only one different type of personnel was mentioned but several relevant comments were made. The new staff member suggested was a librarian to bring "literary resources" once a month. Because of the small amount of time involved, the cost of such a person would be very small. The writer feels this idea is well worth considering. Other comments made are quoted below:

Limit class size to fifteen and no extra staff would be needed!

Psychologist, resource teacher and social worker are fine if they help, but when they create more work, then no.

A program involving the two auxiliary personnel given (speech therapist and resource teacher) would be crippled without "extra hands" and a "free" nature--parents, practicum students, etc.

Having had a good experience with volunteer help, I am opting for the professionals listed and assume this does not exclude volunteers.

Good luck! We are really sold on public kindergarten!

SUMMARY

A 75 percent return of questionnaires showed that the personnel chosen most often by the kindergarten teachers themselves were a paid, full time aide, a speech therapist, a registered nurse, an available pediatrician and volunteer parents. All this personnel was selected more than 50 percent of the time; and this list comprises a value of only twenty-three points of the proposed forty-point budget. If all personnel mentioned exactly 50 percent of the time were added to this staff, it would exceed the budget by only eight points and would include community volunteers, a psychologist for testing and therapy of children with learning problems and a resource teacher to work in the classroom with them. Also two enrichment specialists would be added to teach a class weekly in the areas of music and physical education. Time schedules and more description of the duties of each are given in the body of this chapter.

When the personnel listed as most essential by the teachers was combined into another sample staff, it went only four points over the budget of forty. This staff included a paid aide full time, a school nurse and pediatrician, a resource teacher, a speech therapist and a psychologist. These are listed in the order of their frequency on the survey with the last two being mentioned one time each.

The personnel that appeared on the most stringent form of both

staffs made up of the combined opinions of teachers were the paid full time aids and the medical personnel. Additional comments made on the questionnaires expressed the teacher's belief in the value of kindergarten, the need for time to prepare, the need for small class size and the need for extra help in these areas of special problems, not just extra work.

The following chapter will summarize this entire study and give the writer's recommendations for staffing as based on the information gained in this research.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter the writer will present a general thesis summary, delineate various conclusions reached, and present recommendations made as a result of this study.

SUMMARY

The 1973 passing of an amendment to Montana Law making state aid available to public kindergarten has effected a great increase in the number of kindergarten programs that have been added to public schools. Many more are evaluating the feasibility of adding such programs. Successful implementing of these new programs requires research in many areas. This particular piece of research is to explore the best use of supportive personnel and is designed specifically to help the Helena School System in establishing their program for the fall of 1974.

The design of the study provides for first obtaining the recommendations of experts in early childhood education and then having these recommendations evaluated by practicing kindergarten teachers. A survey of related literature is the source for these expert opinions.

The related literature showed that in all areas of human development: mental, physical, social and academic; the early stages

have a radical effect on the eventual outcome. Consequently in trying to improve human development we should focus on these stages. A preventative approach is not only more effective in dealing with human problems than a corrective one, but it is also much less expensive in time, money, and pain.

In our country, programs are trying to improve the quality of the child's home life, recognizing the large and lasting effect these first years have on him. However, the home is a private institution generally not to be invaded. The school then, is the first institution that offers the opportunity to see that each individual American child is given his best chance to develop to his full potential; and kindergarten is normally the first step in that schooling.

Children come into kindergarten with a wide range of capabilities and problems. At whatever point they are when they arrive, all need experiences to advance their development; and all need personal concern of people who care for them. It appears necessary to study these needs and from them to build a curriculum of varied and enriching experiences and a staff of caring people to make the curriculum fit the individual child. In addition to top classroom teachers, specialists are needed for diagnosing and treating special problems, for adding special enrichments to the children's experiences, and for helping the teacher find the time to do her best for each child.

At the completion of the review of literature a list of the

types of personnel indicated by the various sources as being necessary or helpful was compiled. This list included volunteer help which had been suggested in a variety of different programs and utilized parents, community volunteers, and students from elementary, secondary and college levels. Along with volunteer programs, paid aide plans were used in some places to free the teacher for more creative teaching and to provide a better adult-pupil ratio. For diagnosing and treating special problems, psychologists, guidance counselors, resource teachers, social workers, speech therapists, pediatricians, nurses and psychiatrists were recommended in a variety of programs. Enrichment personnel were found valuable too and came both from the ranks of the volunteers and from hired specialists in the fields of music, art, and physical education.

