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The Initiation and Development of Student Government in a Junior High School

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THE INITIATION AND DEVELOPMENT
OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT
IN A
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

by
RUTH JONES WILKINS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Physical setting	1
Purpose of report	1
Reason for the experiment	1
Procedures used in attacking the problem . . .	3
Factors in the situation	4
Prevailing attitudes in the situation	5
Summary	9
II. FORMULATION OF A COOPERATIVE PLAN FOR STUDENT GOVERNMENT	11
First plan	11
Second plan worked out by committee	11
Presentation of plan to faculty	13
Presentation of plan to students	15
Plan for inauguration of student government .	16
Introduction of educational plan	17
Summary	22
III. SETTING UP THE COUNCIL	23
Plans of Student-Government Steering Committee	23
Campaign for candidates	24
Election of candidates	25
Summary	26
IV. TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	27
Structure of the Student Council	27
Place of the Faculty in the organization . .	29
Place of the students in the organization . .	30
Summary	32

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. EVALUATION	33
Means of evaluation	33
Evaluation according to principles used in initiating the organization . .	33
Evaluation according to results of the questionnaire	36
Opinion of the sponsor	39
Attitudes of students	40
Strengths and weaknesses in the procedures used	41
Summary	42
VI. CONCLUSIONS	44
Comparison of local situation to general ones	44
Principles of student government as outgrowth of the experience	45
Encouragements and discouragements likely in initiating student government	51

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This project report of the initiation and development of student government in a junior high school is based on an experience at Bolling Junior High School, Petersburg, Virginia, from 1945 to 1948. The only junior high school in the city of Petersburg, Bolling is composed of the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth grades. The faculty consists of a principal, an assistant principal, a librarian, nine special teachers, and twenty-six homeroom teachers. The student body of 800 - 900, ranging in age from 11 to 13, is at present organized in twenty-six homeroom groups, with the usual officers, and engaged in appropriate activities. The project was undertaken because there was felt a need for a student organization. The problem was to prepare for and organize student government appropriate to the local situation.

The purpose of this report is to provide a record of the problems encountered and the solutions attempted in connection with the initiation of the student government program and to furnish, through the record of experiences in one school, suggestions which may be of assistance to others planning to inaugurate student government in a school.

Consideration of the possibility of organizing student government arose because the principal and his faculty, the grade

counselors in particular, felt that methods in use in the school to correct discipline problems were losing their effectiveness. It had been observed that conduct assembly, in some schools called "detention hall", to which students were sent for various offenses, did not correct weaknesses or change attitudes for the better, and sometimes seemed even to react unfavorably on student conduct. This situation suggested the need for a means of building better morale and of developing self direction in the students. In addition, it was believed that democracy should be experienced daily by junior high school students.

The decision to undertake the project was supported further by consideration of certain characteristics of junior high school students. In general, students of of junior high school age are highly impressionable, and are beginning to feel their importance and to develop maturity. The faculty had seen junior high school students demonstrate unbounded energy and enthusiasm in all kinds of drives during the recent war, and, therefore, it had come to think that this energy and enthusiasm could be directed into constructive channels. Possibilities were envisioned that junior high school students would take more interest in their school, develop both good leadership and good followership, feel responsible for their actions and for the welfare of their fellow students, and develop good attitudes in general, if allowed a part in the operation of their school.

A second reason for undertaking the project was the increasing responsibility felt by conscientious teachers to provide needed training for children who were failing to receive it at home. Because of the large number of industries in and near Petersburg many mothers are employed all or part time with a consequent breakdown in home life. Through a student government program the possibility that students would learn self-direction was recognized.

A third reason for undertaking the project was the expression of feelings on the subject by a small group of students, who felt a need for improving conditions in the school and thought that a student organization would provide one means of improvement. These students believed also that they could make a significant contribution to the life of the school if they should be granted a voice in its affairs.

The procedures used in attacking the problem are the next consideration. After the expression of the need for some student organization had come from a meeting of the principal and the grade counselors, the principal appointed a committee to draw up a tentative plan for a student organization. That plan was rejected by the faculty, but three months later the principal appointed a larger committee to study principles and plans of student government and to recommend action to the faculty.

On the recommendation of the second committee the privilege of voting for or against student government was extended, first to

the faculty, and second, to the student body. Both groups voted to try a plan. After the voting had taken place, the principal appointed a sponsor to begin work on organizing student government the following fall.

When school opened in September, 1946, the sponsor, with the grade counselors, the guidance committee, a special student government steering committee, the homeroom presidents, and with the principal acting as advisor, initiated an educational program with the faculty and the student body. Informal discussions and reviews of pertinent articles were presented at faculty meetings, and the student body was reached through the homeroom presidents. The whole school cooperated in the educational program.¹

There were certain factors in the situation which had an important bearing on the organization of student government, there were other aspects to be considered in the preparation for and organization of student government. Among those aspects were a recently organized guidance program, prevailing attitudes among both teachers and students, and the tradition of teacher control in the schools of the city. The guidance program had an important bearing because it seemed to have been instrumental in creating an atmosphere conducive to a group guidance activity. In the basic preparation for setting up the guidance program approximately a third of the faculty had participated. During the preparatory

¹A more detailed account of these activities is given in Chapter II.

period the principal had done study in guidance, the assistant principal, to prepare for setting up the program, had attended a guidance workshop, and the teachers had been encouraged to study principles and practices of guidance. A shelf of guidance books had been placed in the school library and additional ones placed in the professional library in the office of the supervisor of libraries. A year spent in doing case studies and in studying other procedures used in guidance contributed to the preparation for initiating the program. In the fall of 1945 a guidance program had been set up through homeroom units. One period of forty-five minutes had been provided weekly for each homeroom teacher to do guidance work with her students. A counselor for each grade level had been appointed and assigned a free period for guidance. The preparation and the study helped in the development and the crystallization of a philosophy of guidance.

The prevailing attitudes influential in the preparation for and the organization of student government in the junior high school were of several types. The attitude of the administration was an important factor in the inauguration of the program. The principal gave the idea from its earliest stage strong support, based on a belief in democratic principles. The principal felt that students had the right to participate in their own affairs and should be given the opportunity if they wished to do so. He assumed that the teachers would support the students and make

necessary adjustments as indicated by the initiation of a student government program.

Among the teachers were found varying attitudes toward student government in a junior high school. There were teachers who felt that in a free election students could not be trusted to choose council members wisely, i.e., those with superior academic and cultural backgrounds. A strong feeling existed that only students with high academic standing, perfect conduct records, and manners in the best tradition should serve in any student position. On the other hand, there were faculty members ready to cooperate in and anxious to launch a student government program. Those members were willing to trust the student body to assume responsibilities and to run elections, and they understood that student government would not be a cure-all, but a slow, educative process. Between these two groups were faculty members who were unconvinced that student government would be advisable in junior high school. As one experienced teacher stated, "I'm opposed to student government for junior high school, but I'm open-minded and willing to have my opinion changed." Such open-mindedness on the part of a number of teachers was an asset. Some teachers were apprehensive lest in a student government program students would be given too much authority, that the wrong type of student would run the affairs of the school, that students would assume responsibilities beyond their capacities, and that respect for teachers would be

decreased. At the same time, other teachers felt that such fears were groundless, and many had a vision of student government as a training ground for democratic living on a wider scale.

Within the student body were strong sectional feelings. Students from one section of the city felt that there was a natural barrier between them and students from other parts of the city. Dealing with this attitude offered certain complications because there were not just two sections of the city, but four or five, represented by students with lack of confidence in other groups. The consensus among the faculty was that the sectional feeling was a carry over of the political ward system. In the early student discussions on student government could be heard frequently in the classrooms or on the grounds, "We don't want student government. It will just mean that another group of students will run us." "You're right. If we have to be bossed, we'd rather be bossed by teachers as we are now." This attitude, noticeable even at first, grew in strength so that when the day to vote on whether or not to try student government arrived, the factions opposing student government, on the grounds that a privileged minority would run the school to the advantage of that minority and to the disadvantage of the majority, had formed a powerful political force aimed at defeating the proposal. The elimination of this attitude, therefore, constituted one of the important initial problems to be solved.

