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Problems in Administration of Mount Zion School

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PROBLEMS IN ADMINISTRATION OF
MOUNT ZION SCHOOL

By

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Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College

Prairie View, Texas

August, 1939

PROBLEMS IN ADMINISTRATION OF MOUNT ZION SCHOOL

By

Katie Bell Sue Fleeks Walker

A Thesis in Education Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Science
in
Education

in the

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of the

Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College

Prairie View, Texas

August, 1939

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to show how "Mount Zion School has Helped to Solve the Problems of Mount Zion Community."

The sources of data for this study came from the written records of Mount Zion Schools, records in County Superintendent's Office of Houston County, and the writer's own activities while working in the Mount Zion School and community.

The following methods of procedure were used in collecting data: A review of records and activities in Mount Zion School and community, interviews with several of the citizens of Mount Zion Community, interviews with the County Superintendent of Houston County, and a critical review of the writer's own activities as Principal of the Mount Zion School for the past thirteen (13) years.

INTRODUCTION

Foreword

Mount Zion School is located in Houston County,

The writer is grateful to those who have helped gather the material for this thesis.

She wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Miss Willie Grounds, Secretary to the County Superintendent of Houston County; Mrs Carrie A Grice; Mrs Arabella Shaw; Mrs Victoria J D Beasley; and Mr Charles Johnson for the valuable aid they have given in the development of this thesis.

To my adviser, Dr G L Harrison, I also wish to acknowledge my sincere appreciation for the assistance, patience and time he has given me in the developing of this thesis.

1880-81 - Mr Hazikiah Staton, a Negro, who now lives in Galveston, Texas

1881-82 - Mr Gladman, white

1883-84 - Mr Sundry, white

1884-86 - Mr Ed Beasley

1886-93 - Mr Lee Johnson

1893-94 - Miss Estelle Davis

1894-96 - Mr Gipson

From 1884 to the present Negro teachers only have been employed in Mount Zion School.

INTRODUCTION

Mount Zion School is located in Houston County, nine miles west of Grapeland, Texas. It is located in a Negro community, whose chief occupation is farming. The Negroes own most of the land and there is not a white family in Mount Zion School District.

The school was established in 1878 and from 1878 to 1882 the school was taught in the church house. The first school house, which was a one room building, was built in 1882.

From 1878 to 1896 there was one school in Mount Zion community and the following named persons served as teachers:

1878-80 - Mr Walker, a white man

1880-81 - Mr Hezekiah Staton, a Negro, who now lives in Galveston, Texas

1881-82 - Mr Gladman, white

1882-84 - Mr Bunzsy, white

1884-86 - Mr Ed Beasley

1886-93 - Mr Lee Johnson

1893-94 - Miss Estella Davis

1894-96 - Mr Gipson

From 1884 to the present Negro teachers only have been employed in Mount Zion School.

In 1896 the school split and in Mount Zion Community there were two schools about a mile and a half apart with the following teachers:

1896-98 - Miss Corrie Jones and Miss Argusta Hale

1898-1900 - Miss Millie Denby and Miss Gencie Martin

1900-02 - Miss Marie Lambert and Miss Genice Martin

1902-04 - Miss Texana Carr and Miss Emma Hicks

In 1904 Mr Tom Tarver, a teacher with a vision, was elected teacher of Mount Zion School, which the writer will call number one. Being a wide awake teacher, and realizing that in unity there is strength, he encouraged the patrons of the two schools to unite their efforts and have one good school in Mount Zion Community. From 1904 to the present there has been only one school in Mount Zion Community.

