

instruments for evaluation caused some of the teachers considerable trouble. Most of them were fairly proficient in constructing objective instruments but were hard put to develop the more subjective means of measurement.

### *We See Results*

The above described workshops have been in operation for the past two summers. In these two years, approximately two hundred and fifty Portland teachers have participated. The principals, supervisors, and directors who have had an opportunity to observe the work of the two hundred and fifty teachers following their workshop experience report definite

improvement in classroom instruction. The results are in some cases more indirect in that the techniques learned by the teachers who attended the workshops have been discussed at building professional meetings and have been observed by other teachers in the building.

The summer workshops are implemented by an in-service training program carried on through the winter months. In this plan, under the direction of the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and instruction, the superintendent, directors, and supervisors actively participate at least one day a week in meeting groups of teachers. But that's another story.

◀ *Michigan likes the workshop method!*

## The August Working Conference

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ROLAND C. FAUNCE

BIRDS SING in the birches. The sun weaves patterns through the leaves. Clean breezes from nearby Higgins Lake refresh the pedagogical soul; and in every nook and corner of the Michigan Conservation Training School grounds, men and women are hard at work on the problems of the impending school year. For this is the fourth week of August, and the clan has returned to the annual Working Conference.

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*Hard work and hard play, few speeches and much discussion are tip-offs to the success of the Higgins Lake workshop in Michigan. The August conferences spring from the expressed need of school people for help in solving their problems. The purpose of these annual gatherings and the way they are conducted are described by Roland C. Faunce, chief of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Michigan Department of Public Instruction.*

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Learning group processes

A one-week summer workshop on general curriculum problems has been held annually in Michigan for five years. These working sessions, attended by administrators, teachers, college representa-

tives, and state consultants, have been conducted in recent years at the beautiful Conservation Training School on Higgins Lake. The 1943 and 1944 conferences were jointly sponsored by the Michigan Secondary School Association and the Michigan Secondary Study. The Directing Committee of the Study has voted funds each year to help support these conferences.

The August conferences grew out of the need which teachers felt to derive help from others who had similar problems. This consciousness of need for help developed from the projects under way in the schools of the Secondary Study. The purpose of the conferences may be summarized as follows: to provide a maximum opportunity for school people to work on their problems and to bring about the most direct communication possible with those who can help them.

What kind of a conference stems from such a purpose? The following six points, listed in the 1944 conference handbook, seem to sum up some of the characteristics of our August conference:

1. It is so planned as to provide an opportunity for participants to work on real problems which grow out of their own school planning.—It is a *working* conference.

2. It provides a maximum opportunity for personal growth through interchange of ideas with others.—It is an *informal* conference.

3. It provides a rounded experience which samples, insofar as possible, all worthwhile areas of living.—It is an *activity* conference.

4. It provides for continuous, cooperative evaluation by all participants and constant adaptation to changing needs.—It is a *flexible* conference.

5. It provides an opportunity for participants to live, work, and play with per-

sons of different ethnic, religious, social, and economic backgrounds.—It is an *inter-cultural* conference.

6. It tends to make resource persons of all participants, regardless of position or title.—It is a *democratic* conference.

#### *A Minimum of Speech-Making and a Maximum of Learning*

The 1944 August Conference may serve as a sample of personnel and procedures for all five so far held. The conference planning was in the hands of a committee appointed by the president of the Michigan Secondary School Association. This pre-planning committee, consisting of representative teachers, administrators, and the staff of the Secondary Study, explored conference resources, sent out the general announcements, invited certain resource persons, and arranged for assembling appropriate materials. They did not arrange a set program or invite speakers. Nor did they commit the conference to any particular contribution from resource people.

The conference invitation went out during May to every secondary school in the state. Schools were urged to send two or more teachers together to work as a team on local curriculum problems. From the response to this invitation a directory was compiled and a list of tentative problems prepared for the use of the planning committee. A total of 110 persons attended the conference this year: 54 teachers, 31 principals and superintendents, 9 college representatives, 16 representatives of state and federal agencies.

On Sunday evening, August 20, the Working Conference opened with a brief statement of the purpose of the conference and of the techniques for beginning our attack upon problems of participants. (These techniques were also set forth in the conference directory.) The entire group then numbered off by sevens into

small random groups to do two things:

1. To list the problems which participants wished to have considered during the week.

2. To suggest procedures which participants wished to see employed during the week.

The chairmen of the small groups then met as a central planning committee to pool the problem lists, classify them, and draft a schedule for the following day and a tentative plan for the week. Meanwhile, the rest of the conferees met for an informal session of song and folk dance, followed by a big campfire on the beach.

The following morning a report from the planning committee opened the first general session. After discussion the schedule was adopted and the following program got under way:

9:00- 9:30—General session for reports.

9:30-11:30—Small discussion groups: (Unified Studies, Postwar Curriculum Changes, Democratic Experiences, Pre-School Conferences, Teacher Morale-Problems, Core (experienced teachers), Core (inexperienced teachers), Evaluation — Standards—Reports, Work Experience, School-Community Problems, and Adult Education.

11:30-12:00—Individual conferences.

12:00- 1:00—Luncheon.

1:30- 3:30—Discussion groups: (Health Program, Intercultural Problems, Returning Service Men, Guidance, and Youth Problems.

3:30- 6:00—Nature hike through woods, swimming, conferences, committee meetings.

6:00-7:00—Dinner.

7:15- 8:00—Movies.

8:00-10:00—General session.

10:00-11:15—Dancing, singing, campfire.

This program continued through the week with some modifications from day to day.

