

# THE LISTENING POST

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## State Legislative Highlights Influencing Curriculum and Instruction

THE YEAR 1947 stands out as a milestone for vigorous legislative action involving better educational opportunities for children and youth. So extensive was this school legislation that only highlights may be touched regarding limited phases as they relate directly to instruction. Back of it all seems to be an awakening lay consciousness concerning the importance of forward-looking legislation in relation to good schools in a democratic society.

Some of the results may be cause for concern. Legislatures have always been subjected to certain pressures which sought, through legislative action, to force the teaching of specific subjects. A brief survey will reveal that this method of curricular manipulation is still a factor to be considered by school people. Five states made the teaching of traffic safety and motor vehicle operation compulsory in secondary schools. Three states either made mandatory the teaching of United States History and Constitution or required that a survey be made to see how effectively these subjects were being taught. Two states added the teaching of the intemperate use of alcohol and narcotics as part of the required program. One state wrote into law the fostering of race and religious tolerance through the schools. In all, nine different state legislatures saw fit to influence curriculum practices by writing into law certain prescriptions for the schools of those states.

In addition to modifications to the curriculum many beneficial measures were passed which should give cause for great encouragement. There was manifested a constructive desire to aid the schools in a variety of ways.

Special education has been receiving major attention from state legislatures for several years. This past session resulted in many more favorable advances made for children and youth with special physical, mental, and emotional problems. Five states initiated new state programs in spe-

cial education. In other states where programs already existed, laws were enacted which will make possible further expansion and additional developments.

Several states were liberal in making possible added supervisory programs, needed instructional units, employment of special teachers, guidance programs, and extended school services to children of pre-school age, as well as for youth beyond the regular school program. In other states scholarships were established for the purpose of encouraging young people to go into teaching. Some states appropriated funds especially designated for carrying on curriculum development and other types of in-service work with teachers. Still others made possible added resource personnel who will serve on a state-wide basis from state departments of education. These additions will be in the areas of health, physical education, visual education, and consultative services. University agricultural and mechanical college training for Negroes was provided in one state. Several states will make possible an extension of recreational and social services to youth. Another will now be able to carry on home demonstration and other similar types of services in cooperation with the federal program in large cities. Maintenance and operation of school libraries during vacation periods was provided in one state. Several additional states made possible the issuance of free textbooks to all public school children.

Six states lengthened their regular school year, while another added the twelfth grade to its regular eleven-year program. It might be noted that children in some states will still continue to go to school less than nine months next year.

Other substantial gains were made in the areas of school financing, administrative organization, reorganization of small school units, teacher welfare, and social

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scriber, beg, borrow, or steal the June 14 issue. The account of the lynching trial in Greenville by Rebecca West, an English journalist, is without exception the best piece of reporting I have come across this year. After reading this one issue you may want to include *New Yorker* in your weekly reading. The letters from Europe and the "Profiles" alone are worth the twenty cents.

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legislation affecting the welfare of children and youth. When the total picture is known, it will undoubtedly reveal many substantial gains for education in the various states.—*Don S. Patterson, Elementary Division, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., for the Association Legislative Committee.*

*Tools for Learning in December will be introduced by Ruth Ersted, state supervisor of school libraries, State Department of Education in Minnesota, and will deal with recreational reading for children.*

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