Analysis of Selected Aspects of the High School Orientation Program

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Loyola University Chicago

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ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF
THE HIGH SCHOOL ORIENTATION PROGRAM

by

Marge E. Bower

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For most adolescents, starting high school requires adjustments to many things. They must find their way down unfamiliar hallways, meet new teachers and peers, become acquainted with a multitude of new forms and terms, and settle into a new routine. The complexities of high school entrance vary considerably with the school involved, as well as with the background of the individual student. For most freshmen, however, the process includes at least some bewilderment, and some feelings of confusion. As Wright points out:

They are likely to feel strange and quite lost in their new surroundings. They are unacquainted with the routines and rules of the school; the building itself is new; the teachers are strangers; and moving from class to class is a new experience. They are not acquainted with the extracurricular activities and the traditions of the school. Often, they find themselves assigned to groups in which they have no friends.1

Another problem area for many students is the one of status. In their elementary school, as eighth graders, they were the 'big wheels'. Younger students looked up to them, and they may have been entitled to privileges denied to those in the lower grades. Now, as freshmen, they find themselves starting at the bottom again. Because this occurs as they are in early

adolescence, a time when self-importance and status are important, this change presents special concerns which must be reckoned with.

Despite these problem areas, the entering students are expected to make a rapid adjustment to their new surroundings and to conform to the rules and traditions of their new school. In most instances, the adolescents are eager to conform and take their part in the group, but the individual may not be sure that what he is doing is right. As McKinney indicates:

"Where everything seems strange to him, he may be concerned lest he do the wrong things — embarrass himself, or look ridiculous. Frequently too, he is concerned about failing or in some way being rejected."

Helping all new students to experience a smooth, rapid transition into high school is the responsibility of the school, including its personnel and student body. Towards this end, almost all schools have set up some type of orientation program. These programs vary considerably from school to school but, more important, some form of orientation is practically universal. Froelich recognizes orientation as "a service for which definite provisions must be made." Likewise, Hoppock expresses the idea that "every school has an orientation program, whether it recognizes it or not."

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In most cases, then, the question for school authorities is not whether or not to organize an orientation program, but how to make it a meaningful one for their incoming students. It is here that the problem seems to lie.

It is the hope of this writer to explore various aspects of this problem, and to propose possible guidelines towards reaching solutions. It must be remembered, however, that while some techniques or principles may have been successful in some schools, this does not mean that they will achieve the same results elsewhere. Many factors (see Chapter II) must be considered. Unfortunately, inexperienced administrators may tend to ignore basic principles or may not understand what they are trying to accomplish. Too often, haphazard and meaningless programs result from this.

Many individuals and groups have been concerned with various aspects of orientation, usually in connection with other aspects of the school guidance program. There is considerable disagreement on what the program should consist of and, even, on what the term orientation means.

A few individuals still view orientation in its narrow sense — as a fairly limited series of events, usually held early in the school year. For example, Frank Miller points out that: "Orientation is a responsibility that is often associated with school-wide activities of a group nature designed to acquaint the student with school facilities, time schedules, regulations, etc." In a slightly broader context, Carroll Miller states: "We shall content ourselves with viewing orientation as one of the guidance services intended to help

the newcomer become acquainted with, understand, and learn to live in a new situation.\(^6\)

In both of these instances, orientation is subjected to limitations and viewed largely as a means of acquainting new students with necessary rules. If this were all that the entering student needed to learn, orientation programs conceived from this basis would be satisfactory. Most individuals, though, do not accept this limited view.

The most prevalent modern view is of orientation as a continuous process rather than as a series of events during the first week of school in September. A sampling of 'continuous process' definitions reveals the following:

Certainly, one of the emphases in orientation is acquaintance with a new environment, but orientation has a far greater import than mere introduction to a setting. Orientation is a continuous process which is going on all the time for pupils.\(^7\)

...orientation is a mutual process of learning on the part of new students, the faculty, and student body of an institution, whereby each group becomes better acquainted with the other and participates in an ongoing process which will help the new students to become an effectively functioning part of the institution, and help the institution to become responsive to the needs of a changing student body.\(^8\)

Orientation is a learning process that promotes mutual understanding between pupils and faculty for the purpose of assisting


a pupil in becoming a functional unit in his new school environment. Effective orientation is an integral part of an educational program.9

Orientation is defined as a process.... Through orientation the individual new to the situation is assisted in a reconsideration of his goals and purposes.10

While the word choice differs, most of these definitions are similar in meaning. These individuals and many others realize that orientation, to be effective, must include far more than merely the traditional orientation assembly. They accept, in varying degrees, the challenge this presents to school counselors, administrators, and teachers. The rationale behind this approach to continuous orientation is summed up well be Robert Hoppock when he says:

Orientation, to be effective, requires more time than a day or a week at the beginning of a term. New problems continue to arise, to puzzle, and to embarrass the new student all through his first term in a new institution. As these problems arise, he needs time and opportunity to discuss them with fellow students and with a good counselor.11

Certainly, in a well organized, complete program of orientation services, the incoming freshman would not be handed a list of rules, listen to school authorities' speeches on opening day, and then be expected to have no further


11Hoppock, op. cit., p. 11.
adjustment problems. The traditionalists might argue that orientation services had, in fact, been provided, but most modern educators would doubt the adequacy of such a meager program. Unfortunately for many ninth graders, however, some schools or school systems have not yet caught up with the times. This viewpoint has been ably expressed by many, including Margaret Bennett:

The statement that orientation is a process, not an event has been quoted so many times in the last twenty years that it seems somewhat trite. However, even most recent reports of orientation programs suggest that many changes are still needed to make orientation a more meaningful process.\(^\text{12}\)

One may wonder why such inadequacies exist and what can be done about them. This, it seems, is a multi-sided problem. First, there are still many administrators who, taking a traditional view, consider orientation in its narrowest sense. For many students, this may be adequate, but there are also many for which this approach is totally inadequate. There are also some administrators who consider the goal of the orientation assembly to be an introduction of various staff members. In these schools, the assembly consists of a series of speeches, usually with an idealistic emphasis. This does not often result in a meaningful program. Still other administrators fail to consider the background of their student body in making plans.

It should be noted at this point that there are many schools and school systems whose administrators and guidance workers are doing an excellent job in providing meaningful continuous programs. These individuals, however, need to be joined by more of their fellow administrators who do not plan their programs as expertly.

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\(^{12}\text{Bennett, op. cit., p. 133.}\)
Towards this end, Peters and Farwell state the following ideas:

Perhaps one of the most neglected areas in the school guidance program is the area of orientation. It is not neglected from the standpoint that orientation does not occur, because by happenstance the individual becomes oriented to his new surroundings, but neglected because orientation is viewed too narrowly and there is a lack of organization of the program in most schools.¹³

What have Peters and Farwell said? First, they appear to agree with Hoppock on the necessity of orientation being a part of every school's guidance program. They also disagree with the traditionalists' narrow view of orientation, and suggest the need for better planning. But, more important, they suggest the existence of factors other than a formal orientation program which enable the student to become adjusted to high school. Including such things as social background, upperclass friends, and his peer group, they must be considered when plans are made. Robert Hoppock agrees with this when he defines an orientation program as "a conscious effort to improve the processes of orientation already functioning."¹⁴ Too often, these aspects are ignored by untrained administrators.

