

Administrators are responsible for improvement activities

The superintendent's role

By Tony Stansberry

Few professional educators at management levels today, deny that recent changes in public expectations and Kansas statutes have restricted the authority of local boards of education. Concurrent with these changes, the responsibilities of boards of education to provide for the educational needs of children have increased. This dichotomy of purpose has presented a real dilemma for boards of education. Boards of education are still expected to perform their traditional tasks of "supervising the district." However, each year fewer tools are provided to do the job.

In the midst of declining authority, the superintendent of schools as the chief administrator for the board of education, must still carry out board policies. The superintendent is still responsible for guiding the district in successfully meeting the educational needs of all the children.

A variety of more vocal pressure groups which include teacher unions, special patron interest and accountability groups, affirmative action groups, student organizations, news media, etc., often complicate the process. These groups and even the board members often disagree among themselves regarding district priorities.

How then, one might ask, is the superintendent to do the job? Is it still possible for one person to lead a district in meeting educational goals, as well as trying to satisfy school community expectations? Of course, the answer, in the traditional sense, is **no**. However, acting as a manager of personnel and assets, the superintendent's success may be greatly enhanced. It is entirely possible for effective leadership to be exerted if the superintendent

assumes the role of educational manager.

An educational manager is one who carries out supervision and effects change by motivating others. This is accomplished in a cooperative and well coordinated effort designed to improve the situation under consideration. The educational manager identifies needs and develops plans for the motivation and facilitation of people. The educational manager then guides and supports the people (i.e., staff, patrons, students) in their efforts to develop and implement the means for school improvement. Throughout the effort, the effective manager strives to help establish a sense of "ownership" on the part of the personnel involved.

Considering the above, it becomes evident that the antidote for diminishing authority versus rising responsibility expectations is improving people management skills. In addition, it should be recognized that nearly all functions of the superintendency in some way impact on one another. One functional area which permeates the superintendent's role as much as any other is curriculum development. Patrons, staff and students alike usually judge a school based on the quality of its program of studies. Examples of other school areas scrutinized by the school community are budget, taxes, support services, student activities, facilities and personnel (to include evaluation, class load, pupil-teacher ratios, salaries, instructional materials, etc.). Professional educators and lay persons judge the superintendent's performance according to their perceptions of that individual's ability to satisfy the needs of all functional school areas. This is usually done in accordance with the standards set by each individual or group. This process is extremely threatening when the superintendent's authority is diminishing and the public's demand for accountability is increasing.

Superintendents (educational managers) and boards of education must understand the present day phenomenon described above and they must come to grips with it. All efforts to improve curriculum and instruction must have at least two goals: (1) to improve education for children and (2) strengthen supervisory credibility within the school and community. In conjunction with these efforts, each should be carefully weighed in terms of both direct and indirect impact on the overall school program. Direct impact is self explanatory. Indirect impact might be described as "spin off effects" on other functional areas of the school.

With these things in mind, the functional area of school curriculum and improvement therein warrants further consideration. Curriculum improvement should be analyzed in terms of giving careful consideration to the process of curriculum evaluation and improvement.

A process of curriculum development being initiated in some Kansas schools is referred to as a systems approach to curriculum development. The process, utilizes participation from all segments of the school community. It may encompass a complete evaluation of the school's program of study from its philosophical goals statements to methods of teaching specific courses in the individual classroom. If correctly implemented, the process can enhance the superintendent's authority in achieving job responsibilities in related areas of curriculum development. In fact, attainment can impact favorably on all aspects of the superintendent's role.

The following is devoted to describing a systems approach to curriculum development. The procedure is offered as a valid option for educational managers to consider. The procedure may be accepted in part or in total

whichever is appropriate. There is an underlying emphasis that the process should allow some constructive participation from all interested school personnel and community groups.

The systems approach to curriculum development can be divided into three phases. The areas are (1) Foundation, Planning and Development, (2) Evaluation of the Curriculum System and (3) Implementing Changes for Improvement. The information in Table I outlines sub-parts of the three major phases. The information in Table II indicates the activities and primary participants involved in developing all three phases. From the initial steps to the final one, a "grass roots" total evaluation is suggested. The remainder of this article is directed to those districts who need to develop their program at the "grass roots" level.

The data in Table I illustrates the importance of training the staff through appropriate in-service programs. In-service is necessary because the majority of today's institutions of higher learning do not adequately prepare teachers with the skills necessary to develop comprehensive curriculum improvements. Administrators also require additional training.

