

THE ROLE OF THE  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST IN  
WATERTOWN, CONNECTICUT

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## INTRODUCTION

The Watertown School Department, in conjunction with the Child Guidance Clinic of Waterbury, for the past two years has been sponsoring a pilot project for consultation in the Watertown School System. This project was designed to help the school personnel to more fully understand children and their emotional, social, and learning problems. With mutual understanding of the problems and concerns confronting the school, the project was started during the school year 1959 - 1960 with the following objectives:

1. To promote awareness and better understanding of children with emotional problems within the school system.
2. To provide consultation on specific problems in the schools.
3. To assist the school system in planning programs and services for meeting the health needs of its students.<sup>1</sup>

At the present time a Clinic Staff member, either a psychologist or a psychiatrist, spends one afternoon per month at each elementary school. The program is divided into two parts: during the first part of the afternoon any teacher may consult with the visiting expert on a special problem she may have with a child. Before presenting the problem, the case is

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<sup>1</sup>Child Guidance Clinic Report, A Report Prepared by Principal Hollis Whitman (November, 1961).

first discussed between the teacher and her principal to decide if it is a matter for the Child Guidance Clinic consultant. The child's history, plus interviews with the teacher give the consultant a basis for possible diagnosis. Following the consultation period, the consultant may observe the child in the classroom.

The second part of the program is a guidance seminar at which principal, teachers, consultant, and school nurse meet to discuss how the school personnel can serve in meeting the individual needs of children. If the consultant feels that any case brought up during the consultation period might be of general interest and that the points discussed might benefit all, it is presented at a workshop meeting. After the discussion a possible treatment is outlined.

The Child Guidance Clinic has been of great assistance to the Watertown School Personnel. In many cases the classroom teacher has been helped to understand the cause of a child's problem and has been able to help the child meet the situation satisfactorily.

Many more children can and should be helped before it is too late. Children can be helped best when work with them is begun at an early age. The longer a problem exists, the more difficult it is to overcome. The school psychologist should identify and help to remedy the problems of children at an early stage.

It will be the purpose of this paper to discuss the

role of the school psychologist in Watertown, Connecticut. At times the role will be discussed in general terms which could apply to the psychologist in any town, at other times it will deal specifically with the particular functions of a psychologist in Watertown.