The solutions to the inadequacies which sometimes exist in high school orientation programs are not easily overcome. There is no magic solution. This writer, however, hopes to provide guidelines and suggestions aimed toward improvement of various facets of a continuous orientation program. But, there are other factors which this thesis cannot hope to help. Probably the most


¹⁴Hoppock, op. cit., p. 19.
important of these is the need for administrators and others involved to achieve a true understanding of how the orientation needs of their school can best be served. Some suggestions along this line will be provided in later chapters, but implementing them must be left up to those individuals actually involved in setting up and carrying out the programs.

Some mention also must be made of the importance of the role of students in all phases of orientation — from helping to formulate a meaningful program to actually introducing the freshmen to the various facets of the school. Suggestions from responsible students can be extremely helpful, but too often are not solicited, or are brushed aside when submitted.

Just as orientation should not be viewed too narrowly, it should also not be viewed too broadly. It is not a solution to all of the adjustment problems of the adolescent. The possible results of too broad a perception, as suggested by Richard Hill Byrne, are: "... to insure that no child would ever be distressed by any new experience. He would be so ready for each step in life that transition from an old situation to a new one would be noticeable only in externals."\(^{15}\)

Fortunately, most schools do not hold this extreme approach which tends to deprive the pupils of facing and overcoming various types of challenges, and making necessary adjustments.

The most adequate approach, then, seems to lie somewhere in between the two polar extremes, and requires very careful consideration on the part of the

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various individuals involved in setting up the orientation program. If proper, thoughtful concern is evidenced toward developing an effective orientation program, the incoming students, the guidance program, and the school and the community in general all stand to benefit a great deal. If, on the other hand, the administrator or guidance worker in charge does a haphazard, ineffective job of planning, many needless student problems are likely to develop. It is the responsibility of the individuals involved to decide which of these alternatives they would prefer to see happen in their school, and to their incoming ninth grade students.
CHAPTER II

GOALS OF ORIENTATION

Just as there are several definitions of the word orientation, there is a variety of opinions on the purposes and goals of orientation. Some of this variation is due to the overall and guidance philosophy of a school or district; some is due to the facilities of the school; some is due to the type of student body. All of these factors, plus others, must therefore be considered by those who are setting up an orientation program.

Unfortunately, in most circumstances, these variables cannot possibly be evaluated scientifically. They do not fall into neat little categories, nor do they lend themselves to most types of experimental designs. Ohlsen points this out when he states:

Though a number of studies have been done, the real influence of specific programs is difficult to assess. In part this is true because so many variables are involved. Sometimes little effort has been made to control the important variables.16

This writer feels prompted to add that, sometimes, nothing can be done to control variables. In public schools at least, the administrators have little control over what types of students enter the school. In existing buildings,

there is little control over facilities. Even school philosophy is often difficult for one person or a small group to alter. Consequently, scientifically planned research is difficult, if not impossible. But, the need for improvement of orientation programs is still there and very important.

A glance at stated objectives or goals for various types of schools or systems reveals the wide differences which exist. For example, Saalfeld discusses the objectives of orientation programs for Catholic schools. He enumerates them as follows:

1. To introduce the new student to the school program, personnel and plant.
2. To integrate the student into the larger social group.
3. To assist the student to assume responsible school citizenship and self-direction.
4. To form the desirable attitudes and to provide the motivation that are characteristic of the Catholic school in general and of this Catholic school in particular.
5. To establish cooperative home-school relationships.\(^{17}\)

Notice that Saalfeld's set of objectives goes far beyond merely a physical introduction to facilities. Just as Catholic schools are concerned with the intellectual, religious, and social development of the individual, so the orientation program should be set up to aid growth in all of these factors. This type of continuous program requires close cooperation between the school,

\(^{17}\)Lawrence J. Saalfeld, Guidance and Counseling for Catholic Schools (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1958), pp. 46-47.
home and church, and a multi-sided approach which will vary according to the individual school.

Public schools usually operate under a somewhat different overall philosophy, and, thus, their systems of orientation function differently. Again, individual schools and school systems have implemented orientation programs and goals to suit their unique situations. To illustrate this, one need only examine stated objectives of a variety of public school systems.

In Tucson, Arizona, a moderately-sized urban area, the schools' orientation programs are guided by the following set of objectives:

1. To create in the minds of first semester students a sense of "belonging" in the school.

2. To make first semester students more familiar with the physical plant and routine of the school.

3. To make first semester students more familiar with curricular and extra-curricular offerings in the school.

4. To bring about a better understanding on the part of the parents of advantages, requirements, and regulations of the school.\(^{18}\)

The differences between these objectives and those suggested for use in Catholic schools are remarkable, and largely due to the philosophy which infiltirates each system. In Tucson, orientation appears to be viewed in a more limited manner. Notice the emphasis on orientation to a building, rather than to an entire way of life. The recommendations for Tucson schools stress limited activities in the first semester, rather than the more progressive continuous orientation approach. Crow and Crow, in later discussion, mention a high school visiting day for eighth graders and a parents' night, as well as an

attendance follow-up on those who do not report in the fall. By almost any standards, this would be considered an extremely limited program of orientation activities and services.

Various guidance textbooks contain suggested objectives for schools or school systems to follow in setting up their own orientation programs. A selection of these, plus critical comments, follows.

According to Mortensen and Schmuller, the purpose of the orientation program is "to help each person feel at home in a new surrounding or activity by helping him to understand the traditions, rules, and offerings of the school and its activities." Again, the emphasis seems to be on physical orientation to facilities — a rather limited, traditional view. Mortensen and Schmuller also seem to indicate that a knowledge of "traditions, rules, and offerings" is all that is necessary to orient an incoming student. Many modern educators would disagree strongly with these limitations.

Andrew and Willey make the following suggestions for suitable orientation purposes:

1. To acquaint the student with the new school, its facilities, practices, procedures, traditions, regulations, and the faculty.

2. To assist the student in becoming acquainted with future classmates.

3. To gather information about the student that will be helpful in assisting him to make an adequate and wholesome adjustment to the new school.

4. To provide the student with a feeling of belongingness.²⁰

Programs organized according to Andrew and Willey's set of objectives will be much more comprehensive and continuous than those which follow Mortensen and Willey's objectives. This would be most suitable for progressive schools with an abundance of facilities in a fairly stabilized community.

An extremely comprehensive set of orientation objectives or goals are suggested by Bennett. She proposes that orientation be set up so as to:

1. Help the newcomer become acquainted with the new institution — its history, traditions, purposes, physical plant and facilities, faculty and student body, rules and regulations, curricular and extra-curricular opportunities and special services.

2. Guide the newcomer in a reconsideration of his goals and purposes in relation to increased self-knowledge and in the perspective of his new opportunities for personal development as a basis for wise choices of experiences.

3. Assist the newcomer to improve his skill in making desirable adjustments within the new environment and in utilizing his various new opportunities.

