

## CHAPTER VI

### ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION, AND SUPERVISION OF THE PLAINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The general plan of the organization of the Plains Public Schools was discussed in the previous chapter; consequently the writer will not discuss it further at this point.

#### The Board of Education

The men who comprise the board of education of the Plains Public Schools are, and have been, men of the highest morals and ethical character. They are the outstanding men of the community and have been elected because of their interest in the school and in the advancement of better educational practices. Howard Jones feels that the American school board member is a highly qualified person. He has this to say:

There are more than 350,000 school board members in the United States. For the most part, they are highly qualified people in terms of: (1) belief in education as a major instrument for the maintenance and betterment of society; (2) belief in the potentialities inherent in each child, youth, adult, and in the need for providing educational opportunity commensurate with the abilities of each individual; (3) acceptance in the community as a community leader; (4) desire to improve the local educational program;

and (5) high integrity and dedication to serving in the public interest.<sup>1</sup>

The members of the board of education of the Plains Schools have been chosen because of the qualities mentioned in the previous citation.

The board is composed of three officials; namely, director, treasurer, and clerk. One member is elected each year. The term of office is three years which keeps a majority of the experienced members on the board at all times. The members are elected at the annual meeting held in June. Candidates are nominated by the patrons of the district and voting is usually done by ballot. There are no required qualifications for school board members other than that they be residents of the district, men of good character, and have the interest of the school at heart. Board members are expected to give unselfishly of their time with no remuneration for their services other than seeing the school march forward to greater progress.

The work of the Plains board is similar to that of other small town organizations. The writer will try to set forth some of the workings of the group with some suggestions and comments for improvements. The statements which

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<sup>1</sup> Howard R. Jones, "A Bill of Rights for School Board Members," The Education Digest, 18:28, February, 1953.



follow are not recorded with malicious intent, but instead with the interest of the school uppermost in mind. Most of the features commented upon are the result of misunderstanding on the part of the board and the lack of knowledge as to the best educational procedures. By most standards, however, the Plains board is above average. The ideal school board is one described in a recent magazine by Cecil D. Hardesty. He comments as follows:

The obligations of the board of education are as follows: (1) to select a competent professional man as superintendent; (2) to serve as a policy making body; (3) to deal always in an ethical, honest, straightforward, open, and above board manner with the superintendent, the staff, and the community; (4) to employ all personnel on recommendation of the superintendent; (5) to function as a board rather than individuals; (6) to keep superintendent informed of community reaction to the school program and assist in avoiding community dissention; (7) to support the superintendent; and (8) to remember that schools exist for the benefit of boys and girls.<sup>2</sup>

With these standards in mind the following statements are made. All criticisms are followed by recommendations for improvement.

One serious weakness of the board is their method of selecting personnel. In the past the superintendent has not always been called upon for his recommendations and as a result some teachers and custodians were employed by the

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<sup>2</sup> Cecil D. Hardesty, "Some Obligations of the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent of Schools," The American School Board Journal, 124:35, April, 1952.



board that were inefficient. This is definitely not a good practice for the board to follow since it is the administrator who supervises the personnel. These actions lead the administrator to feel that he is only a "figure-head."

All school personnel should be hired by the board with specific recommendations from the superintendent. He is a highly qualified person with definite training in this field and should be recognized as such. A much more suitable personnel is in evidence when the superintendent's recommendations are followed.

Another serious weakness of the board is the method of conducting meetings. It is important that all official meetings be transacted with the official minutes of the meetings recorded by the secretary. In some meetings in the past this has not been done and as a result many duplications of actions have taken place and no one could be positive of just what did take place. It is very important that minutes be recorded and read at the following meeting.

Sometimes the superintendent has not been invited to all meetings. When this happens it only serves to breed discontent between the board and the administration because all professional administrators feel that when the school is involved they should be present. The writer suggests that the administrator be present at all meetings. The policies of the school would be of the best type if the



board would follow the professional advice of the superintendent. The control of the schools is not the business of either the board's or the superintendent's acting alone, but is a cooperative enterprise in which the board and the superintendent and the state work together harmoniously for the good of the pupils and the public they serve.<sup>3</sup>

The writer would like to make the following recommendations in regard to board meetings: (1) that the superintendent be present at all meetings in which the school is discussed; (2) that notice of the points of discussion be sent several days before the meeting is held; and (3) that accurate minutes be kept of the meetings so they can be read at the next meeting.