Another factor in the situation was the tradition of teacher control in the junior high school and in the elementary schools which feed into it. Because of the environment created by this system, the students had not learned the lesson of freedom coupled with restraint, which it was hoped would be a natural outcome of student government. Either in addition to, or because of, the traditional setting, there was on the part of a large majority of the students a distinct lack of feeling of responsibility for anything that occurred in the school. The students did not feel the school was theirs; therefore, they thought it was all right to do whatever they wished to do, so long as they were not caught in the act. If they could whisper in corridors without being seen, they thought they were smart. That all behavior was the responsibility of the teachers, not of the students, was a prevailing attitude. This lack of a sense of personal responsibility lessened pride in the appearance of the building and interest in good behavior on the playground or on the buses. Under the leadership of the present administration this situation is being changed, but at the time of the initiation of the student government movement the condition described was a factor to be taken into account.

The plan was not without support, however, on the part of some students. A small group, led by students who had experienced student government in other schools and found it a satisfying experience, worked for the plan, though not as spectacularly as the opponents worked against it. Those in favor of trying some plan of student

government conducted pertinent homeroom programs, in which they discussed the meaning of student government, its effectiveness in other schools, and its possible advantages. The Civics Club held a debate on the subject of student government for junior high school. The students participating in these discussions and in the debate were scattered through several sections of the eighth grade and made a contribution, forceful and stimulating, to the initiation of the student government program.

SUMMARY

The situation in which the project of organizing student government was undertaken presented both assets and liabilities. Among the assets were (1) a study of practices and principles of guidance by a group of teachers which had taken place a short time before efforts to introduce student government had begun; (2) a recently organized guidance program operating through homerooms; (3) strong support of the administration for trying student government; (4) teachers with a splendid vision of democratic organization in a school; (5) teachers with inherent faith in youth and in its ability to work out with wise guidance many of its problems; and (6) a small group of students, led by three or four students who had experienced student government in other schools, in favor of trying a plan of student government. On the other hand, liabilities existed: (1) strong sectional feelings among the students; (2) fear on the

part of one or more groups that another small, highly privileged group would control them; (3) traditional school setting; (4) feelings among both teachers and students that teachers alone were responsible for what transpired in school; and (5) fear on the part of some teachers that the wrong type of student would be elected to the proposed Student Council, and that a few students would be given too much authority.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMULATION OF A COOPERATIVE PLAN FOR STUDENT GOVERNMENT

In the fall of 1945 the first tentative plan for a student participation program in the junior high school was presented to the faculty. During the next two school years there evolved a student government organization operating through the Student Council, which is now a part of the life of the school. Interest in trying a plan of student government had been created by discussion of discipline problems arising from behavior in corridors, in lines, in the cafeteria, in the auditorium, and in the washrooms. In one of these informal discussions by the principal and the three grade counselors it was suggested that a form of student government might help to solve these problems. The principal appointed a committee of three teachers to draft a tentative plan for presentation, first to the faculty, then, if approved by the faculty, to the students.

Having studied available material, the committee presented to the faculty in October, 1945, "A Tentative Plan for a Good Citizenship Council." Though the committee had little time and few materials at hand, it did a thought-provoking piece of work and laid the foundation for subsequent action. The plan suggested a Good Citizenship Council aimed at correcting behavior problems, but it contained

no basic philosophy and no plan for educating teachers or students for a student participation program. The purpose was so limited that the function of the proposed plan was restricted. The Good Citizenship Council would have been too much concerned with punitive measures against students who broke rules and too little with educating students along lines of self-direction and self-discipline. In its approach to the problems to be solved, the plan was negative; for instance, it would have set up a monitor system out of line with democratic procedures.

When the plan was presented to the faculty, fortunately it was rejected, for sufficient thought had not been given to the principles of student government in a school. The tentative plan was presented at the last faculty meeting in October, and the teachers were asked to be ready to vote at the meeting two weeks later. When a discussion was called for in the meeting at which a vote was taken, opinions were expressed that too little time had been given to the planning of a serious change and that junior high school students were too young for a student government organization. On the other hand, opinions that some change was needed and that the plan might be tried with consequent profit were also expressed. In the light of the needs indicated during the educational program the following year it seems that to have accepted the first tentative plan would have been a mistake.

After a lapse of three months the principal, in favor of

working out a plan of student government in the school, approached the problem anew. This time a committee of seven teachers, designated as the Student Government Investigating Committee, was appointed to draft a second plan to be submitted to the faculty for consideration. The committee held five meetings in which the advantages and disadvantages of student government were discussed. The committee had books on student government and manuals of schools having student government organizations. These books and manuals were circulated and studied by members of the committee. Opinion was divided within the committee on the advisability of trying a plan. Some members were wholly in favor of student government, while others thought it could not succeed in junior high school. Because of the sharp divergence of opinion within the committee, lively and stimulating discussions ensued. Some members thought the council, if formed, should be small because a large one would be unwieldy. Some thought the basis of representation should be the homeroom, as it seemed the fair way of choosing representatives, but some thought that the faculty should compile a list of eligible students, from among whom an appropriate number might be elected by the student body to form a council.

After a study which occupied a month, the chairman of the Student Government Investigating Committee presented to the faculty the recommendations of the committee.² At the same meeting five

²See Appendix A.

eighth grade students spoke in favor of student government. Of these five, two, who were just completing their third year in junior high school, said they felt that Bolling lacked a spirit that student government would engender. They suggested that the students would show more pride and interest in their school if allowed some responsibility in its affairs. The other three students, whose first two years in a junior high school had been elsewhere, were also in favor of student government, and told of its success in junior high schools from which they had come: Evansville, Indiana; Oakland, California; and Huntington, West Virginia. These five students, who represented widely differing socio-economic groups, presented in a respectful and earnest manner good arguments for having a student government organization. The faculty was then given the privilege of asking these students questions about their reasons for wanting student government. In answering these questions, the students were courteous but positive in their declarations that they believed the junior high school students were ready and anxious for student government. Since the students did not remain for the latter part of the meeting, some of the value of having them attend the meeting was lost. However, they did, by their earnestness and interest, seem to influence the faculty to approve a plan for student government.

Added to the influence of the students, two other factors appeared to be operative in influencing the faculty to accept almost unanimously the recommendation of the Student Government Investigating

Committee that a plan of student government be tried. In the first place, the faculty was aware that the committee had spent time and thought on the problem, for the chairman had presented the report in thought-provoking, stimulating fashion. In the second place, the principal had, from the first suggestion that student government, if desired by faculty and students, be tried in the school, shown in speech and action that he was strongly in favor of giving students a voice in the affairs of the school. He expressed the feeling that in a really democratic situation a student participation program of some nature had a rightful place. These three factors, particularly the forthright leadership of the principal, convinced the faculty that students should be given the privilege of trying a plan of student government if they wished to do so.

After the faculty had voted to submit a plan to the students, the same Student Government Investigating Committee was asked to draft a plan for setting up student government in the school. A plan³ was formulated and a copy submitted to each teacher, who was asked to study it and suggest changes or additions if they seemed needed. When the plan had been revised in light of the suggestions received by the committee, it received almost unanimous acceptance.

In presenting the plan to the student body, the committee followed democratic procedures. All homeroom teachers were asked to go over the proposed plan step-by-step with their students on the day

³See Appendix-B.

given over, under the recently established guidance program, to homeroom guidance. Because of his position and his enthusiasm for the proposed venture into student government, the principal had been requested by the committee to meet, in grade groups, all students in the school, to speak on student government plans for junior high school, and to discuss with the students the meaning of student government.

At a regular assembly of the student body during the same week the method of voting on the proposed plan was explained to the students. On Friday during the homeroom period a vote was taken. The vote was 60% ^{for} and 40% against the plan. The most powerful factor in the close vote was the fact that sectionalism had resulted in a campaign against trying the plan. The basis of the opposition was the often expressed opinion that student government in junior high school would mean that student affairs would fall into the hands of a group of highly privileged students. In one room the opposition was so strong that an effort was made to stuff the ballot box.

With the decision made to try a form of student government, the next step was to plan for the inauguration of the program the following fall, since the preliminary details had occupied the time from October to May. According to one recommendation of the Student Government Investigating Committee, a sponsor was to be appointed by the principal. The author, who was to have the opportunity to study at the College of William and Mary during the summer, agreed to accept the responsibility for launching the program.