4. Guide the newcomer in the interpretation and integration of his varied experiences in a wider social environment in order to help him to broaden and deepen his perspective on life and plan intelligently for the future.

5. Provide opportunities for the faculty and student body to become acquainted with the newcomers, to become aware of their needs and their potential contributions within the institution, and in cooperation with them to re-examine and adapt curricular and extra-curricular opportunities in the light of this new understanding.²¹


²¹Bennett, op. cit., p. 134.
According to this set of goals, orientation is a far-reaching, all-inclusive process. Certainly, a program set up to correspond to these goals would have to be very comprehensive and flexible in order to meet the needs of individual members of the incoming class. It requires careful forethought and planning by a trained administrator, and close cooperation between the high school and the home, community, and sending (elementary or junior high) school. Margaret Bennett's type of suggestions would certainly not be suited to schools with limited facilities, untrained personnel, or those located in unstable communities (those with high mobility). It puts great emphasis on the orientation program, almost to the point of considering it as a solution to all possible problems, an exaggerated expectation.

For schools with more limited resources, other, more feasible solutions exist. Besides suggested goals or purposes as previously stated by Mortensen and Schmuller and those suggested for the Tucson schools, two more emerge as possibilities. The first of these is that reported by Ferguson, who states simply: "A purpose in orientation is to help pupils make effective adjustments during certain critical transition periods in their school lives." This extremely generalized goal can be met in a wide variety of ways, depending on the type of program which might best suit an individual school and its student body. Ferguson's specifications depend, to some extent, on how one interprets certain key words such as "help", "adjustments", and "transition periods".

Yet another system of goals is revealed by Lloyd Nielsen in his discussion of the orientation program of Merrill High School, Merrill, Wisconsin. This small town has a ninth grade of between 210 and 275 students each year. These students come from three parochial schools (25%), thirty-six small, rural schools (37.5%), or the city public junior high school (37.5%). Thus, their previous educational backgrounds are quite diverse, forcing the orientation program to meet the challenge and suit the needs of all of them. Their orientation goals are broadly stated as follows:

1. To make the transition from eighth to ninth grade as smooth as possible for all of the youngsters, relieving much of the anxiety that is frequently present.

2. To program students so as to best meet their individual needs in class work. 23

Most school districts are not quite so diverse as that in Merrill, Wisconsin. The Merrill High School student who lives on a farm and has attended a rural school must become a part of the same student body as the town dwellers who have attended either public or parochial schools. The link between these varied individuals is essentially geographical; their differences are many. Thus, the orientation goals must be general enough and sufficiently flexible to accommodate all.

The emphasis in this chapter thus far has been to show the wide variety of possible goals which may be considered when planning an orientation program.

As should be obvious no one set of goals or objectives can be universally used. The administrator in charge of planning the orientation program must select a suitable set of goals, or must formulate his own set. He must know the characteristics of the incoming students and the capabilities of his guidance staff, as well as information about school facilities and programs. With these things in his mind, he is in a position to determine what kind of orientation goals and programs would best serve the needs of his school and student body.

Too often, careful determination of goals is not done, usually resulting in an ineffective orientation program. Suppose, for example, the administration at the Merrill, Wisconsin High School decided to adopt the comprehensive goals suggested by Margaret Bennett.

Another goal-oriented error which seems to be a favorite with some administrators is planning a series of activities and welcoming events without giving attention to what they are all supposed to accomplish. An opening day assembly is a part of most orientation programs, but care must be taken to make sure it is significant and corresponds to the overall goals for that particular school. A series of haphazard, meaningless speeches might result otherwise.

The importance of setting relevant goals cannot be overemphasized, for from meaningful goals results a more meaningful orientation program for all incoming freshmen students.

Once the goals are selected, the administrator's next task is to decide what programs and techniques will best fit these needs. In most schools, a variety of services must be offered, resulting in what is usually referred to as continuous orientation. This system begins during the student's final year
in elementary school or junior high school, and extends well into the freshman year of high school. In some areas, it may last even longer.

There are many reasons why continuous orientation is preferred to a more limited system. It has been determined that the orientation program should help the freshman student in several areas. It is inconceivable that all of this can be fully accomplished in one program on opening day in September, no matter how well planned that program may be. Along this line, Clifford Froelich points out that:

The orientation program is confined to the first day in some schools. The persons who plan such a program must have remarkable faith in the efficacy of their orientation process. To expect that in one day — even a long one — students can gain the necessary knowledge and appreciation to make a satisfactory adjustment to the new school is, in the author's opinion, foolhardy.24

Unfortunately, some administrators feel their orientation responsibilities have concluded after the initial assembly. They may then wonder why adjustment problems still continue to plague their students.

Froelich suggests purposeful orientation for the entire first semester.

Moser and Moser add to this by stating:

Orientation is usually thought of as an activity at the beginning of a new school situation, but a large part of orientation is accomplished during the last part of the year preceding transfer to a new school. Orientation is a continuous process, not merely a group of activities at the beginning of a new phase.

24Froelich, op. cit., p. 83.

Thus, we have the introduction of the role of pre-entrance activities which are frequently included in orientation programs and further expand the scope and time of the program.

The additional services provided in a program of continuous orientation increase the possibilities of including help aimed toward solutions to problems which various individuals may be encountering. Such a program does a more adequate job of handling a complex adjustment situation than does a single event held in early September.
CHAPTER III

ORIENTATION METHODS

The administrator or guidance team faced with the task of organizing a comprehensive orientation program has quite a challenge to meet. Once the goals are determined, the next step is developing suitable programs, activities and services to meet them. Usually, this begins some time during the semester prior to the students' expected entrance. At that time, initial contacts are made between the high school and the elementary schools from which the students will come. If the high school is public, there is usually a stated number of 'feeder' or 'sending' schools with which the high school guidance personnel deal annually. The situation becomes somewhat more complex where private or parochial high schools are concerned, because their selective admissions policies and wider geographical base usually enlarge the number of schools from which the incoming freshmen will arrive.

Regardless of these differences, many individuals have emphasized the importance of close cooperation between the high school and the several elementary schools (or junior high schools) as the orientation process unfolds. One reason for this is suggested by Strang and Morris:

Smooth transition from elementary school to high school, whether it occurs at the sixth or eighth grade, requires good reciprocal relations between the two levels. Useful records must be sent ahead
by the elementary school and used by the counselors and teachers in the secondary school.26

Thus, is introduced the question of records. The elementary school has a wealth of information of all sorts about each of its students. The high school personnel, as they attempt to plan an effective orientation for these students, must understand the types of students with which they will be dealing. They must also know each individual's record in order to help him plan his high school program.

Unfortunately, some elementary schools still consider it an intrusion to have high school personnel using its records. These schools and their administrators should put the welfare of the student in a foremost position and be more flexible about sharing relevant information and documents.