The next step was to explore the opinions of classroom teachers to see which kinds of extra personnel are perceived as being most beneficial in practice and to what extent they are needed. A questionnaire was designed listing all the suggested personnel and assigning each a point value based on their cost to the district in each of the various programs listed. Kindergarten teachers from a comparable district were chosen as respondents and asked to choose a staff from the list that would be their optimum. A hypothetical budget based on the point system was imposed on their choice to keep it economically reasonable.

Results of the questionnaires were compiled anonymously showing each individual staff chosen by a respondent. Also shown were the staff members each teacher considered most essential. From the individual staffs that had been selected, those named most often were combined to show a sample supportive staff that reflected the opinion of all respondents. A similar sample staff was built from the personnel listed as most essential by the respondents.

A 75 percent return of questionnaires showed that the personnel chosen most often by the kindergarten teachers themselves were a paid, full-time aide, a speech therapist, a registered nurse, an available pediatrician and volunteer parents. All of this personnel was selected more than 50 percent of the time; and this list comprises a value of only twenty-three points of the proposed forty-point budget. If all personnel mentioned exactly 50 percent of the time were added to this staff, it would exceed the budget by only eight points and would include community volunteers, a psychologist for testing and therapy of children with learning problems and a resource teacher to work in the classroom with them. Also two enrichment specialists would be added to teach a class weekly in the areas of music and physical education. Time schedules and more description of the duties of each are given in the body of this chapter four.

When the personnel listed as most essential by the teachers was combined into another sample staff, it went only four points over

the budget of forty. This staff included a paid aide full time, a school nurse and pediatrician, a resource teacher, a speech therapist and a psychologist. These are listed in the order of their frequency on the survey with the last two being mentioned one time each. Therefore, if this staff were to be held stringently to the budget, the last two could be dropped thus using only thirty-five points. However, since the speech therapist in this study required no points, he could be left on this staff, and the budget would remain at thirty-five.

CONCLUSIONS

From the review of literature the writer is convinced of the great importance of kindergartens, especially for children who have not had a rich background at home. As the first experience in schooling for most, it takes on special significance as the base for the child's future attitude toward school and his role outside of the home. A good curriculum is one that is rich in experience where the child can learn about himself and his world. As pointed out in the section on child psychology, this is a time in development when a child needs exposure to more adults for identification and role learning. This means not only more adults in number but in various types: different ages, sexes, occupations and interests.

Every child coming into our schools needs to be accepted as

he is and where he is in all phases of development or "readiness". He needs to continue to be treated as an individual as he is taken from wherever he is in his development onward at his observed learning rate. His needs and interests need to play a role in planning his experiences.

The key to making all the theory of individuality and experience work in the curriculum is the classroom teacher herself. Nothing exceeds the importance of finding and hiring a person who will care for each student as an important individual and is capable of providing him with the experiences he needs to grow. However, even the best teachers need help to do their best job. They must have a class load that allows them to know each child as an individual, to relate to him daily and to plan a program for him. This points to two priorities; small classes and aides.

Another important implication from the literature was the importance of diagnosing learning problems as early as possible. Again this shows a need for a very personal, individual relationship between teacher and child so the teacher can and will notice the signs of particular problems. This also shows the need for specialists, medical and psychological, not only to help spot problems, but more important to help provide treatment when problems are noticed.

The value of enrichment personnel is indicated by the psychologists who stress the need for exposure to a wider range of adults at

this age and the educators who stress the need for a wide range of experience. The hired enrichment specialists in music, art, and physical education can provide more "significant adults" to the child as well as providing many interesting experiences into fields where these people are experts. The same sort of benefits occur on occasional events by using community people who have specific experience areas to share. However, the primary qualification of caring for children needs to be considered here as well as in hiring teachers. A school visit from an experience-rich adult can be a damaging venture if that adult can not relate to children and in fact negates their reaction to whatever area he represents.