At the College were available books, pamphlets and periodicals on the subject of student organizations. The Educational Index was a starting point for securing information on the subject, variously referred to as "Student Government", "Student Participation", and "Student Council". With the guidance of the head of the College's Department of Education, the sponsor prepared from a study of materials available at the College a report to be the basis of an educational program in the fall at the junior high school. The report was divided into principles and procedures to be used in organizing a student government program, and is presented in the Appendix to this report.

The educational program, based on the report, was undertaken, first with the faculty, then with the students. A need for in-service training of the faculty before an educational program for the students was begun seemed indicated, as the preliminary program had not included a study of principles of student government by the whole faculty. The sponsor's report was given, first to the principal, who approved it with one minor change, then to the assistant principal, who also approved it. Having been thus approved, the report was mimeographed for distribution to the faculty members, who were asked to study it. Criticisms and suggestions were invited.

At the second faculty meeting of the fall term, the sponsor introduced the educational plan. The necessity for moving slowly and laying firm foundations within both the faculty and the student body

was emphasized. Attention was called to the three questions which seemed to the sponsor in studying the problem of organization to be basic to it. These questions, requiring an affirmative answer if student government is to succeed in any school, were:

Do teachers have faith in youth?

Do teachers want to give up some of their authority in order that students who come to them may know the ways of democratic living in its truest sense?

Do teachers accept student government as a part of the educational program of the school and not as an extra-curricular activity?

At the third faculty meeting in the fall of 1946 an effort was made by the sponsor, supported by the principal, the three grade counselors, and other guidance-minded teachers, to point out the importance of proceeding slowly in actual organization. On this question the opinion of the teachers was sharply divided. Some thought a year should be spent in the organizational procedure, while others thought organization should be effected at once. It was pointed out that readiness and understanding were of more importance in the planning than was speed.

In addition to the report of the sponsor, reprints of articles from periodicals and pamphlets⁴ gathered during the summer

⁴Excellent material may be obtained, some free and some for a small sum, from two sources: National Self-Government Committee, Inc., 80 Broadway, New York City 5; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1201 16th Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C.

were circulated among the faculty. Teachers were asked to study and exchange these materials and to obtain handbooks from other schools where they might have acquaintances engaged in similar enterprises.

In the meantime a committee, composed of one teacher from each grade level, had been appointed by the principal to work with the sponsor. The members of this committee had vision, courage, and force, and their forthright leadership and loyal support of the principal and the sponsor were important factors in the auspicious beginning of student government. Because it was believed that small groups would encourage freer discussions, each member met with the teachers on her grade level. When teachers began to ask for help in planning homeroom programs on student government, the committee felt that this recognition of the importance of educating the student body indicated that the in-service program for teachers had brought results.

In the educational program for the student body the approach was made through the homeroom presidents because of the groundwork for a student participation program laid by the homeroom organization and the guidance activities connected with it. Homeroom guidance had fostered a more democratic spirit and teachers had striven to help boys and girls to participate increasingly in school life, and to accept more responsibility than they had accepted previously. From the homeroom presidents committees were appointed and/or elected to serve in various capacities. The presidents elected five of their number to serve with the three teachers appointed by the principal.

This committee was called the Student Government Steering Committee. Though the energy, the interest, and the enthusiasm of the students had not been used in the preliminary stages, they were used in the educational program for the students, as the students took part in homeroom and assembly programs, and in work in regular classroom assignments. From the homeroom presidents three delegates, one from each grade, were elected to attend the State Student Cooperative Association Convention in Richmond in October, 1946. Since these students were well distributed socially and geographically, one of the early objections to student government, viz. the fear that one group would run the affairs of the school, was somewhat dispelled.

Before the educational program had ended, the administration, the whole faculty and the student body had cooperated. The superintendent showed his interest by addressing the student body on principles, meanings, and expected outcomes of student government. The support given every phase of the preparatory program was unlimited and untiring. The newspaper classes, which in the junior high school are regular 8H English classes, made a forceful contribution by writing editorials, reporting meetings, and writing news stories that kept the students and patrons informed of the progress being made in the organization of student government. Civics classes debated and discussed questions pertaining to the organization of student government, and the English classes contributed compositions, both oral and written, on student government. The best of these compositions were

used in two assembly programs. Some students wrote on why they did want or like student government, while others wrote on why they did not. Presenting both sides of the question to the students in the various classes stimulated thinking and enabled them to find answers to many of their own questions. During American Education Week, which coincided with the beginning of the educational program for student government in the junior high school, there was one local radio program, in which three homeroom presidents, one from each grade, discussed with representatives from the Student Council of the senior high school what was being done and planned at the junior high school.

A most effective piece of work in educating students was done by the art department. The art students made fifty posters which presented vividly to the student body the idea of student government, from the meaning and importance of democracy to the actual inauguration of student government. The slogans on the posters emphasized the principles of student government, the necessity for harmony between students and teachers, the importance of careful planning, the value of good leadership and good followership, and the necessity for continued support of the organization once it should be started. Since no visual aids were obtainable in 1946 from the State Department of Education, the Cooperative Education Association, or the National Self-Government Committee, Inc., the contribution of these visual aids materials by the art students was particularly important.

SUMMARY

The rejection of the first "Tentative Plan for a Good Citizenship Council" seemed fortunate because of the negative approach of the plan and because no educational program had preceded the presentation of the plan to the faculty. However, the presentation of that plan stimulated thought and discussion about student government. In the organizational period the principal gave the committees and the sponsor unswerving loyalty and forceful support, which were important factors in carrying through the educational program for the faculty and the students. In the period given to the educational program the numerous committees and a number of other teachers caught the vision of a student government organization. The extended educational program for faculty and students created thought and discussion about the principles involved in a genuine student participation program, and about the advisability of building on firm foundations and of proceeding slowly. During this period the interest, the enthusiasm and the energy of the students had been used to advance the organization of student government in the school.

CHAPTER III

SETTING UP THE COUNCIL

During the time that homeroom groups had been paving the way for the election, the Student Government Steering Committee had met three times at the home of the sponsor to plan for the election and to set up a guide for the beginning of the council. At these informal meetings the committee felt it was able to work out problems more easily than it would have been able to do in a school setting after school hours. The members of the committee thought this type of meeting had contributed to harmony among themselves. The seventh grade representative on the committee was also a co-sponsor of the Civics Club. Together with the other sponsor, she planned the election to take place in the best democratic tradition. Formulation, organization, and operation of these plans were made a part of regular classroom work, as the civics classes were to supervise the election. In each room pupils and teacher had to register, for, according to the regulations drawn up by the Steering Committee, only duly registered persons could vote. On the day of the election, polls were set up on each floor, pages went to rooms to notify voters to come to the polls, students voted, and returned to their rooms. All this took place in a homeroom period, lengthened to permit all students to vote. The faculty was pleased at the serious, courteous, and

school
orderly conduct of election officials and students. After a committee composed of three students, one from each of the three grades, and three mathematics teachers tabulated the votes.

In setting up the student council in the junior high school, the faculty and the students again demonstrated a cooperative spirit. In the week before the elections took place classes discussed methods of electing officers, and the Latin students compared the election methods of the ancient Romans with those used in democratic countries today. The history classes prepared the form of the ballots, which were mimeographed, and the manual arts classes made ballot boxes.

On Thursday, March 20, 1946, each homeroom, acting according to the recommendation of the Student Government Investigating Committee, elected one representative to the Student Council. After the election of the representatives the procedure for setting up the council recommended by the Student-Faculty Steering Committee⁵ was followed. According to that procedure the representatives met and elected from their number a temporary chairman, who appointed a nominating committee, also from among the representatives. This nominating committee chose the names of two representatives for president, two for vice-president, and two for secretary. The students were urged to become acquainted with the nominees and to choose their officers intelligently.

As soon as the names of the nominees were posted, the students began a lively campaign for the candidates. The spirit and the good sportsmanship demonstrated by both teachers and students indicated a

⁵See Appendix C.

favorable attitude toward student government. The student groups were ardent in their support of their chosen nominees, but were courteous throughout the period of the campaign, which transpired in the homerooms, in the corridors, in the auditorium, in the cafeteria, and on the grounds. The campaign had been so spirited that a reporter from the local newspaper came to the school to gather material for a story on our student government plan. That story appeared in the Sunday edition of the local paper and made a definite contribution to the public relations program of the school.