But, sharing records is only one phase of the needed cooperation between the elementary schools and the high school. In almost every high school orientation program, the initial step concerns visits, either reciprocal or one-way. During the student's final semester in elementary school, he may be asked to visit the high school for a day, or a portion of a day. Quite often, the high school counselors also visit those schools which traditionally send students to that high school. These visits have various purposes and can be planned in several ways. They are usually referred to as pre-admission activities, which Hamrin describes as follows:

Pre-admission services, of course, take place before the new class enters the high school and have as their major objective the creation of favorable general attitudes toward, and a general understanding of the new school by entering students.  

How can these purposes be accomplished? Let us begin by looking at the counselor’s visits to the elementary schools. For most students, this is the first official contact he has with the school he will enter the following autumn. The counselor is, therefore, in a position to begin to lay the groundwork for a smooth transition into high school. Mortensen and Schmuller discuss several things which the counselor can accomplish at this time:

a. Holding get-acquainted interviews with each pupil.

b. Describing school curricula, and registration for courses for following year.

c. Describing extra-curricular activities.

d. Displaying school publications.

e. Testing and collecting pupil data

f. Explaining pupil personnel services in receiving school.  

Not all visitations take this form. For example, in some schools, (c) and (d) are left until the student visits the high school, whether this is during the semester prior to entrance or whether it is not until the first day of school in September.


28 Mortensen and Schmuller, op. cit., p. 310.
Testing is another area which leads to much variation, both in the tests administered and the time that this is done. Private schools usually give achievement and/or aptitude tests before admitting a pupil. In public schools, a battery of tests is administered either in the eighth grade or soon after the student enters high school. Thus, the counselor may or may not have recent test data available to him when he makes his pre-entrance visit.

Typically, his visit centers largely in helping the student to select courses for the following year, explaining basic information about the school, and answering any questions the student may have. Quite often, the student's parents are also invited to attend this meeting and participate in the discussion. This is especially useful in the selection of courses, as the parents will then have a hand in helping their child plan his freshman program.

Sometimes, high school students also visit the elementary schools during the spring to talk to the eighth graders. Ruth Fedder describes one such program:

A Speaker's Bureau was organized and ninth-graders were chosen to return to their own elementary school to speak to the eighth grade about the high school. Student council and faculty representatives accompanied them and spoke in each elementary school. A ninth-grade member of the newspaper staff went to distribute a special "Newcomer's Issue" of the school paper.29

This type of program appeals to eighth graders because the speakers are close to their own age group. In cases where the high school students return

to their former elementary schools, the eighth graders are likely to know some of the speakers personally. They can, therefore, identify with the feelings and attitudes of these visiting students.

Too often, the emphasis in visits to elementary schools is on the counselor or administrator's speech. Students' views on some topics, such as school activities and traditions, would be much more meaningful to the eighth grade students.

High School Visitations

A second part of the pre-entrance activities in some districts involves a visit by eighth graders to the high school. Typically, this takes place during the spring preceding their graduation and is held on a school day. Naturally, the cooperation of the elementary schools is involved in allowing these students to be dismissed from school so that they can make this visit.

When the students arrive at the high school, they may be ushered into the assembly hall for a program which introduces them to school activities, traditions, personnel, etc. If facilities and timing allow, they may be given a tour of the school by upperclass student guides. In some schools, this includes visits to typical classes. Occasionally, some testing is conducted during this day.

This type of visitation helps to prepare the student for his school entrance later that year. He can see the rooms where he will be attending classes, meet some of the administrators, counselors, or faculty members with whom he will have contact, and observe students in classes. Thus, his physical orientation to the building is eased at an early stage.
In some schools, this type of spring visitation is considered impractical. If the incoming class is large, their presence may cause considerable disruption of normal class routine, particularly if classroom visitations are included as part of the program. Also, facilities may not be adequate to handle both the regular high school student body and all of the visitors. Suppose, for example, that the auditorium doubles as a study hall. Holding an orientation assembly during the school day would then be difficult, if not impossible. Then, there is the question of dismissing the student guides so that they can assist in the program, and upsetting the normal routine of the administrators and counselors involved. However, if all of these problems can be solved, a spring visitation can be a valuable experience for the eighth grader. It can either precede or follow the counselor's visit to the elementary schools.

Yet another way in which the high school and elementary schools can cooperate is by including the eighth grade teachers in preliminary planning. One example of this is described by Frank Miller, as he discusses a system which has been used in North Chicago, Illinois.

The staff begins the orientation program by meeting with the eighth grade teachers of the districts from which students are drawn. The entire program is explained to them in order to obtain their criticism and support. It is felt that much is to be gained by working with these grade school teachers, because they are already acquainted with the students who will enter North Chicago.30

This type of program would be excellent if the proper degree of inter-school cooperation can be established, and if the district is one of low

30 Frank Miller, p. 354.
teacher and student mobility. In an area where a good percentage of the students are likely to move in the six months between this meeting and high school entrance, or in an area where a sizeable portion may attend other high schools (private or parochial), much wasted effort may result. In the proper circumstances, much can be gained, however, by consulting the eighth grade teachers or by asking them for anecdotal records.

Regardless of the type of pre-admission, springtime contact, the emphasis should be on areas which are then of concern to the student. Specific information regarding procedures, time schedules, etc. will only have to be repeated the following fall, and thus might better be saved until that time. The overall emphasis should be on student’s programs and creating a good impression for the students toward the school which they will be attending in a few months.

The Fall Freshman Assembly

In almost every school, the main stress on orientation comes in September, either during the opening days of school or at some time shortly before the beginning of the new semester. Regardless of the timing, those concerned with planning the orientation program almost inevitably include and emphasize a freshman assembly. At this time, the incoming students receive their official welcome from the school.

This assembly can be planned in a variety of ways, in some cases depending on whether or not the freshmen had visited the school the previous spring. One such possibility has been used at St. Patrick’s Academy, a parochial coeducational school located in the town of Sidney, Nebraska.

After the introductory talk by the principal, time was allowed for questions and discussions. Then an outstanding high school
senior gave a talk on "How to Make the Most of High School". This was followed by a tour of the school and refreshments.... The program was concluded with a discussion of freshmen schedules and student handbook and an address by an alumnus of St. Patrick's presently enrolled in college. His topic was, "How a Freshman in High School Can Begin to Prepare for College or a Career Now".  

Note that this program emphasizes concrete information which is of use to the new students (tour, opportunities for questions, schedules, handbook). Unfortunately, both the speech by the high school senior and that by the alumnus seem to be more idealistic than is necessary or advisable. The contents of the principal's speech were not discussed in the article.

Humphreys and Traxler suggest some guidelines for topics to be presented in an orientation assembly. This list, which stresses the facilities, activities and rules of the school, includes:

a. The history of the school including its most important and interesting traditions.

b. The physical layout of the campus and of the principal building or buildings thereon.

c. The regulations applying to the academic, social and personal life of students.

d. Available educational opportunities: the various curricula and the courses therein; the prerequisites of courses.

e. Student extra-curricular activities: student government; student newspaper; social organizations; dramatics; clubs based on interest in subject-matter fields or professions.  


This list, which can be used in planning college programs as well as those on the high school level, suggests many possible areas to the alert administrator or guidance director. The incoming student should be told about these early in the semester, and the orientation assembly seems the likely place.

