

Front Lines in Education

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Cooperative Study Councils

The cooperative study of educational problems by school systems has been developed in a number of areas. The cooperative study and research organization has taken different forms, depending on the local situation, but all of these groups have the common objective of working together for the improvement of their respective educational programs. In general, the purposes of these cooperative study councils are:

- to gather data and information on school practices in certain aspects of administration and curriculum
- to provide the school people opportunities to think through together important educational policies and plans
- to facilitate the exchange of best practices and hence to speed up the dissemination of our educational know-how.

These councils are cooperative efforts in which the schools determine the program and policies of the council and have a voice through their elected representatives in determining the studies and the other activities to be undertaken. Most of the councils have a paid research director or executive head who is in immediate charge of research and who assists study committees in carrying on their activities. Most of them are closely affiliated with one or more schools of education in the area. They are, nevertheless, cooperative undertakings of the schools themselves and not projects of the schools of education. The work of several councils will be described briefly.

Metropolitan School Study Council, New York. The first of these cooperative study groups was established by the suburban schools of the metropolitan New York area in 1942 with twenty-eight school systems coming together to try to discover to what extent money spent on their

schools was reflected in the quality of education provided. This experience proved so stimulating that they decided to continue the association, and now approximately seventy school systems, located in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, comprise its membership.

The council has research headquarters at Teachers College, Columbia University. Paul Mort brought the original group together and has been very active in guiding its activities. The council employs a research staff which works with the various council committees, conducts the research studies, and carries on the administrative duties. To finance its activities the council assesses each member school a fee of twelve cents per pupil with a minimum of \$175 and a maximum of \$500.

The council is organized with the usual officers and an executive committee composed of the officers and past presidents. The work goes forward under the leadership of a steering committee, which recommends matters for council action. The steering committee is composed of the executive committee and the chairmen of each of the four standing committees. These standing committees are: Lay Understanding, Educational Dynamics, Inter-Community Information, and Unmet Needs. Every council member serves on one of these committees. Various subcommittees may be organized to study special problems determined by the standing committee. For example, the Committee on Unmet Needs has six study committees at work in such areas as improvement of human relations, eradication of racial and religious intolerance, examination of the social nature of class groups, improvement of self-governing opportunities for students, and a study of the emotional stability of teachers and pupils. It

is apparent that the activities are widespread and far-reaching in their significance.

The council publishes many of the reports of its committees and investigations made by its research staff. These are sold not only to member schools but to anyone interested in the findings.

Metropolitan Detroit Bureau of Cooperative School Studies. This council, organized during the school year 1946-47, is composed of school systems in the Detroit area with the School of Education of the University of Michigan and the College of Education of Wayne University participating. Miles C. Romney is director. The work is patterned on the New York council; although it has not yet encompassed the scope of activities of the older organization. The Detroit council began publication of a monthly news letter, called *Action*, last year. This publication describes various promising activities or programs being undertaken in member schools. The bureau has published a number of thorough-going studies of policies and practices relating to types of school personnel in member schools.

Pennsylvania School Study Council. This is an attempt to bring together schools on a state-wide basis. Headquarters are at Pennsylvania State College, and William S. Vincent serves as secretary. Since the membership is more wide-spread, the efforts to date have been designed more to stimulate the spread of best practices rather than to bring together groups of teachers and administrators for intensive study of intricate school problems. One of the chief activities of the council has been the development of a film, "Teachers at Work," for use in the member schools. A book, *How School Administrators Work*, has been published and describes the work of administrators. A committee on public relations has also been studying this whole problem and has made a report to the council.

New England School Development Council. The council is composed of schools in the metropolitan Boston area. It functions much like the New York and De-

troit groups. Membership is compact enough so that study committees can be organized. These are organized under the direction of a Committee on Regional Study Groups. One of the most important of these study committees is surveying the problem of relating teachers' salaries to competency.

Texas Study of Secondary Education. This cooperative undertaking varies somewhat from the pattern of the four cooperative study councils described above. However, it is a cooperative effort of the secondary schools to improve their programs. The study was initiated in 1942 as a five-year program. During the early years a selected number of schools worked under the direction of the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Texas in undertaking improvements. However, people in Texas decided that more value would come if the membership were broadened and any high school interested in joining in these self-improvement efforts may now become a member. A staff member of the University of Texas devotes part time to the study, but schools that desire the services of consultants in planning for improved programs obtain them on an individual basis. The study itself serves as an agency for holding conferences of member schools and of conducting fact-finding studies on school conditions. These studies are published in bulletin form, and a news letter is also issued.

The Southern Association's Cooperative Study in Elementary Education. This study differs in many ways from the work of the study councils, yet it is a cooperative effort to improve schools. It is broad in scope, encompassing fourteen states. The study is designed to stimulate the states to improve the program of elementary education in their schools and to coordinate their efforts. Each state has its own committee for carrying on study activities within the state. Representatives from each state comprise the Coordinating Committee for the entire Southern Association.

The over-all Coordinating Committee has established four working committees: Criteria for Elementary School Evaluation;

Recruitment and Education of Elementary Teachers, Principals, and Supervisors; Basic Data on Elementary Education and Interpretation to the Public; and Developing a Program of Action. The areas of teacher education and evaluation have been selected as the most important, and each state group is urged to undertake intensive work along these lines.

Individual state committees have been doing various things during the past year, but practically all of the states have selected a group of cooperating schools which will undertake experimentation in the improvement of elementary education. State committees are also free to undertake any other activities which they deem advisable.

Teaching Problem Solving. Two interesting pamphlets which deal with the general area of teaching problem solving have recently come to the attention of the editor. The Detroit Citizenship Education Study has published *Problem Solving*, and the Philadelphia public schools have released *Open-Mindedness Can Be Taught*.

The Detroit publication is presented in schematic form with four aspects of problem-solving diagrammed. These aspects are: defining the problem, working on the problem, drawing a conclusion, and carrying out the conclusion.

The Philadelphia publication is a preliminary report of the thought and action of teachers and administrators who were invited to study the possibilities of teaching open-mindedness. The pamphlet pre-

sents five hallmarks of an open-minded person and suggests ways in which open-mindedness may be taught.

Study of High School Graduates. The Department of Secondary Education of the New Jersey State Department of Education has obtained from New Jersey high schools figures on the occupations of pupils who graduated in the spring of 1948. It provides worthwhile insight into what happens to students immediately following graduation.

This study of 35,610 graduates shows that 29.6 percent of the graduates went on to college or advanced technical schools. Included in this figure are 6.3 percent who are attending nursing, technical, or engineering schools. The other 23.3 percent are attending regular colleges or universities. A total of 5.2 percent continued on in schools of a secondary level, such as vocational or business schools, or as postgraduates in regular secondary schools. Almost one-half, 49.8 percent, are employed. Approximately one-half of this group, or 23.4 percent of the total group, are employed in office positions. Only 12.1 percent are employed in trades and industries. Military services claimed 5.5 percent, and 4.6 percent are neither in school nor employed. No information was available for the other 5.3 percent.

In the disseminating of this information, the New Jersey State Department emphasizes the need for similar studies of students who drop out prior to graduation.

Building Public Confidence in the Schools

ASCD announces its newest pamphlet—to be off the press in mid-May. *Building Public Confidence in the Schools* deals with desirable characteristics of the process of lay-professional study, planning, and action in providing better instructional programs. Descriptions of five planning and action programs illustrate, in specific detail, what is involved in such cooperation in building confidence in the schools. \$1.00—quantity discounts are available.

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