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WHO OWNS THE SCHOOL IN OUR CHANGING SOCIETY?

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Introduction

Four problems are indicated by the question, "Who Owns the School?" In that question I mean ownership in the sense of who decides how to use the school and what determines the school's influence now and in the future. "Ownership" can be defined in terms of: possession, occupancy, usefulness, and that with which you live and work. It involves the buildings, the brick and mortar and soil, the people who live and work in the buildings and the activities in which they participate--what they do together, what results from what they do together, and what are the pressures under which they live together in the school community?

The four problems facing us are:

1. How does the student use his ownership of his school and how can his ownership be clarified and strengthened?
2. How can the parents of students exercise their options and sponsor their school in a manner that enriches the school community? This ownership allows the parents to pay back to the school whatever debts they feel they have incurred as a result of their own education. This, of course, also permits the school to ask how it can compensate the parents for the poor or unsatisfactory educational experiences they had in their own school.
3. How do the teachers and their administrative colleagues exert their ownership of the school community? Is their investment one that enables them to grow professionally and to fulfill themselves in one of the great callings that human civilization has created? What interferes with a fierce and prideful ownership by the faculty of their school?
4. How does the community express its sponsorship and its pride and fears about the schools it owns?

Although the title of this presentation was designed to be contemporary, catchy and correlative, it is also intended to provoke a discussion of children's education from their first student days through high school. This paper will aim at promoting a discussion of these four related problems with special attention focused on the teachers and their students, and on the students and their teachers.

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