

THE PHYSICAL EDUCATOR—A CENTER PROFESSIONAL

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The Place of Physical Education in Center Program

PROFESSIONAL literature pertaining to the Jewish Community Center setting is invariably focused around the social group worker, the use of the social group work method, new program developments under the aegis of the social group worker, and agency administrative operations in relation to social group work goals. There is a certain incongruity in this pattern when we recognize the following:

1. Facilities dedicated to health and physical education activities represent well over half of the total square-foot area of most major Jewish community centers.
2. Membership participation and enrollment in the activities of the health and physical education departments are far greater numerically than participation in what is commonly referred to as the "group work" or club type programs.

Serious question may therefore be posed as to why there is neglect of the Jewish center health and physical educator in professional literature.

The commonly accepted goals and objectives of health and physical education departments are quite similar to the stated goals of the departments utilizing professionally trained social group work staff. The ultimate goal of the professional physical educator is the development of a healthy and well adjusted

Jewish individual; in the Jewish community center, there are five specific functions he serves:

1. Helping agency membership develop a variety of athletic and recreational skills.
2. Assisting in the development of positive attitudes towards healthful living.
3. Assisting in the attainment of high standards of sportsmanship and cooperation through teamwork and democratic living.
4. Training for democratic leadership.
5. Encouraging the enjoyment of Jewish associations.

Actually these five functions, removed from the context of health and physical education program, would be more than adequate to describe the "group work" program of the Jewish center. The lack of professional literature on the physical educator in the Jewish center raises the question as to whether agency administrators lack understanding as to the real potentials for achieving agency goals through the health and physical education departments. Another question requiring close examination is why the Jewish center physical educator has tended to remove himself to the background professionally.

Today, our Jewish centers are seeking professional health and physical education personnel who have a thorough training, not only in health and physical education, but also in understanding the psychosexual development of individ-

uals. The engaging of professionally trained personnel and the increasing salary levels for health and physical educators call for a re-examination of their role how they may be supported administratively and professionally in achieving their objectives.

The physical educator rarely leads or conducts all the program activities of his department. We find referees, umpires, scorekeepers, timers, swimming instructors, swimming coaches, instructors in calisthenics, tumbling instructors, and judges, on the operational levels, carrying out the program of the department. Such personnel are engaged either on a volunteer or part-time paid basis, but the pressures and the demands on the professional physical education staff rarely allow time for proper work with this large array of part-time staff. When asked about supervision, physical educators will frequently reply: "Who has time to do supervision? I'm so pressed and harassed, it's all I can do to get people assigned to the different jobs and make sure they show up."

Therefore, it behooves center professionals, social workers and physical educators, to try to set certain minimal standards for the supervision of the large number of part-time staff in the program of the health and physical education departments. Setting agreed-upon standards provides the support a physical educator may require.

Supervision in the health and physical education department should embody the same principles as supervision of part-time program staff by the social worker. Such supervision is based on a relationship whose prime objective is to help the worker or volunteer perform his job so that the participants in program receive maximum benefit from their participation.

To examine supervision of part-time personnel in the health and physical education department requires an ex-

amination of the process of their selection.

Selection in Employment of Personnel

It is quite important that the physical educator clearly state the job of the part-time personnel. The professional must carefully examine whether jobs can be combined so that the part-time staff person has a definite and substantial block of work, thus allowing the physical educator to confine his supervisory efforts to a limited number of part-time personnel. This would also make possible a position of some stature for part-time personnel. The supervisor must define the type of person necessary to fill the job, to specify the qualifications necessary, so that employment sources might be given more cues to referral than "a swimming man" or "someone to handle a given class." The physical educator must be afforded as competent a person as is engaged for club advisorship. Until the physical educator formulates his job needs with thoroughness, employment sources will not view his request on the same basis as they do other part-time employment opportunities they bring to the attention of their clients.

One of the major concerns is where to find adequate part-time paid staff. In some settings, physical educators have found it helpful to join their staff needs with those of the social workers, so that there might be a joint approach to staff hiring and recruiting. Unfortunately, the physical educator does not usually undertake this joint approach, perhaps unconsciously feeling that his own professional area and his staff needs are not as significant as those of the social work staff. This is visibly demonstrated when we find social work staff professionals engaging camp staff for club type program in the fall despite the fact that many of these people would do top-notch jobs in physical education.