Unfortunately, the fact that a "captive audience" has been assembled has prompted too many school officials to take undue advantage of this fact. Some of the areas in Humphreys and Traxler's list could easily be presented in written form, and merely emphasized in the selected speeches. For example, a lengthy account of the history of the school would undoubtedly not be of great interest to many of the students. If all of the information in their list were presented orally, the orientation assembly would have to be unduly long, thus removing its initial purpose of encouraging the new students to have a good school opinion, and begin school in the right way.

An effective assembly results from careful planning and cooperation among the administrators, counselors, teachers and students involved. Material which will be both useful and interesting for the freshmen should be included. This will vary considerably according to the school involved, but most schools do include some sort of opening assembly in their orientation program.

Along with the assembly, printed material is usually distributed. This may take the form of a handbook, a special edition of the school newspaper, or a collection of mimeographed sheets. Usually, these are designed to supplement the speeches presented at the assembly, and to provide ready reference sources for the new student's questions. Like the assembly, these printed resources must be carefully planned in order to be effective.
School Handbook

Let us first consider the handbook. This is usually the most comprehensive of the assortment of printed resources. What does it accomplish? Robert M. White considers handbook objectives as two-fold: "the development of certain attitudes toward the school, its personnel and program; and the providing of information for either immediate use or for later reference." 33

There are many ways in which these objectives, and any others that the individual school wants to impose, can be fulfilled. To discover what information was being included, Robert White examined 114 high school handbooks, all from a midwestern state. He found that, regardless of the school involved, there were several items which almost invariably found their way into orientation handbooks. A partial listing of his findings follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Rules and regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Activities and organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Daily schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>School services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Faculty roster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Report card information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Curriculum required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Calendar of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Curriculum, elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Awards and honors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A smaller percentage of surveyed handbooks contained information about school songs and cheers (50%), the grading system (46%), the school philosophy (43%), floor plans (23%), school traditions (16%), or college requirements

One question which frequently arises when orientation handbooks are proposed is who should plan and write the volume. Sometimes, students who have shown previous literary inclinations by joining the yearbook or newspaper staffs are recruited; in other situations the student council undertakes this as a project. But, too often, much of the groundwork has already been laid by the administrator, counselor, or faculty member in charge. This is likely to result in a handbook which is full of rules and lacking in a warm welcome. Robert White, in his survey, found that "nearly one-half of them were dictatorial in tone. The question arises whether this can be related to the observation that two-thirds were faculty productions."35

It should be considered that a handbook must be read and used in order to be effective. If the freshmen feel that it talks down to them, they are likely to disregard it and consult their upperclass friends instead. This is less likely to occur if students are involved in all stages of the handbook production. S. A. Hamrin points out:

One of the resources within the school for helping teenagers become oriented to a new school situation is the student handbook, particularly if it has been prepared by students themselves. Those who have gone through a school experience recently often have a better appreciation of what is needed by the next group than the teacher, to whom the experience is relatively remote.36

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34Ibid., p. 43.
35Ibid., p. 44.
The importance of student participation is of concern in all phases of an effective orientation program, but it has particular relevance to the publication of a student handbook because of the variety of possible approaches to be considered.

One locally produced handbook with which this writer has some familiarity is that which has been presented to the incoming freshmen at Farragut High School (Chicago) for the last twelve years. Revised annually, its 56 pages contain information on almost any topic. It provides valuable help to student seeking information on study methods, programming, joining extra-curricular activities, or seeking counseling facilities, as well as the more traditional rules and regulations. Used in the proper spirit, it should provide great assistance to Farragut High School's freshmen.

Orientation Edition of Newspaper

Publishing a handbook usually involves a large monetary expenditure. In some schools, with more limited finances, this is not feasible. Another solution has been publishing a special edition of the school newspaper, usually four pages in length. This enables the students to see in printed form some of the same information they might have received in a handbook. Typically photographs of administrators and student leaders are also included, helping the student to recognize these individuals when he encounters them later.

Since a newspaper is much more brief than a handbook, only a portion of the handbook material can be included. The newspaper staff, the student council, and their respective faculty advisers (those most likely to receive the job of publishing this edition) must, therefore, exercise their best
judgment in deciding what to include and what must be excluded.

Usually, one item which is included in an editorial advising new students to work hard in high school, citing various benefits this might lead to. Too often, this fails to realize that not everyone is gifted and not everyone wants to go to college. In the many schools which have a sizeable percentage of students from lower socio-economic groups, an appeal should be made which more directly relates to their situation. Even in schools in which the student body is from the middle or upper class, most of them will not be academic stars. It is fine to set a high goal, but setting an impossible one will only serve to discourage many.

Another factor which must be considered by those planning an orientation edition of the newspaper is that the paper is less durable and is likely to be kept for a shorter period of time than is a handbook. Therefore, the information contained in it should be that which is of immediate concern to the students. The inclusion of rules for dismissal at Christmas vacation time, for example, is unnecessary because few students (if any) will still have the newspaper at that time. It would be better to include that information in a later edition of the newspaper or in the daily bulletin.

One advantage of publishing an orientation edition of the newspaper is that the newspaper staff is already formed and is familiar with that type of work. Another is that it introduces the freshmen to the newspaper and encourages them to subscribe later. Practically all school newspapers derive a large percentage of their revenues from subscriptions. It is, therefore, imperative that the newspaper put its best foot forward at an early date, by providing information that the freshmen will consider to be genuinely useful.
Mimeographed Material

The third alternative in the area of printed information is that of mimeographed material. This is the least expensive way, and also the least desirable. Since virtually all schools have their own mimeograph machine, the printing can be done at school. Mimeographing, however, eliminates the possibility of including pictures and some forms of diagrams, and usually results in line after line of printed material, quite often emphasizing rules. This decreases the interest level, and increases the possibility that it will be tossed aside by the freshman.

Regardless of the type of printed material included in the orientation program, it must aim for usefulness and appeal. Unfortunately, some administrators boast about the number of pages of printed material they provide without taking into consideration how useful it is.

Tours of the Building

Another portion of the pre-opening day festivities usually includes the tour of the building given by upperclass guides. Ideally, this should not be merely an introduction to where certain rooms are located, but an attempt to help the new student in "acquiring the feel of 'old hands' in use of locker room and showers for physical education (a traumatic experience for some individuals), the library, cafeteria, bus loading, study hall, class passing, and other procedures which greatly differ from those in elementary school."37

37Byrne, op. cit., p. 93.
To be most meaningful, the students should be separated into small groups, rather than being herded around en masse as occurs in too many schools. Emphasis should be placed on individual reactions, and the students should be given ample opportunity to ask questions. As Stewart and Warnath point out, "the straight presentation of facts is not sufficient for use by many students; they need assistance in reacting to the facts and in knowing how to make use of the material."\(^{38}\)

This can be accomplished by having meaningful guided tours which emphasize the individual. The guides must, however, be knowledgeable about the school, and understanding about the problems of freshmen. At the time they enter high school, a major consideration is finding their way about the building, and making a rapid adjustment. Theirs is a conforming age; they do not want to seem different from the other students or have others make fun of their lack of knowledge.

