This Month ................ from the editor

By this time, the shock of the shuttle tragedy on January 28 has eased for most of the nation. For many others, however, the pain and grief continues. Only the numbness seems to have subsided.

In addition to Christa McAuliffe’s family and students and immediate colleagues, educators throughout the country—even the world—will be among those ‘‘many others.’’ Mrs. McAuliffe was our representative on Shuttle Mission 51-L, and what a superb representative she was!

All the significant statements have been made, leaving us now to an engulfing silence that we best spend in reflection and contemplation.

One last consideration, however, that has special meaning for us as school administrators is the model that Charles F. Foley, principal of Concord High School, set in handling the crisis. How well he handled the students, staff, parents, and the media! So impressed were working journalists that many of them commended him for his skill in organizing news conferences and other events.

News media throughout the world quoted Foley’s very appropriate remarks: ‘‘Christa McAuliffe had intended through her televised lessons from space . . . to demystify the space program in what she called the ultimate field trip. Today she may have taught the youngsters a tougher lesson about life.’’

Can any statement be more profound than that?

Leadership Theme

Principals, the effective schools research says, must be leaders. Toward that end, the question that confronts most of us is how one becomes an effective leader. Books have been published and courses have been designed to define leadership and to help all takers become skillful leaders.

Several articles in this Bulletin pursue that theme. We hope they cast a new perspective for some readers, perhaps a fresh idea for others. Providing leadership for instruction, the primary function of schools, is paramount; and Roy Mendez offers a host of ideas to readers.

Other aspects of this subject are also important; for example, the elements of risk taking, personnel relations, and power. We hope they provide Bulletin readers with insights not likely to be found elsewhere.

Leaders, it goes without saying, must be idea generators. That’s among the most difficult thing to do—how much easier it is to organize and implement an idea once it is formulated!

Fred Silverman’s article on technology is in this category. His review of what’s happening and what’s ahead in technology can be the sparkplug to the school leader’s imagination. Note the suggestion to principals to work closely with their local cable television stations. How nicely that fits the current trend to establish school-business partnerships.

In line with this concept, the reader will also want to note the ‘‘highlights’’ on ‘‘Top Educators Call for Improvement’’ (p. 98) and ‘‘Journalists and Educators Working Together’’ (p. 39).

The Special Feature this month is an interview with Scott Thomson, NASSP’s executive director. We mention in the introduction that he has had a singularly important position during the ’80s from which to view secondary education. His thoughts about the several studies conducted during this period and their likely effect on American schools are explored. We think readers will enjoy the upbeat nature of his remarks and his optimism for the future.

One of Thomson’s comments centered on his belief that ‘‘the working relationships between teachers and administrators will improve substantially.’’ This idea will be explored fully in next month’s Bulletin in an interview with National Education Association President Mary Futrell.