Many of these conclusions of the writer were reflected in the responses of the teachers on the questionnaires. The need for adequate time was shown both in the fact that a paid aide was the personnel most often selected and in extraneous comments made; such as:

A program involving the two auxiliary personnel given (speech therapist and resource teacher) would be crippled without extra hands.

Limit class size to fifteen and no extra staff would be needed!

Paid aide full time frees teacher to do more for her class.

The fact that medical personnel, nurse and pediatrician, were also included in the most stringent forms of both sample staffs convinces the researcher that the teachers feel there are significant problems for five year olds in the health area and that teachers are

not equipped to deal with these.

The high frequency of reference made by the teachers to need for psychologists and resource teachers indicates that they feel a need for special help with psychological problems too. This is not as high on the list of priorities, however, as medical help. Further the teachers chose a direct help program for children having problems, such as the resource teacher who comes right to the room to work with the child. This approach was not only preferred to a testing and recommendation approach, but one teacher wrote a special comment to the effect that she wanted the specialists if they really helped; but if they just made more work for her to do, she preferred not to have them.

Although there is certainly individual differences in teachers that cause a difference in what sort of aid programs work best for them and what types of enrichment they feel lacking in, both the literature and the questionnaire response showed certain visible generalities: all teachers felt a need for time to work with the individual; all felt a need for some specialist help, primarily medical and secondarily psychological; and all saw the value of enrichment personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research done in this study and conclusions drawn from that research lead to the following recommendations for the staffing of the

new public kindergarten in Helena, Montana:

1. Although the topic of the study is supportive personnel, the first recommendation is, never-the-less, that the primary consideration in staffing be the hiring of the best classroom teacher available. A loving and capable person with a class load of fifteen to twenty students is considered the number one recommendation. Not only is the classroom teacher the most important influence on the student but is also necessary for the supportive personnel programs to function at their best.

2. Paid aides should be provided, particularly if the class load is over fifteen. Teachers should be involved in planning the aide program and individual teacher preferences included as far as personnel hired, scheduling of that personnel, and duties. Other types of aide programs, students and volunteers, should be explored if teachers wish to.

3. A program for volunteer parent participation should be worked out. This is not to say all teachers should use parents and in the same way. However in view of the response of teachers who do use these programs, all teachers should consider the possibilities, particularly in view of enrichment.

4. A speech therapist should be available to screen all kindergarten children and provide therapy where they feel it is necessary.

5. A registered nurse, either school nurse or county nurse,

should be available for screening all children for vision, hearing, and physical defects and also for consultation anytime she is needed by the teachers throughout the year.

6. A pediatrician should be available on recommendation of the nurse for assistance in any of her duties when she feels it is necessary.

7. A psychologist should be available at least for testing children the teacher suspects has some special learning problem.

8. Resource teachers should be part of the psychologist's team and be hired and trained to work in the classroom with students who have learning problems on the basis of at least two sessions weekly.

9. Any other available funds should be used to hire enrichment personnel with first priority given in the fields of music and physical education, and second priority in the field of art.

10. If any funds remained after hiring enrichment specialists, it is recommended the psychologist's team be expanded to include more therapy and home liason with social workers.

The far-reaching effects of the child's first school experience necessitates the best possible program being offered. Provision for individual attention to the child's needs and interests along with diagnosis of and therapy for special learning problems at this level will provide maximum benefit. Without meaning to detract from the importance of sensitive programs at all levels, the writer recommends that top priority be at this beginning point. In the long run,

resources spent here will save expense in future remedial and corrective programs. More important still, children developing a positive self-image and stimulating base of experience at this level will be able to gain much more from all future instructive programs.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire

I. Consider yourself in charge of assembling the supportive staff for your kindergarten within a specific budget. Place checks in the blanks before the personnel below that you would include for maximum benefit without exceeding forty points. (No minimum)

- ____ (0) Student tutors from the grade school
- ____ (0) Student tutors from the high school
- ____ (0) Volunteer parents on a regular basis
- ____ (0) Volunteer parents for special occasions
- ____ (0) Community volunteers on a regular basis
- ____ (0) Community volunteers for special occasions
- ____ (0) College practicum students full time
- ____ (0) College practicum students half time
- ____ (20) Paid aide full time
- ____ (10) Paid aide half time

- ____ (1) Registered Nurse to screen all children for hearing, vision, and physical defects and for consultation when needed throughout the year.
- ____ (2) RN for screening and consultation with pediatrician on her request.
- ____ (3) Pediatrician for screening, RN for consultation with pediatrician again at her request.
- ____ (6) Guidance counselors to work with severe learning problems.