**Need for Continuity**

Thus, the first days of school and, in some cases, the week prior to the beginning of school, are periods of heightened orientation activity. It is at this time that the new students' needs are greatest. The school, in most cases, is eager to help them adjust -- and also to collect the multitude of information that seems to be required of each new student.

Once these first days have passed, however, too many school officials

lose interest. With other things pressing for their attention, they may tend to lose sight of the freshmen, all the while protesting that they have provided an orientation program.

The Homeroom

But, the students' adjustment problems do not miraculously end at the close of the first day of school. Thus, the orientation program must continue. After the opening of school, the center of orientation activities usually becomes the homeroom.

Here, the freshmen have the opportunity not only to be informed about a multitude of new conditions, rules, and regulations, but also to pool their individual questions and difficulties for helpful consideration by teacher, counselor, or older student, and tackle thoughtfully their problems of how best to use their new opportunities and what they as new citizens will be able to contribute over the years to their school democracy.39

How much of this is actually done in the homeroom depends, to a large extent, on the school policy, homeroom teacher, and the length of the homeroom period. For example, many of the Chicago Public Schools allow a brief ten minutes for the homeroom, hardly enough time for even the most industrious teacher to do much more than check the attendance, sign notes, and make a few brief announcements.

Fortunately, many other schools have more time. Properly planned, the homeroom can be an excellent setting for the most progressive group guidance methods available. The students are linked together by their lack of experience and, while all many not share exactly the same concerns, there is

39 Bennett, op. cit., p. 138.
likely to be a great deal of similarity which they would like to know about. They need not feel embarrassed about voicing their opinions, although, inevitably, some will at first.

**Group Guidance Classes**

It might be mentioned at this point that some schools prefer to incorporate freshman group guidance into English or social studies classes, or to maintain a separate group guidance (or orientation) class. It is not important what form is decided upon; it is important that some form of orientation extend beyond the first week in September. The student who is experiencing adjustment problems must have some source available to help him solve them. Much can often be done through effective group guidance, either in providing actual solutions or in helping the student to see that others are experiencing the same difficulties as he is.

In some cases, topics have been brought up in group situations which reveal the need for individual counseling on the part of one or more of the group members. If the proper groundwork has been laid in the group, this should not be a difficult step. As Humphreys and Traxler point out: "Group guidance is employed in orienting a student to the guidance services of a new school or to new aspects of these services in his present school."

Ferguson goes one step further in making this transition:

Like group guidance, orientation activities often lead to a pupil's arranging for individual counseling.... Many of the activities of the guidance program — such as individual counseling, group guidance and orientation activities —

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\(^{40}\)Humphreys and Traxler, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
blend imperceptibly one into the other, leading to a richer and more meaningful school experience for the student.41

The well organized, effective guidance department will take this into consideration when the various portions of the orientation program are planned.

Parents' Programs

Thus far, the emphasis has been on proper orientation of the incoming students. Unfortunately, too many schools stop here. This leaves out a critical element — the parents. It is important that suitable orientation programs be planned early in the year for parents of new students. The meeting should go far beyond the traditional staff introductions and the speech by the PTA president. It is essential that the parents be well informed on various phases of the school. This will vary somewhat from school to school, but several elements seem almost universal. Blanchard and Flaum suggest the following:

...the school philosophy and the organization of the curriculum, the role of the teacher as a guide, a co-worker and a leader, the supervisory function of the administrative staff, the routine of the school, the growth background of the school, who checks attendance and how carefully it is done.42

This is a large order to fill, but will result in better rapport between the parents and the school authorities. The parents will also be in a better position to help their children overcome any adjustment problems and understand the causes for them.

A glance at two sample parents' programs reveals how some schools have

attempted to meet the challenge of orienting the parents as well as the children. The first is the "concerned parents program" in Warwick, Rhode Island schools:

The orientation program consists of six evening meetings held between the months of September and December, during which the following areas are explored: guidance; language arts and physical education; fine arts; industrial arts; home making and business; mathematics and science; and social studies. Each evening's program is introduced with remarks by a representative of the school administration and the department head. The parents then follow a schedule of half-hour periods in classrooms where teachers demonstrate the techniques, materials and subject matter covered in the respective courses.  

Notice the subject matter approach to this series of programs. Apparently, the administration of this school feels that most of the areas of concern lie within the various academic disciplines. Through these meetings, they hope to help parents to know more about the type of courses their children are taking, or might take in the future.

A second type of parent program is in use at San Bernadino High School (California). Their four-sided approach includes "junior high school meetings, a guided tour of the high school plant, back-to-school night and neighborhood coffees. All four programs are used as a systematic attack on the age-old problem of communication."  

The school officials in San Bernadino have evaluated this program in extremely favorable terms:

A result of this four-pronged approach to orientation has been a better understanding of the school program by our

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Of even greater importance, it has given a new high school parent immediate contact with the teachers, the counselors, and the administrators of San Bernadino High School.45

This type of program, due to its variety of methods, would undoubtedly appeal to all parents somewhere along the line. It points to the significant problem of communication, and attempts to meet it. Without proper communication, the parents' role might be reduced to merely signing forms, thus negating a strong source of support for the school and its orientation program.

In this chapter, several orientation techniques and approaches have been discussed. Unfortunately, there is no magic solution. Regardless of the type of orientation program used, freshman students will continue to experience the same anxieties and encounter the same difficulties. The more adequate the orientation program, though, the easier these difficulties will be to overcome. It is the responsibility of the counselors, administrators, teachers, and parents to help insure an effective orientation program for all new students.
CHAPTER IV

ORIENTATION AT SOUTH SHORE HIGH SCHOOL

South Shore High School is an urban public school in a racially changing, but predominately middle class neighborhood. The student body numbers approximately 2,350, with about 250 freshmen attending a nearby branch and 400 freshmen in the main building.

For these freshmen, pre-admission and orientation activities began last spring with counselor visits to surrounding elementary schools. At these meetings, the high school freshman counselor, student, parents, and eighth grade teacher discussed matters of joint concern, usually with emphasis being put on selecting what courses the student would take the following year.

In all Chicago Public Schools, a battery of tests is administered near the beginning of the eighth grade. The results of these tests, plus other relevant information such as student's past achievement, teachers' and parents' recommendations, and facilities of the high school form the basis decisions concerning whether the student will be placed in an honors, regular, essentials or basic section of a particular course. Other questions about the high school which the student or his parents may have are answered at this time.

This meeting provides an early opportunity for the students to find out a few things about high school, and for the counselor to learn a little bit about the student. It also serves to introduce the counselor, with the hope that the student will not hesitate to consult him the following fall, if the need arises.
The next formal step in South Shore's orientation program consists of a session during the week prior to the opening of school in September. This coincides with similar programs being held in other Chicago public high schools during that week.