In addition to the campaign carried on by groups of students for their favorite candidates, the candidates themselves were given the opportunity to make campaign speeches in the assembly program on the day before the election of officers took place. Each candidate was presented by the President of the Civics Club. Each one expressed appreciation at having been elected by his homeroom group and having been nominated to office. Each asked for the votes of the students and said he would work for the students and support the administration if he should be elected to office. The officers were elected on March 27, 1946.

With the election completed, the next step was to install the Student Council. This was done on April 10, 1946, in an impressive ceremony. Again cooperation was shown when a student-teacher committee decorated the stage and planned the program, and the representatives

on the Student Council and the steering committee marched together in the procession. The newly elected Student Council of Bolling Junior High School met the next week and demonstrated at the outset by the attitudes of the members its seriousness of purpose and the wise choice of officers made by the student body.

SUMMARY

In setting up the student organization, the Student-Faculty Steering Committee was determined that it should be done in the democratic tradition. Since there was a functioning homeroom organization, the committee felt that it was the fairest basis of representation. It was an objective of the committee that every student in the school should be informed about the method of election and learn by actual experience how a democratic election should be carried out. The committee had the satisfaction of knowing that the election procedure was a replica of those in the best form of democratic governments. The installation the committee wanted to be impressive, and it was. The attention and the behavior of the student body on that day were satisfying. After the first meeting of the council the sponsor was able to report to the faculty that the representatives and the officers had shown that they fully realized the responsibility that had been placed upon them.

CHAPTER IV

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

Many considerations led to the decision on the type of organization to be developed in the junior high school. In the second chapter of this report reference was made to the opinions expressed in a meeting of the Student Government Investigating Committee. There were on the committee teachers who said they thought a large council would be unwieldy. It was stated that representation from every homeroom would be undesirable because there were two rooms made up of students considered as "problems". Because of repeated academic failure, irregular attendance, and undesirable behavior, these students had been placed in two groups with guidance-minded teachers who were qualified by experience and interest to help them adjust themselves to their situations. Opinion was also expressed in the committee that the faculty might choose two or three candidates for each position on the council, and allow the students to elect one candidate for each position. However, fairness triumphed and it was decided that, no matter what type of students composed a given homeroom, every room should be represented and that only on the basis of homeroom representation could a genuinely democratic organization be assured.

The Student Council in the junior high school is a simple organization with one "house". This simple and direct type of council

promotes efficiency in carrying out plans, seems suitable for students of this age and provides for close contact between council and student body. The officers of the Student Council are president, vice-president, and secretary. In April, 1946, only special committees were appointed to deal with the first problems of the new Student Council. In the fall of 1947 when the Student Council started on its first full year, an objective committee, an assembly committee, and a traffic committee were appointed as standing committees. It was decided in general to appoint committees as the need for them arose instead of appointing numerous standing committees that would have no duties. As McKown says, "Committee organization will depend upon actual needs. The job first and then the committee to do it is a much better procedure than the reverse."⁷

The committees have been varied, and it has been customary to appoint a teacher to work with each major committee in order for the faculty to have close contact with the Student Council and for the members of the committees to have the benefit of the interest and the advice of experienced teachers. Committees have been appointed to help the faculty assembly committee, to arrange the Student Council bulletin board, to plan the Clean-Up Campaign, to work out a system of awards, to write a constitution, to study conditions in the wash-rooms, and to recommend improvements in them, to be responsible for

⁷Harry C. McKown, The Student Council. New York, McGraw Hill and Company, 1944. pp. 174.

the suggestion box, and to study means of improving conditions in the cafeteria.

Immediately after the council was set up, homeroom groups were urged to send to the council suggestions for changes and reforms in the school. The response was prompt and numerous suggestions were received. These suggestions were listed according to the number of times each occurred in the lists of the homeroom groups. Later these suggestions were used to plan projects and activities of the council. Each representative was held responsible for taking back to his homeroom a report of council activities as well as for bringing suggestions to the council.

At the first meeting of the Student Council it was decided to hold bi-weekly meetings. The principal and the sponsor doubted that the council could be kept busy with such frequent meetings and they realized the importance of keeping the council busy to sustain interest; but they were willing to let the council try the plan of bi-weekly meetings, since the decision to do so was made by a majority vote of the members. The meetings to date have been so filled with reports, discussions of these reports, and plans for new projects that business scheduled for one meeting frequently has been carried over to the next meeting.

In a genuine participation program the organization should have connection with the faculty and with the over-all guidance program. The junior high school guidance committee, composed of the

director of guidance, the three grade counselors, the librarian, two physical education teachers, one manual arts teacher, the sponsor of the Student Council, three homeroom teachers, and the principal as ex-officio member, is large. To the guidance committee go the recommendations of the Student Council which usually has prepared them from suggestions sent in to it by homeroom groups through their representatives. The procedure has been for the guidance committee to pass on these suggestions before they are sent to the principal for final approval or action. Each faculty member has the opportunity to present suggestions to the Student Council. Homeroom teachers may send theirs through their student representatives. At intervals a suggestion box is placed in the hall. The chief contact, though, of the faculty with the council is through the sponsor, who will present to the council whatever suggestions the faculty may have.

No student government organization can be effective unless the students in the school feel it belongs to them and that they are represented.

It is but natural that the student who feels that he is represented in the council will have a more wholesome attitude toward it and a greater interest in its policies and programs than the student who does not feel his representation.⁸

If the homeroom representatives bring to the council the suggestions

⁸Ibid., p. 22.

of their homeroom groups and carry back to those groups adequate reports of the council meetings, the students are kept in touch with the council. In addition to this means of contact between the council and the students, another good means is the use of the Commission Plan. This plan provides that a committee be composed of one or more Student Council representatives to work with other students who are not on the council. In the student government program described in this report the plan has been used with traffic directors, who have helped to keep the students moving in orderly fashion through the corridors, and who have been responsible to the council for their directions and actions. Others working under the Commission Plan have been the Pass Inspectors, placed in the halls on the recommendation of the grade counselors and the guidance committee. These inspectors have helped to cut down aimless wandering through the corridors and have been responsible to the Student Council. The Pass Inspectors elected their chairman, who has made the contact with the Student Council. A number of committees appointed throughout the year to deal with problems that have arisen or to plan projects have been composed of both council and non-council members, so that the students in the junior high school had reason to feel they had direct contact with the council.

SUMMARY

In organizing student government, the committees which worked on the problems connected with the organizational processes wanted an organization that would be in accord with democratic procedures. The committees wanted an organization that would be closely connected with the faculty and with the student body. Through the guidance committee, the student government committee, and the sponsor the council is associated with the faculty. Through the homeroom representatives and the Commission Plan of committee selection, the council is allied with the student body.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION

In modern educational theory whatever is worth doing is considered to be worth evaluating. In this chapter the effort to evaluate the student government program in the junior high school will be made. The organization will be examined according to the principles in the report,⁹ used in the educational program. In addition to that will be included the results of a questionnaire,¹⁰ given to the 35 teachers and to 52 students, 26 members of the Student Council and 26 other students, one in each homeroom. Finally, evaluation according to the subjective observation of the sponsor will be made.

Appraisal of the Student Council according to the principles derived by the sponsor in studying the literature in the field will come first: Has student government been of, by, and for the students? The organization seems to have been of, by, and for the students, who have had a large share in the formulation of the policies of the organization since April, 1946.

Second, has the relationship of the faculty to the organization been consultative and advisory? In the early organizational period too many details were worked out by the faculty without

⁹See Appendix. D.

¹⁰Ibid. F.

consultation with a student group. However, the relationship during the year of operation has been consultative and advisory. From time to time a teacher has served on a student committee in an advisory capacity, and even those teachers who have not yet developed an interest in student government have not tried to dominate it. The administration has been careful not to control the organization and has avoided using it to shift responsibility from themselves.

Third, was student government organization preceded by an educational program for faculty, students, and parents? Almost a whole year was consumed in the effort to prepare students and faculty, but in accordance with the suggestion of the administration, parents were not a part of the organizational program. They were, however, kept informed through the weekly student page in the local newspaper of the progress being made and were invited to see the first Student Council installed.

Fourth, were the aims and objectives of student government outlined before organization? This was not done as carefully as it should have been, although in homeroom periods and assembly programs the effort was made to think through the purposes of student government in the local situation. From time to time new objectives have been set up.