The Plains board has some very outstanding points. The boards in the past have selected competent, professional superintendents. The budget has been prepared with the help and advice of the superintendent. Supplies have been more than adequate for all departments. The board is to be commended for these things.

It is not the writer's intention to any way infer that the superintendent should have complete authority of the school. The administration of a school should have the

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<sup>3</sup> The Virginia Association of School Trustees, A Manual for Virginia School Boards (Richmond: State Printing Plant, 1948), p. 41.



aid and cooperation of a school board made up of citizens who reflect the ideals and aspirations of the people. The superintendent definitely has certain obligations to his board and the community. Some of these are:

1. To supply the educational leadership for the board, the school system and the community.

2. To be the professional advisor to the board, giving it the benefit of his professional training, experience in school administration, and judgement. This includes not only advice on programs and policies initiated by the board but also recommendations for the adoption of new programs and policies.

3. To coordinate, direct, and supervise the work of all the instructional and administrative departments of the school system.

4. To execute the policies and enforce the rules and regulations of the board, keeping his decisions and actions in specific cases in conformity with the general rules or regulations.

5. To select and recommend to the board for employment not only the teachers, principals, supervisors, but also all other employees of every sort.

6. To supervise the maintenance and the use of the school plant.

7. To handle all business transactions of the board.

8. To protect the schools and the personnel from exploitation, propaganda, advertising, and similar special interests.

9. To represent the schools and the school board to the public as opportunity occurs.

10. To support the board actively and loyally in all of its legal decisions and actions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Virginia Association of School Trustees, op. cit., pp. 39-40.



I. D. Weeks, one of the leading school administrators in America, has some hints for any administrator in his relationship with the board of education. Some of his points are:

1. It is important that all official meetings be transacted with the board in meetings rather than at conferences with individual members.

2. The administrator should assume an honest, forthright attitude with the board at all times.

3. It is good psychology to make it a custom to present something at each meeting which shows accomplishment.

4. The administrator should make the budget his responsibility once it is approved by the board.

5. The board expects the administrator to provide educational leadership.

6. The superintendent should be cordial to all members of the board.<sup>5</sup>

The writer would suggest that both the superintendent and the board get together and work out a program of duties based on the before mentioned citations. A working relationship based on goodwill and a thorough understanding of each other's work would result in greater progress for the school system in general.

It should be stated again that there is no intent to discredit the boards and the different superintendents,

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<sup>5</sup> I. D. Weeks, "Rules for Working Effectively with the School Board," Nation's Schools, 48:39-40, August, 1951.

but rather to point out suggestions for improving the general program.

### The Superintendent

The superintendent of schools is selected by the board for a term of one year. The board requires the superintendent to have a master's degree and have several years of successful experience in a similar school. There is no particular age requirement, but the person selected must be in good health and be physically fit for the position.

The Plains board holds the superintendent responsible for the running of the school in general. He has charge of buying all supplies and making out checks for the bills. He must keep a record of, and be responsible for, all money coming into the school through school activities. He is held directly responsible for disciplinary problems or measures in the school. Fortunately for the superintendent, the board has employed a full-time secretary to help with the clerical matters.

### The Teachers

At the present time there are 18 teachers in the system. The table in the appendix shows the present qualifications of the faculty employed. Since the salary for teachers in Plains is reasonably high the board can make the



requirements high. Some beginning teachers are employed, but those who have experience are naturally preferred. Grade school teachers must hold a legal teaching certificate, and as mentioned previously, should have experience, if possible.

High school teachers must have a legal certificate and have some experience in the field in which they are teaching.

All teachers employed must be people of good character and habits with an interest in the affairs of the community. It is especially desired that the teachers participate in church activities.

The teacher tenure is not as high as it should be. At the beginning of the 1953-54 school year there will be twelve new teachers in the system. The longest any teacher has been in the system at the present time is eight years. This is low and has decidedly hampered the long-range goals of the school system. The board and the community must realize that a teacher grows more valuable to a school only as he or she grows with the school.

The average number of pupils per teacher in the grade school is 22 and the average in high school is 19. High school teachers teach five classes and draw an average salary of \$3550. The grade school teachers have a self-contained classroom and draw an average salary of \$2770.



These salaries compare slightly higher than the state average of \$3493 for high school teachers and \$2746 for elementary teachers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Minter Brown, Teachers Salaries in Kansas, 1952-53. Unpublished bulletin of the K. S. T. A.