Once, the administrative and teaching staffs are prepared to under take the project; an evaluation of the School's Educational Goals (Philosophical Goals) initiates the effort. Goals approved by the board of education set broad parameters for the programs and functions of the district. These "district goals" should be statements of broad direction of intent, timeless and stated in student outcomes, (e.g., All graduates should develop good character and self-respect.) Phi Delta Kappa, North Cen-

TABLE I
A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

PHASE I
FOUNDATION, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Establish a Teacher In-Service Program for the Project.
 - a. Hire Consultants if needed
 - b. Conduct In-Service Workshops
 - c. Organize a Professional Assistance Committee
(Central Curriculum Advisory Council)
2. Develop School Philosophical Goals.
 - a. Choose a Method of Approach
 - b. Organize a School Goals Committee
 - c. Involve Total School Community
 - d. Establish School Goals
3. Develop Curriculum Guides.
 - a. Choose a Strategy for Development
 - b. Determine Subject Matter Goals
 - c. Determine Scope and Sequence
 - d. Develop Instructional Objectives
 - e. Consideration of: Methodology
Facilities
Materials

PHASE II
EVALUATION OF THE CURRICULUM SYSTEM

1. Carry Out an Appropriate Series of Program Evaluations.
 - a. Objectives Should be the Basis of the Evaluation
 - (1) Standardized Tests
 - (2) Conferences, Teacher, Student and Parental Feedback
 - (3) Follow-up Studies
 - (4) Staff Evaluation
 - (5) North Central Association Evaluation

PHASE III
IMPLEMENTING CHANGE FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Prioritize Recommended Needs (Weakness Identified During Evaluation)
2. Devise an Implementation and Monitoring Plan
3. Implement the Plan on a Short, Medium and Long Range Basis. Monitor as Required.

TABLE II
A SOLUTION
 USD-458 BASIC
 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
 APPROACH

PHASE	ACTIVITY	PARTICIPANTS
I Foundation Building	1. Set up a Teacher In-Service Program 2. Determine what the Educational Goals of your school district are. 3. Develop curriculum guides to accomplish stated goals. 4. Organize a Professional Council to assist in monitoring and making improvement recommendations.	Total School Community Professional Staff Professional Staff
II Evaluation of Foundation	5. Once a viable curriculum improvement program has been implemented, evaluate its success in terms of the total school program.	Total School Community
III Plan and Implement needed changes	6. Prioritize recommended needs 7. Develop an implementation plan for curriculum revision 8. Implement and monitor results of implementation plan regularly and implement revisions needed, (follow-up)	Professional Staff Board and Administration Administration

tral Association and several other school evaluation resources provide ideas for developing or redeveloping school goals.

In devising schools goals, the curriculum leaders should involve staff, patrons, students and boards of education. The goals define "What the school is all about." Everyone involved needs to provide input into development of the goals. This involvement leads to "ownership" on the part of the participants. Once the goals are developed, it is time to re-evaluate or develop curriculum guides.

Curriculum guides (of a minimum objectives variety) which include subject matter goals and scope and sequence should be developed. The subject goals outline the goals for each subject, stated within parameters established by the broader school goals. The scope explains what is to be taught and the sequence illustrates when. Teaching methodologies, learning styles and gatherings of all resource materials are other aspects of a sound curriculum guide.

Once the curriculum guides have been developed, evaluation is the logical next step. The total school evaluation such as that provided by North Central Association is a fine process. By now, the goals of the district have been set and specific guides for instruction are developed. An evaluation reflecting the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum in conjunction with the total school program presents a fairly accurate picture of the total program. An NCA evaluation not only notes program strengths and weaknesses, but it allows for staff

"ownership" in recommending priorities on a short, medium and long range basis for implementation.

Once the school goals, curriculum guides and other areas of the school have been evaluated (in terms of district goals established), the superintendent has a "handle on the total program." In addition, representatives of the whole school community have participated in the developmental study. The superintendent will be placed in the enviable position of leading from a vantage point of strength. The superintendent has a back log of information and support on which to make recommendations to the board of education. For instance, no longer will the superintendent's judgment be singled out for criticism because budgeting expenditures did not satisfy one pressure group or another. Teachers may be evaluated upon goals established in the curriculum guides by the professional staff. School and community relations are enhanced because the public had opportunities to participate in making recommendations for improvement. A host of positive eventualities arise from the approach just described.

In conclusion, almost all the functional areas of the administrative process can be affected by the systematic developmental process for curriculum improvement. The board of education through its superintendent is more capable of achieving its educational responsibilities after such a study. The superintendent can effectively carry out board policies because (1) the superintendent is more informed of district wide needs, (2) the community is more understanding and cooperative because of its con-

structive participation, (3) the staff is more satisfied because it has constructively participated in the decision making progress. In sum, a healthy, concerted spirit of cooperation from throughout the school community is extended to the board of education.

Overall school community approval of the board's

policies lends itself to enhanced confidence. Public and staff confidence by association lends itself well to a broadening of authority. This authority, well supplemented by public confidence, assists the superintendent and the board of education in fulfilling supervisory responsibilities.