There was a minimum of speech-making throughout the week and a maximum of informal discussions. The schedule was built each day on a basis of evolving problems and interests. The initial planning committee already referred to yielded Monday morning to a new group composed of representatives of the various discussion groups. Besides the central planning committees there was a finance committee to settle the ratio of reimbursement and a fun committee to plan recreational activities.

#### *"Not a Stuffed Shirt on the Grounds"*

The conference played as hard as it worked. Three evenings were used for group folk dancing and stunts. Four big campfires on the beach, with coffee or watermelons, attracted nearly all the participants. They sang at general sessions, at meals, at the campfires and dances, and most of the time in between these events. It was, all agreed, the "singiest" group ever assembled in one place. On Friday night all the fun and mischief culminated in a big stunt night characterized by laughter, heavy drama, song, and terpsichore. All this had a profound influence on the nature of the conference. Educators of every level and kind learned to know each other as persons. Degrees were laid aside and, as one participant said: "There was not a stuffed shirt on the grounds."

A strong emphasis on the arts and crafts was evident throughout the week. Materials were assembled in the lobby of the Lodge and many participants wove bas-

kets, belts, or mats, painted, modeled, whittled, or sketched between and during discussion groups. A mural depicting the week's activities was painted entirely by persons who had never used a brush before. The implications of these creative activities for the classroom were not lost upon participants as they discussed school problems during the week.

Recent visual and auditory aids were assembled in considerable quantities. Interested participants previewed and audited films and transcriptions throughout the week and held discussions on the techniques of using these aids in the classroom.

The Training School itself represents a rich resource in conservation education. Led by the camp director, the group visited beaver dams, deer feeding grounds, a hatchery, and many other points of similar interest. Two nature hikes through the woods were made and a fine collection of slides on Michigan wild life was projected. The beautiful pictures and woodcraft articles with which the buildings themselves are furnished made a rich contribution to the conservation-mindedness of the group. Many participants planned conservation units during the week and arranged for consultant help on conservation during the coming year.

### *Why It Worked*

Evaluation of the conference was continuous throughout the week. A more intensive session on evaluation was held Friday morning in which the conference divided again into random groups by numbering and held a sixty-minute discussion of the techniques used during the week. These group discussions were then reported to an evaluation committee, which summarized the reports at our last general session on Saturday.

In general, the evaluation was strongly favorable. Some of the best features of the

conference, as rated by participants, were (1) the fact that resource people were present all week, (2) the flexibility of the schedule, (3) the efficiency of the initial planning session Sunday evening, (4) the recreation program, and (5) the democratic spirit which prevailed.

Several suggestions were made for the guidance of those planning the 1945 conference. Of these, two were made by a considerable number of participants: (1) that each day's schedule be posted more clearly, (2) that the "appointment bureau" for reaching resource people be more directly accessible.

One rather specific cue to the success of the conference was the number of requests which came from participants for copies of group reports developed during the week. One of these reports, called "A Philosophy of Democratic Living," was produced by the intercultural education group. Another report, submitted to the conference by the guidance group, proposed a plan for admission to college without reference to subject sequences. Still another outcome was a series of proposals from the youth guidance committee for helping communities and schools to develop better recreation programs.

There is considerable evidence that the procedures and philosophy of the Higgins Conference have been carried over into other working sessions of teachers in Michigan. This has been especially evident in the local pre-school and post-school workshops, in institutes, and in school curriculum committees. There is ground for the belief that the work of the conference has affected classroom and administrative procedures. Teachers report that the year's work gets off to a better start because of the analysis of problems in the conference. The college and state agency representatives testify also to the value of the conference in orienting them to the prob-

lems of teachers in service. One follow-up of the workshop was a two-day consultants' conference three weeks later, which explored informally the problems of consultant service. Finally, workshop findings have been incorporated in programs of the Michigan Secondary Study and the Michigan Secondary School Association.

The Association and the Study are planning to hold another conference in 1945. On the basis of past experience it seems clear that teachers and principals will promptly reserve places and again assemble for an informal, cooperative attack on local school problems. Michigan likes the workshop method!

□ *County workshops for better community living*

## Workshops for Rural Teachers

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M. E. YOUNT

AN EXPERIMENTAL teacher-education program was initiated in 1942 by the Board of Education of Alamance County, North Carolina. The General Education Board, the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, the University of North Carolina, Elon College, a local liberal arts college with a teacher-education department, and state and county health, agriculture, and home demonstration agencies are cooperating with the Board of Education in conducting the experiment.<sup>1</sup>

The program includes in the pre-service education of teachers a period of cadet teaching, usually consisting of a full quarter of the college year, so planned that the cadet teacher receives full college credit for the quarter. The cadet lives in the school community in which she works, she teaches under competent supervision, she studies community problems with proper consultative guidance, and she otherwise learns to adapt herself to school and community life and work.

<sup>1</sup> A companion program similar in all essential respects is being carried on with Negro teachers in the county. The Southern Education Foundation, the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, and the North Carolina College for Negroes, together with other state and county agencies are cooperating.

For teachers who are already in service the program involves individual and group study of community needs and resources, the development of plans which the school may employ to improve the quality of community life, the selection and use of teaching materials with particular reference to the materials and activities supplied by the school environment, and a consideration of good classroom teaching programs.

The general aim is to develop the concept that conditions affecting the health, the economic status, and the religious, social, cultural, and aesthetic aspects of community life must become the concern of the school; to emphasize the idea that one of the basic purposes of the rural school is to assist the people of the community to make use of the school and its facilities for the improvement of their general living conditions. It is expected that a closer relationship will develop between the school and other social and civic agencies, and that ways will be discovered for using community resources for improved instructional practices and for making the school an effective instrument for more profitable community living.

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