Fifth, has student government been used as an experience in democratic living, and never as a disciplinary measure? To this

question the answer is "Yes". One constant aim has been to make student government a genuine experience in democratic living, and all disciplinary procedures have been divorced from it. When traffic directors were placed in the corridors by the Student Council, students who had refused to obey them were carried to the principal or to the sponsor to be reprimanded. These students were asked why they had disobeyed and were told that the directors were helping to keep the halls in a more orderly fashion for the comfort of the students. They were further reminded that homeroom groups had asked for an improvement in hall traffic, but both the principal and the sponsor refused to use the action of representatives of the Council as a basis for meting out punishment.

Sixth, was a form of student government appropriate to the school worked out? It was. Handbooks and constitutions from a number of schools were studied, but the committees, and later the new council, set up their own objectives in terms of the local situation.

Seventh, is the Student Council large enough to exert real influence? It was believed that the plan of homeroom representation would insure a council large enough to exert real influence in the school. Opinion is divided among students and teachers as to the amount of influence the Student Council has had on the life of the school.

Eighth, has the Student Council been given large

responsibilities? To date it has not. There has been an inclination to let the council work with minor phases of school life instead of with major issues. The council has not been given the responsibility of running a lost and found bureau, or the book store; it has not been given sufficient opportunity to help set up the policies of the school.

Ninth, did the constitution give the principal veto power? Faculty and students agreed that veto power should be retained by the principal, in the interest of providing a system of checks and balances. The principal has not used the veto up to June, 1948.

Tenth, have the students learned that democracy is privilege plus responsibility? They do seem to have learned this. They found early that new ways of doing things, such as entering the building informally, brought individual responsibility for maintaining order. It has not been easy for them to accept this. Recently, however, a teacher said she thought that with the amount of freedom given the students there had been a remarkable show of responsibility and that there had been less confusion and disorder than might have been expected.

In addition to the evaluation given in answer to the ten questions above, evaluative material was obtained from a questionnaire. Of the 33 teachers receiving the questionnaire, 15 responded.

Of the 52 students receiving the questionnaire, 45 responded. The wide difference in the percentage of responses, 45 percent of the teachers, and 87 percent of the students, may be attributable to the fact that no effort was made to check on the teachers, while contacts were made with students to see if they had answered the questionnaire. Every teacher received a questionnaire, but only a sampling of the students received one. Each member of the Student Council was given a copy. The sponsor picked at random the name of one student from each homeroom, and these 26 students were sent a copy. The 52 students, socially, economically, and geographically, represented a cross section of the student body.

Of the fifteen teachers responding, one thought the council had been unsuccessful, one very successful, and thirteen successful, though two of the thirteen qualified "successful" with "fairly". Of the 45 students three failed to answer the question on the success of the council, 20 thought it had been successful and 22 very successful.

The questionnaire was not a check list of possible responses but was a means of drawing out the opinions of the respondents. This type of request made the tabulation of the answers somewhat more difficult, but the objective of the questionnaire was to obtain freedom of response. Of the fifteen teachers responding, 33 percent said the Student Council had taught democratic processes, while only 6 percent said it was undemocratic. That the Student Council

had increased cooperation between students and teachers was the opinion of 26 percent of the respondents, while only 13 percent said it had failed to do that. The opinion of 20 percent was that students had chosen good officers, but six percent said it had not chosen good officers and helpers. Percentage of opinion was equal on the question of order in the school, 20 percent said it had increased order and 20 percent that it had not. Order in the cafeteria was considered improved by 13 percent. The development of self-assurance was noted by 13 percent. On the question of developing personal responsibility the respondents were divided, 13 percent said Student Council had increased it and 13 percent said it had not. Leadership was considered developed by 13 percent, and 6 percent said it had developed a greater sense of loyalty to the school. The Student Council was accused of spying on students by 6 percent. Force and efficiency were shown in major drives according to 6 percent of the replies. A desire for self-improvement, good organization, and the bringing about of needed changes were considered strengths by 6 percent of the teachers. An inclination toward too much talk and too little action was a weakness revealed by 13 percent of the respondents. Failure to educate the student body continuously was considered a weakness by 13 percent, too. Three other weaknesses were listed by 6 percent of the teachers, failure of Student Council to play a major part in assembly planning, failure of representatives to take back good reports to homeroom

groups and a loss of too much time in carrying out suggestions.

Many of the replies of the students were long and constructive, but only a brief summary will be given here. Students said they were glad they had a student council because it gave them an opportunity to participate in the affairs of the school. They felt the council was democratic, had helped the school and the students to understand the problems of the faculty better, had increased cooperation, order, and cleanliness in school, fostered a finer school spirit, had taught democracy, developed feelings of personal responsibility and of the importance of individual students to the school. Weaknesses mentioned were a failure to make all students conscious of the interdependence of students, teachers, and the Student Council, a tendency to talk too much and to act too little, and an inclination to ask for too many changes instead of looking for work to do.

Much of the value of a student government program is intangible. The greatest value of such a program, perhaps, lies not in the keeping of cleaner buildings or grounds, nor in more orderly movement of students through the corridors, nor in better order in the cafeteria, important though all those expected outcomes of student government may be, but lies rather in the building of finer attitudes in students. It is important that they learn to be friendly, responsible for their own activities and for the welfare of others, wise in choosing leaders, strong in self-discipline,

and filled with a consciousness of their right and responsibility to participate in government on all levels.

There is reason to believe that some of these intangible values have been secured through the student participation program in the junior high school, though there is much room for development of others. The student participation program, as a part of the total guidance program, has obviously increased friendliness among students and between students and teachers. There is evidence that teachers are taking greater interest in students and that growth in desirable human relationships in the classrooms, in the home-rooms, and in the general environment of the school has taken place. With more freedom in the school has come the opportunity for teaching individual responsibility for discipline. The present status leaves much to be accomplished, but there has certainly been an increase in the feeling among students that they have a responsibility. That attitude, however, has not yet carried over to outside activities as much as teachers in charge of guidance had hoped it would.

The present attitudes on the part of the students toward the Student Council show growth. The sectionalism, i.e., the feelings between students from various political wards of the city toward each other, has noticeably decreased in the past two years. Most of the students appear to feel that student government is accomplishing worthwhile improvements for them. They like being

permitted, for instance, to enter the building after recess through all three doors and from the cafeteria in informal fashion, instead of being lined up, made to keep quiet, and marched into the building. This change was obtained by the Student Council after homeroom groups had requested it and a committee had worked out a plan for entering the building. It seems to the sponsor that the interest of students in the organization is increasing. The opposition of a majority of the faculty to student government on the grounds that students would assume too much authority seems to have been dissipated, as students have been cooperative and have shown no desire to assume too much authority. In general, then, it appears that attitudes have been improved.

By way of summary it may be stated that in the judgment of the writer the Student Council seems to have increased the spirit of friendliness among students and between students and faculty, to have helped students to learn self-discipline, to have helped them to develop some feeling of responsibility for their school, to have offered a good lesson in the right of people to participate in government, to have given increased opportunities to participate in assembly programs, and to have offered ample opportunities for students to express their views on school affairs.

In the procedures used both weaknesses and strengths appear. When the first committee to study student government was appointed, the entire faculty was not taken into confidence and the committee was given little material or time to work. When the

second Student Government Investigating Committee was appointed, a long study made and the faculty informed, an affirmative vote indicated that the second procedure was effective. Democratic procedure used in educating the student body and in electing representatives and officers lessened the chief opposition of students to student government, i.e., that it would mean a few highly privileged students would run the affairs of the school. Homeroom presidents, with whom the educational program was begun, justified the confidence placed in them and proved a valuable instrument in preparing the student body for organization. There have been periods in which too much time has elapsed before a proposed project of the Student Council could be approved by the guidance committee. The administration in the busy routine of school life, finds it hard to give attention to all the problems of the Student Council, and the sponsor, sometimes fails to prepare fully for meetings of the Student Council, for more preparation and tact are required to keep a student council going than are required in a classroom situation.

SUMMARY

Evaluation according to the criteria set up for the Student Council suggests that the organization measures up well to those criteria. Evaluation of the program by 52 students and the faculty showed specific strengths and weaknesses. The responses of the

students revealed more enthusiasm for the organization than did those of the teachers. The answers to the questionnaires will be used in the session 1948-1949 as a basis for improving the Student Council. Every effort will be made to enable the students to feel well represented, for as Mildred Riley says,

The student body will respect the council if it feels it is well represented, if their suggestions are sought after and acted upon, and if they are kept informed about the work of the council.¹¹

She goes on to say that faith in the program is vital and that one of the main purposes is to train both leaders and followers, and that faith is confirmed as the sponsor and others see students grow "in confidence, in the ability to get things done, and in regard for the interests of others".¹²

¹¹Riley, Mildred, "Student Participation in School Government", Social Education, March, 1948, p.122.