In 1962, the Board of Education provided staff and authorized a special program of high school orientation, one day prior to the opening of schools for pupils entering high school for the first time as well as for other new students. High school principals and counselors under the leadership of the district superintendents organized assemblies, tours of the schools, and individual interviews of new students and their parents. Programs, courses of study, school activities, rules and regulations, and other matters of concern to new students and their parents were discussed, and efforts were made to familiarize the new students with various aspects of the high schools.46

In attempting to follow these city-wide guidelines, South Shore's principal, assistant principal, and counselors set up the following schedule for Wednesday, August 31, 1966:

9:00 A.M. - Assembly for freshmen


2. "The Difference - High School" - by assistant principal

3. School regulations - by registrar

4. "Good Study Habits" - by freshman counselor

5. "Tips on Good School Living" - by faculty adviser to the student council

6. "Student Activities" - by 3 outstanding seniors

10:30 - Registration of non-enrolled freshmen

(those who had not participated in a spring session)

Tour of building conducted by Pilots

(Pilots are a group of outstanding seniors who are selected to aid in the orientation day program and to assist the freshman homeroom teachers during a large portion of the first semester.)

12:00-3:00 Orientation and registration of transfer students

Note that this program emphasizes the administration, and provides a great deal of information about rules. It also contains idealistic "words of wisdom" about studying. This writer would doubt whether any students, if they were not predisposed to study hard, would suddenly do so because of these speeches. Also, there is a slighting of student views in this program. The program was planned entirely without consulting students, and even the three seniors are able to present only a limited view.

At the meeting, the students were presented with a copy of a special orientation edition of the Shore Line, the school newspaper. This was a joint effort by the newspaper staff and the student council, with the financial support coming from the school's general fund. It contained articles dealing with the various activities, such as the student council, newspaper, yearbook, National Honor Society, R.O.T.C., and athletic teams. A diagram of the school, and pictures of the student council officers, last year's talent show, and various athletic events were also included. Still another part of the paper spotlighted the freshman counselor, discussed the services available through her office, and editorialized the desirability of school success.
The new students were also requested to bring completed medical and dental forms, as well as some proof of residence to their homeroom teachers at the beginning of school. The Pilots were in charge of collecting this information, then sending it down to the counselor for checking and filing in the student's folder.

On the first few days of school, division (homeroom) period, which is normally ten minutes long, was lengthened to fifty and then thirty minutes. This allowed more time for the freshman division teachers to do the multitude of necessary things, ranging from passing out students' programs to answering questions of all sorts. The Pilots were excused from their own divisions and were assigned in pairs to help the division teacher perform all the necessary tasks.

At this time, a check was made on those students who had not reported. The freshman counselor and the truant officer cooperated to determine whether these individuals had moved, enrolled in another high school, were sick, or truant. It might be noted that all grade counselors work on an extended (lengthened) day schedule for the first two weeks of school to check on any missing students. Overtime pay is given for the added hours.

Approximately three weeks after the beginning of the new semester, a freshman assembly was held. Following brief welcoming speeches by the principal and freshman counselor, the student heads of the major organizations and activities spoke. This included the student council, National Honor Society, newspaper, yearbook, G.A.A., Lettermen's Club, Cheerleaders, R.O.T.C., band and two choruses. They introduced their organization, explained its function, and, in most cases, discussed procedures for becoming a member.
The following day, these organizations and others set up booths in the lunchroom and provided student representatives during each of the five lunch periods to answer questions from interested students. While this actually appealed to all students, it was particularly planned as a follow-up from the freshman assembly and, as such, designed to interest freshmen in becoming a part of some school activity.

This concluded the formal part of the orientation program. There is no group guidance class, nor are orientation topics regularly discussed in other courses. The only exception is the introduction to the library given jointly by the freshman English teachers and librarians. Since everyone is required to take English, the freshman English classes of all tracks are invited, individually, to visit the library and learn how to take out books.

Other questions or problems which individual freshmen may still have are dealt with by the homeroom teacher, a Pilot, the counselor, another faculty member, or a student friend. Too often, they remain unanswered because the student involved does not make the effort to seek out one of these individuals.

At South Shore High School, as in many other Chicago Public Schools, orientation is not dealt with as a continuing process due to lack of facilities and personnel to carry it on. Since most students attended elementary schools in the area, it is assumed that they have some understanding of what is required of a student at that high school. Some incoming students who have older friends are well adjusted to high school life before they even set foot in the door in September. Some others, unfortunately, never become adjusted, resulting in discipline, academic, and emotional problems of some sort. In most cases, an attempt is made by some staff member to deal with these
individuals.

With a continuous process approach to orientation, some of these problems might be alleviated. Certainly, they would not disappear altogether because no system is a magic cure-all. But, the present, traditional system tries to do too much in too short a time, leaving loose ends for various staff members to try to pick up.
CHAPTER V

ROLE OF VARIOUS SCHOOL OFFICIALS

It should be apparent by now that conducting a thorough, effective orientation program requires the cooperation of all members of the high school staff, relevant individuals from surrounding elementary schools, parents, and students. It cannot be done by any one individual, no matter how capable he is.

Unfortunately, there are some schools which shift the burden of orientation onto the shoulders of one individual, usually the principal, guidance director, or freshman counselor. Certainly, these staff members play key roles, but they should not carry the entire responsibility.

The problem of dividing this task of planning and carrying out orientation is not an easy one to solve. Because of the wide variety of ways of planning orientation programs, there is a corresponding variety of responsibility divisions.

**Principal**

Almost every such system includes the principal or chief administrator. His role, however, may range from merely giving a speech at an assembly all the way to directing a major part of the program. To some extent, this is governed by the size of the school, type of guidance program, school philosophy, and other similar factors.
In almost all cases, his name appears on all printed material (handbooks, forms, etc.) which indicates he has given at least tacit approval to such activities. In some situations, he may have had an active role in the production of such materials.

What functions should the principal perform? What roles should he play in orientation? This depends on his overall function as an administrator in situations. Certainly, he is a representative of the entire administrative wing of the school. Too often, this gives students the idea that he is associated only with enforcing rules. Frequently, this opinion is based on the fact that the principal may be the one to whom the orientation duty of explaining rules is delegated.

While this may fall under his jurisdiction, it should not be his sole function during orientation, largely because it is not his sole function in the normal day-to-day conducting of his activities. A booklet which is received by all eighth grade students in the Chicago Public Schools states: "The school principal supervises all of these guidance workers and will be glad to talk over special problems with you and your parents." Imagine the surprise of these students, then, when the principal sternly discusses rules at the orientation assembly, without saying much else! Therefore, this writer feels that other suitable functions of the principal might include assisting in plans, welcoming students and parents, and trying to create good relations at the outset.

In smaller schools, the principal may find himself performing essentially guidance functions, especially in cases where the overall guidance program is rather inadequate.

**Teachers**

Teachers are an important source of orientation support, but are overlooked too frequently. They deal with the students on a regular, daily basis and, thus, are in a potentially good position to aid the new student in becoming oriented, and to help him solve any problems which may develop. To do this, an understanding attitude is required. McDaniel states:

Reliable facts on student needs are not obtained by guesswork in an isolated office, but must be derived from systematic studies based on sound techniques: from intensive personal contacts, from listening and observing, from examining, synthesizing, and drawing inferences from the comprehensive data provided by a full scale application of methods for studying individuals.48

Teachers, therefore, must not (and usually do not) stick to their own office or to only those matters which pertain directly to the subject matter they teach. They are in a position to establish and maintain good rapport with their students. In this way, the alert teacher can realize when orientation problems are developing and take steps, either directly or indirectly, to alleviate them.