A sound hiring approach in one center is contained in the following excerpt from its report:

"In late June, the supervisor laid out the various part-time paid and volunteer jobs in the physical education setting for the coming year. He then ran an article in the center's paper, indicating vacancies that were available and also contacted Red Cross and part-time employment bureaus of the university for his staff needs. Each job was listed with responsibilities, pay and hours involved. All told, about twenty different jobs were listed this way, with certain of the jobs grouped together. Part-time employment bureaus posted notices and referred a number of people to the center. The center's paper also brought a few results. Coupled with this, plus some participants in the physical education program enrolling as volunteers, the physical education director was able to fill the bulk of the vacancies by mid-September."

It is important to note that many part-time staff vacancies in the health and physical education department can be most adequately filled by volunteers who come from a variety of sources. Examples of such sources are parents of children in the program, former athletes, participants in the center's physical education programs and so on.

The Hiring Interview and Process

The following record material indicates a common situation in some health and physical education departments and shows a lack of sensitivity to recruitment of personnel evinced in a failure to give stature to the job, to conduct a proper interview, and to devote adequate time to the task.

"Supervisor has been noting that each week on Sundays, it's become a hit-and-miss proposition as far as getting fellows to serve as timers and scorekeepers. Last week, when supervisor tried to interest a couple of the men watching the game, they were reluctant to do so and it was only through the personal cajoling of the supervisor that the two men in question agreed to score and keep time. Supervisor decided that it would be important to have someone on a regular basis help-

ing out on Sundays and supervisor therefore asked Joe if he could count on him every Sunday timing the games. Joe asked what the period of time involved was and supervisor indicated that it ran approximately from 10:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. Joe was doubtful if he could do it every week, but said that he would give it a try. Supervisor then spoke to Art, who agreed to keep time on Sundays. The fellows helped for a couple of weeks, but then each one, at one time or another, cancelled out and supervisor is confronted with the same problem once more of not having adequate coverage to assist in the Sunday games."

An actual interview of prospective volunteers and part-time staff is a necessity and should never be done in a haphazard fashion. All interviewees should be requested to fill out an application blank so that the physical educator can gain a full understanding of the applicant's background, experience, and maturity and also be able to check out references. In approaching the hiring process in this fashion, the physical educator is imparting dignity to the role of the volunteer or part-time paid person. The interview and the filled-out form provide the physical educator with an opportunity to orient the part-time paid person to the total agency operation and to gain a fuller understanding of the background and attitude of the person under consideration. This employing process establishes from the beginning the fact that part-time staff are responsible to the physical educator.

Such a line of responsibility to the physical educator is essential but unfortunately is not always established. We find situations in centers where youngsters select their own coaches. We may find men working with youth groups in basketball or other sports with little or no background for, or orientation towards, working with children. Invariably we find conflict situations will arise where there has been no screening process by the physical educator. While resistance may be encountered from par-

ticipants in program who have developed the pattern of selecting their own leadership, in the final analysis respect for the program and respect for the professional are generated by a proper selection process. This principle must certainly apply to programs for children and youth. In certain adult programs, we do find adults selecting their own advisor or coaches. As long as it is understood by the advisor and the group that the advisor functions within the rules and framework of the physical education department, this arrangement may prove satisfactory.

Orientation and Supervision

In the process of orienting the new part-time paid or volunteer staff worker, the physical education professional must give an orientation to the total agency and must ensure that such part-time staff be related to other agency staff through periodic staff meetings. It is vitally important that the part-time person assisting in the physical education department see the total picture of the center and how his work fits in with over-all goals and objectives. In addition to his orientation, he should have a clearly defined list of job requirements and expectations. If he be engaged as a basketball referee, the rules of the league must be clearly established and certain rules, those concerning behavior of the participants, must be reviewed with the referee.

It is imperative that physical educators develop a framework through which a close and clear picture of program developments is observable. In some situations, this may require an actual meeting with the part-time staff person on a regular basis where his work and the agreed-upon goals and objectives can be reviewed. Some physical educators have found record-writing to be extremely helpful. Through the writing

of records, a supervisee gains a fuller understanding of his own work and provides the physical education supervisor with an opportunity to identify lacks in understanding of the supervisee. An example of how a physical education supervisor found recording to be helpful is reflected in the following year-end summary record:

"George is a tall, husky young man in his early twenties. A senior in the university, he is majoring in physical education. Prior to this season, George's work experience with children included three summers at a private camp. Though George's speech and manners are a little on the rough side, he has a warm and friendly approach and seems to enjoy children. He was hired to lead a physical education class for fifteen seven-year-old boys. At the time George was hired, the supervisor went over with him the agency's purpose and the method by which goals are achieved in physical education. However, there was little carry-over in our discussion in George's work during the first three weeks. He seemed to see program as an end in itself. It was difficult for him to see individuals in the class and he tended to see the individuals as all grouped together. During this period, his records contained such information as "today we played Charlie over the water, tag, I spy and dodge ball; all the boys enjoyed these games, everyone was cooperative, I felt that it was a good session." In order to help him better look at the individuals in the group, the supervisor asked him for a short thumbnail sketch of the youngsters. This helped somewhat and within the month, he was able to include in his record such information as the following: "I was troubled today by Larry's behavior.

"During a conference, the supervisor asked him why he was troubled about Larry's behavior. When pressed for an answer, he could not say. Supervisor suggested to him that he observe Larry more carefully, see exactly what it was that caused him to become concerned. The following weeks, each of his records contained more about Larry. In order to help him look at some of the other individuals in the group more closely, supervisor asked him to look at whom Larry played with, which boys avoided Larry and which boys Larry avoided. By following Larry's behavior and how he got along with the other boys, George was able to become aware of

the individual differences in his group. In a later record, he stated, 'Larry was again vague and distant in his answers to me today. He seemed to be walking around in a fog. Jerry, who usually follows Larry around, was befuddled by Larry's behavior today; Peter, who is usually cooperative, was loud today and started several fights. When I pulled him aside to ask him what was bothering him, he told me that his mother had called off the surprise birthday party because he had a bad mark in school. I can understand his disappointment.' Through following Larry's behavioral patterns and then how Larry got along with the other boys, the supervisor was able to discuss patterns of groupings, growth needs and individual behavior, which were areas that George was studying in the university. Through these discussions and examining the records, George was able to see how individuals could be helped to meet such basic needs as recognition, love, acceptance. George was also able to help the boys develop a strong group feeling and a respect for the rights of others. The supervisor was able to help George through the medium of his records and the weekly conference. Through his skill in working with the boys and helping them get the most from the experience, he was assigned to two other groups. He was able to use the know-how and knowledge gained from this one group and apply it to his new groups. . . . I recommend that we consider George for full time employment with the center upon his graduation."

While the supervisory conference and the utilization of record material are two extremely helpful tools in supervision, another very important supervisory technique is that of demonstrating to the supervisee how a given program or activity might be conducted. Nothing can be of more assistance to the supervisee in some situations than having the supervisor demonstrate. By observing the supervisor refereeing a game or conducting a class, the supervisee can better learn a proper use of self. This, needless to say, calls for very judicious handling by the supervisor so that he does not impair the relationships of the supervisee with his group.

It is also important that the supervisee learn in supervisory conference that

there is no one right way of doing something, but that there are basic principles some of which control the supervisor's activity. These principles can be guideposts to the supervisee. Thus, supervision by demonstration borrows some of the great values educators have found in audio-visual techniques of teaching. The supervisor is not expected to be skilled in all physical education program areas, but in those areas where he possesses skills he should certainly teach by demonstration. Where he lacks skill in conducting certain programs, there are resources in the community which can be called on for short term teaching demonstrations so as to enhance the knowledge and techniques of part-time staff. A final *caveat* is that the professional must always guard against creating a feeling of inadequacy on the part of the supervisee through the use of this technique.

Conclusion

Recognizing that the health and physical education program is people-oriented, rather than solely program-oriented, agency administration must be sensitive to the values which can accrue to participants when professional staff are provided ample time to recruit, orient, and supervise part-time staff. In the Jewish community centers over the country, we are serving almost seven hundred and fifty thousand children, youth, adults and senior citizens. Well over half of this group is participating in physical education programs. If the Jewish center is to accomplish and achieve its purposes of personality development, enhancement of Jewish identification, creating better citizens, and molding of character, it is important that a most vital group of professionals, the physical educators, be encouraged to develop tools which will allow the physical education program to achieve the goals of the Jewish center.

The physical education director and his professional assistants can only be held accountable for the professional nature of their work and services when agency administration (1) makes possible realistic work loads, (2) develops

sound recruiting and hiring procedures, (3) supports the supervision and training of part-time staff, and (4) creates vehicles for relating physical education program to over-all agency purposes and goals.