The following teachers have taught ⁱⁿ Mount Zion School:

1904-06 - Mr Tom Tarver

1906-08 - Mr Harvey King

1908-09 - Mr F C Fleeks

1909-11 - Mr Harvey King

1911-13 - Miss Carrie A Dailey

In 1913 the enrollment of the school increased to the extent that the Board of Trustees decided to add another teacher. From 1913 to 1925 the following persons have served as teachers:

1913-14 - Miss Carrie A Dailey and Miss Leoda Marshall

1914-15 - Miss Carrie A Dailey and Miss Eljane Wheeler

- 1915-17 - Miss Leoda Marshall and Miss Hattie Davis
- 1917-18 - Mr J N Perkins and Miss Alice Bell
- 1918-19 - Mr J N Perkins and Miss Carrie A Dailey
- 1919-20 - Mr J N Perkins and Miss Arabella Hicks
- 1920-22 - Mr F C Fleeks and Miss Arabella Hicks
- 1922-24 - Mr F C Fleeks, Miss Arabella Hicks,
and Mrs Victoria J D Beasley
- 1924-25 - Mr F C Fleeks, Mrs Addie L Hayden
and Mrs Victoria J D Beasley
- 1925-26 - Mr F C Fleeks and Mrs Victoria J D
Beasley

In November, 1925, the writer went to Mount Zion School to assist her father, Mr F C Fleeks, with his work, because the teaching staff of Mount Zion School had been reduced to two teachers in 1925. In April, 1926 her father, Mr F C Fleeks, resigned as Principal of Mount Zion School and the writer was elected to succeed him. From September, 1926 to May, 1939 Mrs Victoria J D Beasley, Mrs Arabella Hicks Shaw, and the writer have served as the faculty of Mount Zion School. Mr J C McAdams was elected as part time vocational teacher in 1933.

During the sixty-one years that Mount Zion School has functioned as the educational institution of Mount Zion community the following persons have served as members of the Board of Trustees:

Messrs Alex Marshall, Charles Taylor, Lewis Beasley, Will Wray, W D Gilmore, James Harvey, George Shepherd,

Harvey Johnson, Robert Dickson, Sr., J P Moore, Tommie
Wilson, Charles Johnson, Napoleon Beasley, and Mrs
Sudie Johnson.

The School

When the writer entered the system of Mount Zion School as Principal she found the Board of Trustees working very harmoniously together, but they did not seem to have very much interest in the school along the lines of improving its rating or its standard. The writer studied the situation and found that the students remained in school until they were ready to marry or got too old to attend that particular school. There was no encouragement for them to continue their education. The school offered work in the grades-- first through the ninth. The writer decided to have the work of the school rated by the County Board of Education. The following steps were taken to get the school rated by the County Board:

- 1- Requested the local board of trustees to meet and discuss the problem.

- 2- Discussed the problem with the teachers.

- 3- Talked the situation over with the County Superintendent.

- 4- Held special interviews with parents who had children in the ninth grade.

The plan of the writer was to get the County Board of Education to recognize the work of Mount Zion School with the approval of the County Superintendent, and allow

the children to graduate after completing the ninth grade.

The local board of trustees, the teachers, county superintendent, and the county board consented to help carry out the above plan.

The plan has been quite successful because in thirteen years the amount of money spent in Mount Zion School District for educational purposes has increased from about \$1800 to \$4000; the teaching staff has been increased from two to four; and sixty four students have graduated from the school. Of the above number of students, forty-two have graduated from accredited high schools. Seven will enter the eleventh grade of an accredited high school in September, 1939. Of the forty-two who graduated from accredited high school, twenty have entered college. The class graduations are as follows:

1926	-----	4
1927	-----	6
1929	-----	4
1930	-----	6
1931	-----	2
1932	-----	10
1933	-----	5
1934	-----	4
1935	-----	5
1936	-----	2
1937	-----	6
1938	-----	3
1939	-----	7

The School Board

A fundamental change in the conception of the purpose and function of boards of education is necessary both for the right kind of administration and for the development of a high school spirit. The first business of a board for school control is to define the relationship which should exist between it and the administrative officers. The assumption of general legislative powers by the board and the delegation of executive control to the Superintendent or Principal will go a long way in establishing in the person of the chief executive officer responsibility commensurate with authority. The constant usurpation of the details that rightfully belong to the executive department probably creates more friction in the administration than anything else. Thus, the ideals and spirit of the superintendent or principal are broken by the autocracy and shortsightedness of the board members, and he becomes a mere clerical agent in the hands of unskilled laymen.

