

Most curriculum leaders today are selected from the ranks of the best teachers in a school. In many ways, curriculum leadership is a lot like classroom teaching. It is the job of the curriculum leader to determine how to best involve all teachers in curriculum work and, in order to gain commitment, determine the needs of teachers. A new curriculum leader will rarely be successful if they try to “be the boss.” Instead, using his or her knowledge from the classroom, the new curriculum leader will try to mediate between the “system” (the district or school) and the needs of classroom teachers. In other words, he or she will individualize the experience for the teacher. Curriculum leadership is almost always a problem-solving process.

It is important to recognize that leading must go beyond the school curriculum team and the building teachers. Community members, particularly those with children in school, are very interested in what goes on in a school. Remember, curriculum development reflects values, and a successful curriculum effort must occur within the general value structure of a community or resistance will soon be in place.

THE LEADER AS HELPER AND GUIDE

Throughout this book the author will emphasize that curriculum leaders must operate in an open, involving, and facilitating way to be successful. Unlike an army general or a policeman, or even a principal of a school building, curriculum leaders don’t have traditional lines of authority. Curriculum leaders are staff members, with authority borrowed from those in the chain of command. Curriculum leaders must use persuasion and demonstrate competence to gain support and participation from others; they must help and they must guide.

In the long run, supportive or persuasive leadership (power with) is much more effective and natural than authoritative (power over) leadership. As the curriculum leader demonstrates the ability to organize, serve, and meet the needs of those in the school and the community, future leadership will be simple. The curriculum leader is helping those in the school and community to develop the program they want for children. This is a win-win situation for the leader, the teachers, parents, and members of the community.

What the followers in the school will demand from the curriculum leader is competence. Competence in the role of curriculum leadership would include working effectively with others, evidencing planning skills, being able to encourage effective communication among all parties, and delivering the results that have been projected through curriculum development activities.