In some schools with highly developed, continuous orientation programs, entire courses are planned to help orient new students. Sometimes, this is part of the group guidance program, if one is in existence. In other situations, orientation units are included in freshman English, social studies, or

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physical education classes. In both of these sets of circumstances, the teacher then assumes a crucial role in the total school orientation program.

In other situations, he is usually more easily accessible than a counselor or administrator. He must, therefore, be ready to help, and not say uncategorically, "I'm too busy" or "See your counselor" when a confused student confronts him with a question or problem.

Because they are so close to the student, teachers should be consulted when plans are made for orientation. Too often, the only teachers who are asked to participate are those who will have freshman homerooms or who sponsor such activities as the student council or school newspaper. This system overlooks many potentially excellent faculty sources.

Counselor

Another critical participant in the orientation program is the counselor. He should be involved in all phases of the program. This begins while the students are still in the eighth grade. At that time, "the high school counselor can serve as a resource person, answering questions and dispelling any false impressions that exist."\(^9\) This is the first time he greets his potential counselees, and he should aim to create a good first impression.

When 631 Minnesota eighth graders were asked about the origin of their views of the high school counselor, the results were as follows:

Sources | Boys N | % | Girls N | % | Total Group N | %
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
1. Counselor discussing his services - in a visit to my class | 317 | 100 | 302 | 96 | 620 | 98
2. Actually talking with counselor | 221 | 70 | 212 | 68 | 433 | 69
3. The student handbook | 229 | 72 | 207 | 66 | 436 | 69
4. The counselor meeting the entire grade | 210 | 66 | 188 | 60 | 390 | 63
5. Information from teachers | 199 | 63 | 184 | 59 | 383 | 61

Other sources mentioned in this study included experiences with other counselors, talking with other students, and talking with parents or brothers and sisters.  

Thus, a great deal of preliminary groundwork can be laid by the counselor if he gives thought to what he is doing when he meets with the eighth graders. If they accept him as a source of help, they will more readily seek out his services the following year, if the need arises. Fullmer points out that:

The counselor should not miss the opportunity to be of service and to explain what counseling can do. First impressions are important in the continuing relationship the counselor hopes to build. Youngsters will formulate their first impressions of the counselor and

counseling on the basis of the adequacy and quality of the service he provides. They are discriminating and will not gracefully tolerate uninspired, inept service.  

This matter of first impressions could apply to either the eighth grade visitation or to the first days of school in September, depending on the type of program involved. Whenever it occurs, it is an important first step for both counselor and student.

As early as possible, the counselor should acquaint himself with any available information about the students. With this background, he will be more qualified to understand the students' concerns and advise relevant steps toward solutions.

The freshman counselor should also play a key role in the planning of the overall school orientation program. Actually, both the counselor and the orientation program aim for similar ends – a well adjusted student. Thus, the counselor should be an excellent reference, as well as an active participant.

If group guidance classes or units are planned as part of the continuing orientation process, the counselor typically is called upon either to conduct them or to serve as a resource person. Thus, he has another opportunity to meet with the class as a group, as well as with certain individuals or smaller sub-groups. He also has a chance to include what he perceives as relevant topics in the discussion series. If group guidance is not a regular, class-wide part of the program, the counselor might wish to visit the various freshman homerooms near the beginning of the year in order to develop closer rapport.

with the students, and to inform them of various counseling services about which they may not be aware.

Many of the concerns which prompt freshmen to visit the counselor during the first weeks of school have their origin in aspects of orientation. The more thorough and effective the orientation program is, the fewer problems of that type that will tend to occur among new students.

**Upperclass Students**

Upperclass students are a fine potential source in planning and carrying out an orientation program, but one that is ignored far too frequently. In his list of desirable features of an orientation program, Knapp includes as the first point: "Students of the receiving school took an active part."52 Hatch, Dressel and Costar state that:

> Every opportunity should be provided for students and student groups to conduct their own orientation activities. The normal willingness of adolescents to participate wholeheartedly in activities of this type tends to increase the effectiveness of the orientation program.53

Despite these opinions, the student's role in orientation programs has traditionally been limited to guiding new students around the school, or giving speeches about student activities. What a waste of resources! This writer feels that responsible students should also be involved in several other ways, such as serving on planning committees. Since they are closer in age to those

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being oriented than the school staff members, they are in a good position to
give their ideas on what would be effective or on how students might react to
various suggested activities or programs.

It should be accepted that, in conjunction with the school's formal
orientation program, an informal, student-run orientation is also taking place.
Older friends and relatives are only too eager to pass on all sorts of informa-
tion to the new students. Through "the grapevine", tips about teachers,
procedures, activities, etc. are freely passed — and sometimes distorted.

Thus, the administrator, teacher, counselor, and student must serve as a
cooperative team in an effective orientation program. Each has a role to play,
and must undertake that role earnestly in order for the new student to obtain
the most benefit from the school's orientation program, and in order for him to
start his high school career in the most positive, well adjusted fashion.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Since virtually every high school includes an orientation program of some sort as part of their total guidance program, it would seem that they would want to make it as effective as possible. Certainly, the incoming students and the school in general have a great deal to gain from a well organized, meaningful orientation.

Why is it, then, that some schools persist in merely going through the motions of orientation? In the opinion of this writer, the major problems concern confusion of goals and means of reaching them, as well as a lack of administrative training in orientation planning. As a result, some haphazard programs result.

What can be done about it? No governmental agency can threaten to withhold funds until this is corrected; no school accreditation council can apply sanctions; no certifications can be revoked. These procedures while drastic, have been used in the past (and are being used in the present) to force the correction of other school deficiencies. None of them can be applied in correcting orientation procedures, even in cases of severe, crucial deficiencies.

What is needed is more concern by school staff members about the ramifications of their actions. Many do not realize how important it is that they do a complete job of orienting new students.
Most of the administrators and counselors have had some contact with a variety of texts in their respective fields. This writer has found numerous instances in which these texts dismissed the entire topic of orientation in a few brief paragraphs, completely ignoring the fact that these programs must vary according to the type of school involved.

Thus, those planning orientation programs often use a trial-and-error type of approach. The students can only suffer this way.

The question, then, seems to be better means of education in this area for those who are involved in the orientation program. Schools or school districts should make more effective provisions for in-service programs to acquaint those involved with more progressive methods. Authors of textbooks in guidance or administration areas should emphasize this area more than is too often the case at present. Education courses in universities should pay more attention to this area in their discussions of guidance services, or in teacher or administrative training.

Most of all, though, administrators and counselors should pay more attention to what kind of orientation program their students are receiving, and how meaningful it is. Orientation is not the magic solution to all problems but, when carefully planned and executed, it can alleviate many needless concerns for students facing an important transitional period in their lives.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Marge E. Bower has been read and approved by the director of the thesis. Furthermore, the final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

25 January 1967
Date

Signature of Adviser