¹²Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Certain generalizations have evolved from the writer's experiences in the local situation described in the five preceding chapters. The total experience has led to convictions about student government in its three general stages, preparatory, organizational, and operational. These convictions will be stated in twelve principles, and each principle discussed. It is hoped that the principles and a discussion of each of them may be helpful to others preparing to launch student government.

Before beginning with the principles it seems pertinent to state that the individual or group attempting to inaugurate a student government program in a school may expect to find a setting similar to the one described in this report. In the average school of today are to be found faculty members with guidance training and at least a beginning guidance program. On the average faculty will likely be teachers with undemocratic and those with democratic attitudes, teachers with and those without faith in youth, teachers with open minds and those with closed minds. Students will probably be divided in their opinions; some will want to assume responsibility, while others will not. Sectionalism, a factor in the situation discussed, is not confined to any one school or to city schools. County school administrators and teachers face it in areas

where consolidation has occurred. Traditionalism versus liberalism is a struggle to be found in many schools. To find teachers afraid to release a part of their authority to students for fear the wrong element will control the school is not uncommon. The administrator or teachers responsible for undertaking the organization of student government in school, may, therefore, take courage from the realization that difficulties encountered are not unique to any one situation, but are characteristic of many, and that assistance may be found in the record of the way the problems involved in one situation were met.

A student government organization should grow from the needs of teachers and students. Unless needs are felt, enthusiasm for the organization is likely to be weak. It is justifiable for teachers to stimulate students in thinking about student government. Suggestions and ideas about student government in other schools may be used to create thought and discussion in a local situation. But, it is necessary that a desire for student government be apparent before detailed planning for it is done. In the local situation the needs were for a means of handling certain discipline problems, a desire on the part of students to have a voice in school affairs and to effect desirable changes in the school; a desire on the part of teachers to create a more democratic environment for students; and a feeling on the part of a group of students that student government would contribute to a finer spirit in the school. The needs expressed

here and the reasons for undertaking the project locally might be expected to be similar in other situations. Minor reasons may vary, but probably they will be much the same. The responsibility of maintaining the American way of life today rests to a marked degree on the American schools. Actual experience in democratic living, which may be had through a student government program in a junior high school, may be expected to prepare students to function as valuable members of society. Pertinent to this McKown says,

It is logical to assume that educating the student for successful living in a democracy can best be accomplished by having him live in a setting which most nearly resembles that democracy.¹³

Learning by doing is of greater functional value than learning by rote because what students learn and do makes them what they become. Student government presents an opportunity for learning democracy by living daily. Again, McKown may be quoted in this regard: "It [a student participation program operating through a student council] is, in short, a practice school of democracy, a laboratory of citizenship."¹⁴

To students, teachers, and administrators a student participation program presents one means to desired ends. Through a student government program students may be able to contribute finer things

¹³McKown, H. C., Extra-Curricular Activities, rev. ed. McGraw-Hill, 1937, p. 90.

¹⁴McKown, H.C., The Student Council, McGraw-Hill, 1944, p. 44.

to their school, they may learn self-direction, and they may realize the true meaning of democracy, for a student participation program, used as "a practice school of democracy", becomes a medium for teaching its principles and procedures. The training of boys and girls to cherish and sustain democratic ideals is a major responsibility of teachers and administrators in a democracy.

Necessary for the initiation of student government in a school is the enthusiastic and constant support of the administration. There will be difficulties along the way and without the backing of the administration those in charge of initiating the program will find the difficulties accentuated. Unless the administration is in favor of student government, the problem of securing the support of the faculty will likely be more difficult. It is highly important, therefore, that the administration approve of student government in the school.

If student government is to succeed, an educational program for faculty and students is necessary. That both teachers and students understand the principles of, the needs for, and the possibilities of a student government organization is important. The whole faculty should be approached first, then divided into a number of committees to study various phases of the problem. When the faculty has had a semester, perhaps, to study, their findings should be summarized and an educational program be undertaken with the student body. If the needs for and the meanings of student

government are pointed out to the faculty and the students before organization is attempted, the support of both groups, so important to the launching of the program, can be obtained.

In setting up a student council, or any other form of student government, the faculty and the student body should participate jointly in the planning. If participation is widespread among faculty and students, it may be expected that greater interest will be aroused. The more people who take part in the setting up of an organization, the more should be the follow-up interest in the working of the student government. That the administration, the teachers, and the students work together is highly important, for a real student participation program is a cooperative venture. Democratic procedures may seem slow, but if they are followed in planning a student government organization, the results will justify the effort. If the faculty and the students have been taken into the confidence of the individual or group doing the planning and have been given part in the planning and the setting up of the organization, they will likely realize the value of preparation. They will be less impatient to begin actual organization if they understand the worth of an educational program.

In the student government organization the faculty and the students must feel well and fairly represented. Council members and officers should be chosen in democratic fashion, and all groups in the school, whether they be by homerooms, by classes or by sections

of classes, should have representation on the council. No school has a right to exclude from representation on the council any group. Even if it appears that a given group has nothing to contribute, it should not be forgotten that it is the business of student government to give as well as to receive and that from contact with the other council members a "problem" student may himself receive and take back to his group benefits. If the council is too small and seems apart from the student body, it will hardly receive the continued interest of the students. If the faculty does not feel a part of student government, their understanding and support, needed by the organization, may not be forthcoming. Therefore, it is wise to have the faculty and the student body, either by homeroom groups or by class organizations, well represented and kept informed of the activities of the council in order that the student organization will seem to belong to everybody in the school. A realization of the necessity of having a type of student organization in which both students and faculty feel represented is important.

Each school needs to have a set of principles for student government and to set up its objectives each year or perhaps each semester. A set of principles is a guide, but each school needs to work out its own plan of organization. Objectives need to be kept in front of a group and new ones should be set up frequently.

The use of existing organizations in the school where

student government is being organized is valuable. Using homeroom presidents and the homeroom groups already organized in the local situation proved effective, but the approach to the student body might be made as well through clubs or through class organizations.

Responsibility for items that really make a difference in the life of the school and the welfare of the students should be given to the student organization. While minor items claim the attention of a student organization rightfully, major phases of the life of the school also should be a part of the work of the organization.

Both a place and a time that will not conflict with other activities should be given the student organization. If it is continually being interrupted, or if the members are under tension because they should be somewhere else at the time of the council meeting, some of the values of the organization will be lost. Dignity will be lent to the organization if an attractive room, not used as a classroom, is provided for meetings.

The connection between student government and students and between student government and the faculty must be maintained. If the students or the teachers feel that the council is a "closed" organization, they will cease to be interested and to send suggestions to the council. In a democratic organization contact between the representatives and those represented must be nurtured carefully and unceasingly.

If the student organization deliberates over problems and suggestions before recommendations are sent on to the administration or other designated committees or individuals, little time should be lost before action is taken on those recommendations. If much time passes before action is taken, the council members and the homeroom groups, whose suggestions may have formed the basis of the recommendations, will become discouraged.

Constant evaluation of achievements should be made if the organization is to be effective and to grow. This may be done at the end of a semester or a year, and the results of the evaluation used to improve the work of the organization. McKown says:

Probably no council should ever be considered entirely satisfactory, at least for any length of time, because educational ideals, materials, organization, and procedures are constantly changing, and participation in school control represents one phase of instruction. Constant readjustment is not always uncomplimentary; on the contrary it is often very complimentary, one of the earmarks of progressive thinking.¹⁵

Briefly, one might say: Discover a need, proceed slowly, educate both students and faculty, plan according to democratic procedures, make administration, teachers and students part of student government, work with real issues, and evaluate periodically.

It is likely that there will be both encouragements and discouragements in organizing a student participation program. Those in charge of planning such a program will be wise to use the discouraging experiences constructively. Obstacles should be taken as a

¹⁵McKown, H.C., The Student Council, McGraw Hill, 1944, p.93.

means of growth and weaknesses turned to strengths.