When the community and its board of education think that it is the business of the board to administer the school in spite of a competent superintendent or principal, practices are indulged; in that, it literally destroys a large part of the morale of the teachers as well as the administrative organization. A community which elects the school board member to satisfy political

prejudices, represent particular religious denominations, increase the prestige of any class, champion the cause of any special part of the community, enhance the influence of women versus men, lower the tax rate, and to elect or defeat local conditions for the teaching position, has weakened the usefulness of those in charge of its school.

Harmony and co-operation within the board itself, to say nothing of the undermining of the loyalty and devotion of the administration and teachers, are almost impossible when such conditions exists. Just as it is the paramount business of a community in a democracy to select board members who are accustomed to handle business matters promptly and successfully, to weigh the proposals and recommendations for public improvement without prejudice and to discuss financial matters without fear of favor, so it is the greatest function of the board to select and elect a superintendent or principal who is a leader in the field of education.

The morale of the school cannot be very high where incapacity and inefficiency are represented in the titular head of the school system.

Realizing the above to be facts beyond a reasonable doubt, the writer has continually influenced the patrons to elect a board, a board of education to meet the above requirement as far as possible. As a result during

fourteen years there has been only five men and one woman to serve as Members of the Board of Education of Mount Zion School. There have been no changes in the teaching personnel during the same period.

On account of the usual lack of supplies and equipment, it becomes especially important for the teacher to improvise equipment and to make every possible use of the resources of the community. Supplies must be conserved, books borrowed and equipment built. Despite the claims of high-pressure scholarship and the occasional requirement of minimum standards for classification of high schools, it remains true that very little of the equipment of small high schools need to be of the expensive type. From the educational point of view, it is frequently more valuable for the pupil to participate in the building and collecting of such material.

The responsibility of the principal usually includes general supervision over many aspects of this common problem. In some small high schools the principal is the chief educational adviser of the local board of

Securing Equipment

One of the major problems of the small high school is inadequate supplies, insufficient number of textbooks, and inferior equipment. There is an obvious need to make each dollar in the budget item for supplies and equipment count to the very limit for service. The rapid turnover of principals and teachers in the small high school means a lack of continuous responsibility and supervision of all school property over a period of years, and tends to intensify the general problem.

On account of the usual lack of supplies and equipment, it becomes especially important for the teacher to improvise equipment and to make every possible use of the resources of the community. Supplies must be conserved, books borrowed and equipment built. Despite the claims of high-pressure salesmanship and the occasional requirement of minimum standards for classification of high schools, it remains true that very little of the equipment of small high schools need to be of the expensive type. From the educational point of view, it is frequently more valuable for the pupil to participate in the building and collecting of much material.

The responsibility of the principal usually includes general supervision over many aspects of this common problem. In some small high school the principal is the chief educational adviser of the local board of

education and, as such, must assume practically all professional responsibilities for his school.

Mount Zion School, being a typical small high school, encountered the problem of inadequate supplies and equipment. To meet the minimum requirement to be classified as a small high school, the patrons, pupils and teachers of Mount Zion School have put forth every effort possible to secure the needed equipment. The writer contacted the County Superintendent who was willing to help all she could to finance the bills. Through the cooperative efforts of all concerned the following equipment has been added to Mount Zion School: Charts, maps, volumes of reference books, dictionaries, blackboards, tables, chairs, one teacher's desk and chair, steel locker, and a set of tools for general repair.

The playground equipment such as swings and seesaws were made by the men and boys of the community.