Questionnaire

- ____(21) Guidance counselors to work with any child you feel has some problem.
- ____(9) Psychologist for testing and therapy of children you feel have severe problems.
- ____(32) Psychologist as above for any child you feel has some problem.
- ____(1) Psychiatrist when recommended by psychologist.
- ____(12) Resource teacher to work in your classroom with problem children two half day sessions per week.
- ____(20) Resource teacher two full days weekly.
- ____(6) Social worker liason with the home for severe problems.
- ____(21) Social worker liason for any problems you encounter.
- ____(0) Speech therapist for testing and therapy. (State Aid)
-
- ____(1) Music specialist to help teachers plan program.
- ____(2) Music specialist to teach your class once weekly.
- ____(5) Music specialist to teach your class 2-3 times weekly.
- ____(1) Physical Ed. specialist to help teachers plan program.
- ____(2) Physical Ed. specialist to teach your class once weekly.
- ____(5) Physical Ed. specialist to teach your class 2-3 times weekly.
- ____(1) Art specialist to help teachers plan program.
- ____(2) Art specialist to teach your class once weekly.
- ____(5) Art specialist to teach your class 2-3 times weekly.

Questionnaire

II. Of the listed supportive staff, which do you feel most essential?
(No more than two)

III. If there is any other personnel you think should be included,
please list her.

_____ Check here and sign your name if you wish a copy of the
results.

THANK YOU!

Cover Letter Accompanying Questionnaire

Dear Teacher:

Helena School District No. 1 is planning to add a kindergarten program to the public schools this coming fall. I am on sabbatical leave from that system and am presently doing research at Montana State University which is designed to help in the particular area of selecting supportive personnel. Your experience in a similar district gives you valuable insight that would be very helpful to us in deciding what sort of staff, in addition to the classroom teacher, is most beneficial to students of this age.

Attached to this letter is a questionnaire designed to convey your opinion to me in a quick form. The three items should not take more than a few minutes to complete. You need not indicate your name on the instrument when you return it, as all information will be presented anonymously.

Only (City) kindergarten teachers are being contacted in this survey and your opinion is very important to the study. Would you please return the completed form to me in the enclosed envelope by April 30? If you wish a copy of the results, check the appropriate box at the bottom of the questionnaire.

Thank you for sharing your experience and ideas with us.

Sincerely,

Judy H. Harding

Enclosure

Point System For Questionnaire

Volunteer help all 0 since there is no charge involved.

Aides at \$2.50 per hour = \$20.00 daily; so full time = 20 points and half time = 10 points.

Speech therapist can be paid for with state aid so no points were needed.

Enrichment specialists in music, art and physical education are regular teachers at the \$60.00 approximate. At a visit of 2-3 times a week, the specialists could work with about 12 different teachers (two kindergarten sessions daily): so $1/12$ of their salary gives a point count of 5. One visit weekly (2 sessions) would comprise about $1/30$ of her job or 2 points. As a co-ordinator only, this teacher could service the entire elementary system, so the minimum of one point was used.

For the psychologist, social worker and guidance counselor, working with all problem children was figured at 35 percent of a pupil load of 40 (20 per session) or 14 students. At one hour per week this would equal 14 hours weekly which would take $7/20$ of a normal work week. The severe problems represent 5 percent of the class load or 2 students. Since severe problems would also take more therapy, two hours weekly will be used for a total of 4 hours of a 40 hour week or $1/10$ of the workers salary. The results are:

Social worker-- $7/20 \times 60 = 21$ points; $1/10 \times 60 = 6$ points

Guidance counselor--same as social worker

Psychologist-- $7/20 \times 90 = 31 \frac{1}{2}$ or 32; $1/10 \times 90 = 9$ points

Resource teacher would be figured on the \$60 salary. Two full sessions weekly (all day) would be $2/5$ of her salary or 24 points. Two half sessions weekly would be $1/5$ of her salary or 12 points.