Though there have been discouragements in the process of organizing student government described in this report, and though an intense desire to see the Student Council succeed has at times prevented an objective attitude on the part of the writer toward all the problems connected with organizing and guiding the council through one year, the experience has been an enriching one. The faith of the sponsor in youth and in democracy has been deepened, as the students of Bolling Junior High School have justified the confidence placed in them by their principal, their assistant principal, and their teachers.

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Reprints, pamphlets, and newsletters may be obtained
from this source.

APPENDIX A - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

"The Student Government Investigating Committee

suggests:

1. That the machinery for a school council be set up; said machinery to be simple.
2. That the council start with simple objectives, and that the full purposes of the council be formulated as the council progresses.
3. That a Yes or No secret ballot of the faculty be taken; these ballots to be put in a box in the office by Thursday of this week, and further, that, if any member of the faculty be absent, that she be sent her ballot by mail and return it."

**APPENDIX B - PLAN OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE
FOR ORGANIZING STUDENT GOVERNMENT**

PLAN OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE FOR ORGANIZING
STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The committee suggests that:

- (1) The principal explain the school council idea to the students, by grades, on successive days as follows:
 - Friday - sixth grade
 - Monday - seventh grade
 - Tuesday - eighth grade
 - Wednesday - during the regular assembly period the method of voting be explained
- (2) On Thursday following the grade meetings, the plan be thoroughly discussed during the homeroom period.
- (3) On Friday of the same week, the students vote by registered ballot whether or not they choose to have a student council.

If the majority of the students vote for a council, the following plan is offered, not for a constitution, but as an aid in establishing the council.

- PURPOSE:** To develop good citizenship in the school by giving the students a setting within the school that promotes self-reliance.
- OBJECTIVES:** The objectives shall be set up by the council, subject to the approval of the faculty committee.
- FACULTY PARTICIPATION:** The principal shall appoint a sponsor who has no homeroom and not more than four classes, and one who sponsors no other club. There shall be a faculty committee which shall act as a nominating committee and in an advisory capacity to the council. This committee shall consist of the principal or assistant principal, the sponsor and three faculty members, one from each grade level, who shall be appointed by the principal.
- MEMBERSHIP:** The council shall be composed of one representative elected by and from each homeroom; an alternate, whose duty it shall be to attend the council meetings when the representative is absent, shall be elected from each homeroom. The qualifications of these representatives shall be as follows:

- (1) The student shall have passed at least four of his five subjects.
- (2) The student shall be considered a good citizen by his teachers.

OFFICERS;

The council shall have a president who shall be an eighth grade student, a vice president, a secretary and a treasurer. These officers shall be chosen in the following manner: the faculty committee shall select from the council three nominees for each office, and present these to the student body, and then the student body shall vote by ballot for their choice of these nominees.

CLUBS:

All clubs shall function under the authority of the school council.

TIME OF MEETING:

There shall be regular meetings, these to be held during school time, the number and days of such meetings to be determined by the council.

VETO:

The principal shall have veto power.

It is suggested that the principal shall have charge of the installation of the officers.

**APPENDIX C - REGULATION OF STUDENT FACULTY STEERING COMMITTEE
FOR SETTING UP STUDENT COUNCIL**

OF
REGULATIONS ^ STUDENT FACULTY STEERING COMMITTEE
FOR SETTING UP STUDENT COUNCIL

These regulations for setting up the student council were drawn up by the Student-Faculty Steering Committee in a meeting March 5, 1946. The council will draw up regulations by which it can operate until it is prepared to write a constitution, which will be presented to the school for ratification. The committee decided that the council, after it began to function would write a more practicable constitution than could be written for it before organization.

This organization shall be called the Student Council of Bolling Junior High School.

Membership: All pupils are eligible for election provided they have not failed on more than one subject during the semester preceding the election.

Representation: Each homeroom shall elect one representative to the council.

Plan for election: On March 13 plans for nominating and electing representatives to the council will be discussed in homerooms. Homeroom presidents in a meeting Monday, March 10 will be urged to stress qualifications people should look for in their nominees and representatives. They will also discuss method of nominating and electing council representatives.

On March 20 each homeroom group will nominate by secret ballot and elect by secret ballot its representative to the council. The committee suggests that the two people receiving the highest number of votes on the nominating ballot be declared the nominees, and that again by secret ballot one of these two be elected the representative. Method of nomination and election of the officers of the Student Council:

1. On March 24 the twenty-six representatives will meet in room 311 during homeroom period to elect a temporary chairman, who will serve as head of the council until the election of the officers.

2. This chairman with the guidance of the sponsor will appoint a nominating committee.

3. This nominating committee shall be composed of five members:

Two members from 8H
One " " 8L
One " " 7th grade
One " " 6th grade

This committee will nominate for president two people from among the 8H representatives who will be in junior high until January, 1948, one person from 8L and one person from the seventh grade for vice-president, and two from the sixth grade for secretary. These nominees will be chosen by the committee from the council representatives who will have been elected by their homerooms. During the assembly program of March 26 the nominees will be introduced. Method of registering and voting: Every student and every teacher in order to be eligible to vote must register. The secretary of each homeroom shall register the teacher and pupils of his room. Special teachers on the first floor may register in 110, on second floor in 204, and on third in 301. The secretary of each room will pass the register with HOMEROOM NUMBER ON IT to the temporary chairman of the representatives by 9 a.m., on March 27, the day of the election of officers. No one will be permitted to vote unless his or her name is on the voting list. If he has not registered up to the day of the election, he will be required to obtain from his teacher a statement that he is eligible to vote.

The Civics Club under the sponsorship of Misses Jarratt and Hank will be in charge of the election, which will take place in this order:

At each polling place, a list of which will be posted, there will be two pages, a judge and a registrar. Pages will notify various homeroom groups when it is time for them to vote. Ballots to be used will be prepared by the history teachers and a group of the students. They will be placed in the hands of the judges at the beginning of the homeroom period Thursday, March 27. Ballot boxes will be placed at polls by a committee of teachers. After the voting is over the judges and a committee of teachers will tabulate the votes. Of the two people nominated for each office the individual receiving the majority vote cast for that office will be declared elected to that office. These three officers will serve until the beginning of the second semester next January or February, 1948.

Installation of Student Council officers: This ceremony will take place in assembly April 9.

First meeting of Student Council under its elected officers will take place Friday, April 11, in Room 311 during homeroom period.

APPENDIX D - SOME PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT

SOME PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT

In a study of the problem of initiating student government in any school, three questions requiring an affirmative answer, if student government is to succeed, seem to confront one. These questions are:

1. Do you want to give up some of your authority in order that the youth who come to you for guidance and learning may know the ways of democratic living in its truest sense?
2. Do you accept student government as a part of the educational program of the school and not as an extra-curricular activity?
3. Do you have faith in youth?

I. Student government must be of, by, and for students.

- A. A desire for student government must come from the students themselves. "The council must be demanded by the school.... A successful form of democratic government comes only in response to a definite demand for it, and an intelligent demand comes only after an appreciation of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations that it may bring. No principal, faculty, or even interested group of students can force a council upon a school. The consent of the governed is basic to any form of democratic living, and naturally, a plan must have the support of the individuals who compose the group for which it is designed. This support will probably never be unanimous, but it must be a solid majority. Without it any council will fail."¹
- B. A superimposed plan, no matter how good, will in all likelihood fail.²
- C. Students must be given dominant part in carrying out activities.³
- D. Students should take the consequences of their decisions and profit by their mistakes.⁴

¹Extra-Curricular Activities, McKown, H. C., McGraw-Hill, 1937.

²The Student Council, McKown, H. C., McGraw-Hill, 1944.

³Your School and Its Government, Kelley, Earl C. and Faunce, R.C.

⁴Democracy in School Administration, Koopman, Miel and Misner,

- E. The welfare of the students must be the chief concern of any student government organization.
- II. The relationship of the faculty to the student government organization should be consultative and advisory.
- A. Pupil experience, not teacher control, must be emphasized if student government is to become an enriching experience.
- B. Intelligent cooperation of the faculty will do much to insure success of a newly organized student government.
- C. The faculty should have an attitude of assistance, instead of one of domination.⁵
- D. Sponsor must give leeway to students.⁶
- E. Students, even in junior high school, can do much for themselves if allowed to act.
- F. Student government involves the cooperation of all people in the school: administrators, teachers, cafeteria managers, janitorial staff.
- G. Student government used simply to shift responsibility from faculty to students is not true student government.
- III. Student government in action must be preceded by an educational program for faculty, students and parents.⁷
- A. Faculty must believe in youth and in democratic processes.
- B. Students must have gradual preparation for self-government.⁸
- C. Parents must understand need for and principles of self-government.
- IV. Aims and objectives of student government should be outlined before organization.
- A. Student government should train objectively and realistically for citizenship.⁹

⁵Democracy Must Be Taught, Stanffacher, H. W., "Harvard Ed. Review," April, 1945.