The teachers have improvised equipment for their rooms especially the primary teacher, Mrs Victoria J D Beasley. With the aid of Mr J C McAdams, chairs for the primary room were made from apple and orange boxes and tables were made from lumber. They were painted by the high school boys.

Community Use of School Building and Grounds

Of all problems confronting the public school official today, that of the study of the optimum use of school facilities for community betterment will give greatest return for the time spent. Most schools are occupied less than one-third of the possible time. Programs can be organized for 3,300 hours per year; instead, many schools utilize an investment running into hundreds and even thousands of dollars for as few as 1,000 hours per year.

This waste illustrates the idea that democratic philosophies of education are put into practice but slowly. "Education of all the children of the people," is still a meaningless statement as far as accepted procedures are concerned in many sections of this country. A national policy of adult education is a development of the future. However, it is a logical outgrowth of a democratic form of government.

To the thoughtful educator must come the question: Why limit the privilege of attending school to the immature? Are educational serums of benefit only to one age group? It may be wise to think of schooling as never ending from birth to till death. Certainly if there is any panacea for the ills which afflict the body politic, that remedy will be found through citizens working together

in order to arrive at common understandings. Millions have been invested in school building and their equipment. Why not utilize the possibilities of this investment for community gain?

In order that the citizens of Mount Zion Community may use their investment for community gain, the school building and equipment are at their disposal the year round.

During the year the patrons use the school grounds and building for nineteenth of June and picnics, athletic contests, social entertainment and club meeting.

It is the opinion of the writer that if the school building and equipment is to render maximum service to the community, all educational agencies of the county must have access to it at all times and feel free to use it. To this end the principal and teachers in Mount Zion School have made satisfactory progress. The county agents are always welcome to use the school building and equipment to put over their program. Whenever the school can assist in other ways in putting over a program, all teachers and pupils willingly cooperate. Every effort is made by the teachers, pupils, and agents to make the school house an active community center. The teachers hold membership in various clubs and organizations of the county agents assist with the organization and promotion of clubs for girls and boys with whom the agents work and assist them in the preparation of exhibits.

The Pupil

For years the teachers and principal of Mount Zion School System have planned and labored to make the system child-centered instead of subject-centered.

We learn when we profit by what happens to us, for education is but the process by which one gains experiences that will enable him to act more efficiently in the future than in the past.

Years ago people adopted the kind of education which they thought would best fit the child for his part in the community of which he was a member.

To-day there is an ever growing number of people who advocate social efficiency as the true goal for the school, which means the ability to work with others so as to carry on effectively the various activities of the community. To do his part fully the socially efficient individual must have good health and high moral ideals. He should know how to use his leisure time profitably; should find a pleasure in working with others as well as possessing high ideals and right habits. In order to make pupils socially efficient, the school must give instructions and training in health, occupation, the use of leisure time, citizenship, and the formation of right ideals and habits.

The school authorities of Mount Zion School encourage various activities. Clubs, parties and picnics have aided

in developing school spirit and social courtesies.

Many other school and community enterprises which give business training to many pupils are provided. Various class organizations and clubs which arouse their originality and responsibility and which give them direct contact with matters closely related to effective citizenship are encouraged. These are some the ways in which Mount Zion School attempts to make its pupils useful members of the community.

mental inspection whenever it was available. The State Health Nurse has made several visits to Houston County and whenever she is there the faculty of Mount Zion School makes special efforts to have her visit the school and examine the children. The teachers make a record of the nurse's findings and these records are kept. These records are divided into two classes: (a) those that need immediate attention, and (b) those that may be followed up at some leisure time. The records of the first class are sent to their parents and every effort is made to have the defect corrected. In most instances we have the parents of those who are grouped in the first class to visit the nurse and have a personal interview.

In many cases the parents have been induced to take steps at once to have the necessary corrections made. Where the parents are not financially able to bear the entire expense the physicians have willingly rendered their best service, charging only for the material used

How the School Seeks to Aid the Community with its Problems

Health

The Mount Zion School realizing that there is no activity in life where health is not needed, has stressed the preservation of health by seeking to train its students in knowledge, habits and ideals which will enable them to make the best use of their life.

One means of carrying this out has been medical and dental inspection whenever it was available. The State Health Nurse has made several visits to Houston County and whenever she is there the faculty of Mount Zion School makes special efforts to have her visit the school and examine the children. The teachers make a record of the nurse's findings and these records are kept. These records are divided into two classes: (a) those that need immediate attention, and (b) those that may be followed up at more leisure time. The records of the first class are sent to their parents and every effort is made to have the defect corrected. In most instances we have the parents of those who are grouped in the first class to visit the nurse and have a personal interview.

In many cases the parents have been induced to take steps at once to have the necessary corrections made. Where the parents are not financially able to bear the entire expense the physicians have willingly rendered their best service, charging only for the material used

in the particular case.

The second class is brought to the notice of his parents or guardian by visit from the teacher. Their plan of work is the building up a daily health standard based on habits of personal cleanliness, mouth hygiene, nutrition, fresh air, exercise, rest and cheerfulness. Their object has been to increase the child's interest in these daily health habits by using charts furnished by the Life Buoy Soap Company, and a daily inspection of the pupil.

Some treatment is offered in the health program in the nature of first aid. Students often allow, seemingly, minor ailments to go without proper attention. For this purpose the Parent Teacher Association provides a first^{aid}/cabinet fully equipped for the school.

The small high school is not so small or helpless that it cannot offer some phase of home economics. One way is through the provision of hot lunches for pupils.

Primarily, of course, the hot lunch in the small high school is popular because we are all learning that a warm meal at midday vitally affects the child's efficiency, and is a definite aid in the afternoon study. It is true also that in many communities this innocent little lunch has been the means of bringing about a satisfactory cooperation of school and home. In many instances on record the hot lunch has been the first step in organizing a school home economics course of great

benefit to the farmer's wife as well as the children.

The following facts in regard to the hot lunch problem should be understood by all teachers. First, it is not advisable that an entire meal or elaborate and time consuming dishes be prepared; second, much may be accomplished with very little and with simple equipment; third, the work necessary for the preparation and serving of a hot dish affords excellent opportunity to instill habits of consideration, courtesy, orderliness, neatness, and dispatch, without making anyone of these subjects unduly prominent; and fourth, something of the true value of foods, cost of foods, sanitation, and principles underlying food preparation and preservation may be brought out. Common duties of the home may be inculcated, and simple but good table manners may be practiced each day at school as well as at home. The situation, however, will require teachers of ingenuity and enthusiasm in their work.

The amount of equipment necessary for successful preparation and serving the hot dish at the noon hour depends upon the size and equipment of the school.

In 1927 the faculty of Mount Zion School decided after much consideration to serve a hot dish to the pupils, especially on real cold days during the winter. With the cooperation of the parents and students money was raised and the following equipment was purchased: one two burner oil stove, three large dish pans, two mixing bowls, two

large spoons and a measuring cup. Each student was asked to bring a penny a week to buy such as soup bones, macaroni, and spaghetti. The remainder of the groceries were furnished by the parents. An adequate record was kept of the groceries furnished by the parent in order that each parent would know just what contribution she was making to the hot lunch project. These records were read to the pupils in order that they would know and appreciate the contributions of the parents, especially those students whose parents were not as fortunate as others. A spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance were developed among the pupils.

The writer seeing and realizing the benefits of the hot lunch to the children talked the proposition over with the county superintendent who readily agreed to give \$150 for equipping a home economics department in Mount Zion School.

There was not a special room for home economics in the school, but as one of the rooms was extra large, a portion of it was screened for a home economics department.