⁶Ibid.

⁷The Student Council, McKown, H.C., McGraw-Hill, 1944.

⁸Extra-Curricular Activities, McKown, H.C., McGraw-Hill, 1937.

⁹Student Participation in School Government, Vineyard, J.J., A. S. Barnes & Co., 1930.

- B. Student government should train youth to:
1. Think for themselves
 2. Think in terms of group welfare
 3. Stand on their feet before their peers
 4. Express their own judgments
- C. Student government should train in self-direction toward worthwhile ends.¹⁰
- V. Student government should never be used as a disciplinary measure, but as an experience in democratic living during which many common discipline problems will disappear
- VI. Each school must work out its own form of student government.
- A. Copying the plan of another school or having student government because "it's the thing to do" is likely to result in failure.
- VII. A student council should be large enough to exert real influence.¹¹
- A. Council must touch lives of many students, perhaps through organization on the commission plan in which one council member works with a committee chosen from outside the council. In this way a large number of students can be brought into close contact with the council.
- B. Each homeroom should have regular reports from the council and a discussion of minutes of council meetings.
- C. Any student should feel free to refer to a council member any problem he wishes to have discussed.
- VIII. A student council must have large responsibilities.¹²
- A. Students must feel they are handling real issues.
- B. Students must feel their school belongs to them.
- C. Student government must become a serious part of school life with a time in the school day and a place set apart for it.

¹⁰The Education of Youth for Leadership, Jones, A. J., McGraw-Hill, 1938.

¹¹Student Participation in School Government, Vineyard, J.J., A. S. Barnes, 1930.

¹²Ibid.

- IX. The principal should retain veto power
- A. However, this should be minimized in setting up the plan, or students will feel the faculty has a suspicious attitude toward them.
 - B. If council evolves from a gradual and thorough educational program and if students are permitted to organize according to their own ideas, veto power will be rarely necessary. "When principal and pupils do things together in good faith with sufficient discussion and concensus, there will be no need for any veto."¹³
- X. Student government should above all teach that democracy is privilege plus responsibility. "Only as students live democracy will they come to know its true meaning."¹⁴

¹³Too Many Safeguards Kill Student Government, "The Clearing House," December, 1943.

¹⁴Adolescence, Mackenzie, G. N., 43rd Yearbook, Part I, National Society for Study of Education, 1944.

**APPENDIX E - GENERAL PLAN FOR PROCEDURE IN ORGANIZING
STUDENT GOVERNMENT AT BOLLING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

GENERAL PLAN FOR PROCEDURE IN ORGANIZING
STUDENT GOVERNMENT AT BOLLING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

I. Education of faculty, student and parents.

A. Faculty

Step 1 - Conference with Mr. Scott to discuss principles and plan for a committee to work on educational program with suggestion that final committee be composed of faculty, students and parents. In this conference approval and active support of plan is to be asked of Mr. Scott.

Step 2 - Conference with Miss Cataniss, three grade counselors, and guidance committee to solicit their aid in educational program after a thorough discussion of principles and the adding of any additional principles they may suggest.

Step 3 - Conference with whole faculty to discuss plans for and principles of student government.

Step 4 - Ask Miss Donnan to help with educational program through newspaper after students thoroughly understand what student government is.

Step 5 - Faculty members watch for and exchange articles on student government.

B. Students

Step 1 - Invite group of representative students (representation may be by homeroom or by organization) to participate in discussion of principles of and plans for student government.

Step 2 - Student and faculty committee study plans of other school groups.

Step 3 - Student and faculty committee visit other schools where student government operates.

Step 4 - After study and visits have report made to every homeroom.

Step 5 - Have copies of principles and plans for procedure mimeographed for distribution to each homeroom where individual groups will have opportunity to study, discuss, and add to them.

Step 6 - By way of posters, assembly programs, and talks assist students in putting on educational program for whole student body.

C. Parents

Step 1 - Invite group of parents representing cross section of school to meet and discuss student government with faculty and students, for a student government educational program of necessity includes faculty, students and parents.

Step 2 - Enlist aid of group of parents in helping to organize student council.

Step 3 - Keep parents informed of progress being made.

Mr. Scott's suggestion: To enlist interest and sympathy of parents is a praiseworthy undertaking, but is it wise to enlist this interest and sympathy in the manner suggested?

Careful thought and planning are necessary to launch an organization of this kind and unless the parents are taking part in the planning all through the year previous to the inauguration of student government, they may easily prove a hindrance rather than a help.

After student government is an accomplished fact we can see no objection, on the contrary we can see great advantages, in inviting parents in to see it work, to attend any meetings that are in session and then to offer suggestions, etc.

II. Planning of objectives by faculty, students, and parents.

III. Setting up of the council.

These two phases are to be worked out by committees and sponsor, who will go to William and Mary for conferences with Mr. Oliver from time to time during school year.

APPENDIX F - QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

McKown says 'The organization and operation of a plan of student participation is expensive in time, efforts, and money and, if the plan is to continue to exist, this cost must be satisfactorily justified to those who are asked to meet it .

Emphasis is on objectives sought and attained or lost not in form of organization. The test of a student organization is in what it accomplishes. This questionnaire has two purposes.

1. To improve Student Council next year
2. To gather evaluative material for sponsor's report of the two year's work

Please answer these questions briefly and put unsigned sheet in Suggestion Box.

1. Are you glad that your school has a student council? Why, or why not?
2. Are you interested in what the council does? Why, or why not?
3. Do you have a pretty clear idea of the main purpose of our student council plan? What do you think this purpose is?
4. Do you feel that you have any personal responsibility for the success of the plan? Give reasons for your answer.
5. Do you have opportunities to participate in the discussion of school problems?
6. Do you believe that the council is seriously and continuously trying to find opportunities to render service to the school?
7. Do you feel that you yourself are represented in the council?
8. Do you consider the council a serious-minded body?
9. Do you believe that the council has accomplished some really important achievements? If so, will you illustrate?
10. Because of the council's work, do you feel that you understand better the problems of the school? That you take a greater interest in these problems?
11. In general, do you believe that the council is composed of good members? That it has good officers?
12. Has your attitude toward the school changed because of council activities? If so, in what way?
13. Has your attitude toward yourself changed? If so, in what way?
14. Has your attitude toward other students changed? If so, in what way?
15. Because of council activities, do you believe that you have a better understanding of the meaning of democratic government?

16. Do you believe that you are better prepared for adult citizenship?
17. Do you believe that you will take a greater interest in adult citizenship activities?
18. Do you consider yourself a better all-round school citizen because of the council's work? Explain your answer.
19. Does the council make any difference to you in your daily school life? If so, just what?
20. In general, would you say that the council has been (underscore one)
Unsuccessful Successful Very successful.
21. Name two or more strengths of the Student Council.
22. Name two or more weaknesses of the Student Council.

Students received whole sheet, but teachers only the last three questions on the questionnaire, which was prepared from Chapter XIII of The Student Council by McKown.

VITA

The writer was born at Allen, Maryland, May 1, 1904. There she attended grade school and was graduated from Wicomico High School, Salisbury, Maryland, in 1921. From 1921-1923, she attended Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland, and in the summer of 1923 the College of William and Mary. From 1923-1925 she taught at Cape Charles High School, Cape Charles, Virginia. On October 3, 1925, she was married to W. Elliott Wilkins. Following his death in 1942, she returned to college and to teaching. In completing work for the A. B. degree, the writer spent one year at Westhampton College, University of Richmond, and two summers at the College of William and Mary, from which she received her degree in August, 1944. From 1943-1945 she taught English and sponsored the Dramatics Club at Cape Charles High School. From 1945-1948 she has taught at Bolling Junior High School, Petersburg, Virginia. The writer is a member of Petersburg Branch, American Association of University Women, Alpha Zeta Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi, and The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, of which in April, 1948, she was elected state president for a term of two years.