A home economics supervisor was stationed in Houston County in 1937. Mount Zion School was selected as one of the schools of the county for her to hold adult class. The home economics equipment has proved very helpful, not only to the pupils but to the parents as well.

Encouraging the People of Mount
Zion Community to See the Need of Im-
proving Home Conditions

There can be no ideal rural civilization till we succeed in developing higher ideals in rural group life. There must be heroes in the country as well as in the city; for where a boys' heroes are, there will be his interest also. In order to idealize rural life it should be pictured with all the attractiveness that it possesses.

After attending a Rural Education Class conducted by Mr Gordon Worley in Houston County, and a Coordinate Institute for a week in Arkadelphia community in Bowie County, the writer with the suggestions of Mr J C McAdams, Area Supervisor decided to carry out a coordinate program in Mount Zion community.

The aid of all the county agencies was solicited, including Jeanes Supervisors, Farm and Home Demonstration Agents and Home Economics Supervisor.

After some discussion and planning of the program, a survey was made of Mount Zion Community to find out the needs of the people. The survey showed the need of screening the home, home beautification, more and better poultry, more orchards, more and better live stock, and more cooperation among the patrons.

The school cannot perform its fullest service to a community unless it sustains the proper relation to other organized educational agencies that exist about

it. The church and its subsidiearies are the most important of these agencies with which the school is associated.

The rural shurch has been handicapped in its work by the same factors that have affected the rural school; low per capita wealth to be drawn upon for support, a scattered population; too small units of organization; and conservatism of the people. The duplication of efforts by denominations further reduces financial support and membership. A community that is served by a single consolidated school often have three or four churches within its borders, each too small to be of effective good. There is usually no such agency as the county or state to promote church consolidation.

In addition to full cooperation of teachers with the church of the community, the school should make a direct contribution to the final solution of the rural church problem by developing a spirit of cooperation, open-mindedness, and an appreciation of the essentials values of christian teaching on the part of those whom they teach.

The above is a concrete example of Mount Zion Community. There are two baptist churches and one methodist in the community, and one school.

To bring about a closer cooperation between the churches and the school the writer invited the pastors to make

regular visits to the school and acquaint themselves with its work. Teachers were asked to attend the services of each church as often as possible.

Since the pupils of the school belong to the different churches the teachers and pupils were asked to take part in the programs given by the different churches.

Anyone making a visit to Mount Zion Community would not think there were three churches in the community unless they were told, because there is mutual cooperation between the churches

SUMMARY

All human beings if they reach their fullest capacity must develop mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. Let any person neglect any one of these sides of his nature and he becomes a lop-sided individual incapable of serving the community as he should. Proper attitudes must be developed in the child. If the attitude of the school is one that abhors crime and oppose the wrong kind of recreational life, but honor righteousness and honesty, the children in the school will grow up strong and beautiful in character. Every civic program that develops a more beautiful environment is a definite step in citizenship-building. Children that are trained to have civic pride could never be happy in the slums.

The aim of the Mount Zion School is to discover and develop the individual abilities of the children and prepare them for life.

The cultural life in the school must be so developed that when the children become adult citizens of the community they will acquire a sense of neighborhood responsibility and cooperation. The school is a community center and is therefore expected to support civic, moral and spiritual welfare of the community.

The attitude of the school and the attitude of the community should be one of mutual assistance. Our efforts to build community spirit between the school and community is demonstrated by our generous and willing contributions to different community activities. The Mount Zion School, realizing its place in the community, tries to bring every child to realize that while his life centers chiefly around the school, its boundaries reach out to include the whole community. The activities of the school are closely associated with the activities of the community, hence, the school should see and feel community problems and opportunity.

Thus realizing the place of the school in the community the faculty of Mount Zion School tries not to forget the fact that the child must live with people. Let us then recognize the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Realizing that life is a mission and not a career; that dominion is service, its scepter is gladness; that living is giving; life is immortal; and love is the crown.

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