

THE LISTENING POST

Florida School Legislation, 1947

THE CITIZENS of Florida, like those of most states, want better educational opportunities for their children. This is reflected in the forward looking recommendations of the Florida Citizen's Committee which the 1947 Legislature adopted with few alterations. The efforts of the Citizen's Committee and the State Legislature made possible important changes in the state educational program for *all* children in the state. The law which became effective July 1, 1947 contains provisions which are basic to the improvement of educational services throughout the state. A review of Florida's accomplishments should be of interest to all working for better schools. Some of the more significant phases of Florida's "Omnibus Bill" are:

1. For the first time provisions are made for a comprehensive minimum foundation program for all schools in the state. The objective is to provide an adequate minimum level of opportunity for every boy and girl in Florida. State funds are combined into the foundation program fund which is apportioned to the counties on the basis of educational need and tax-paying ability. The cost of the minimum foundation program in the state is paid in part from state funds and in part from local taxes. The local contribution is equivalent to the proceeds of a six-mill levy on ninety-five percent of the total assessed valuation of the non-exempt property in the state.

2. In order to secure a more adequate educational program, the new law provides that the amount of the minimum foundation program be determined not only on the basis of instructional salaries but also recognizes the need for transportation, current expenses, capital outlay, and debt service.

3. State funds provided under this program for the current school year will be approximately double the amount provided in 1946-47.

4. The amount included in the foundation program for teachers' salaries is determined by the number of instruction units and the training of teachers. As the average daily attendance increases and the education of the teachers improves, the amount provided by the state increases.

5. A minimum average salary of \$2550 will be assured for college graduates in all counties. The minimum average salary for teachers with the Master's degree will be \$3000 and for persons with six years of training \$3600. Twenty percent in addition to the amount determined by his training will be allotted for each person whose employment is on a twelve-month basis.

6. Ten months of service will be required of all teachers; and about twelve and one-half percent of the personnel, including principals, librarians, counselors, and teachers for whom a year-round program has been planned, may be employed for twelve months. All schools must operate a minimum of 180 actual teaching days each school year.

7. Instruction units are now provided in the regular program for vocational education, for adult education other than vocational education, and for education of exceptional children.

8. Provision is made for including kindergartens and junior colleges in the comprehensive program in counties which qualify under law and the regulations of the state board of education and make the small additional tax effort required.

9. At least one additional instruction unit is allotted each county for the purpose of employing a general supervisor for improving instruction. Additional supervisors are allowed where school enrollment in the county raises instruction units beyond certain limits. However, no county shall be entitled to more than six additional units for supervisors.

10. The minimum foundation program includes \$1100 for each transportation

unit as determined by the number of transported pupils in average daily attendance and the area served; \$300 per instruction unit for other current expenses; and \$300 per instruction unit for capital outlay and debt service. The county must raise from local sources an additional \$100 per instruction unit for capital outlay to participate in this phase of the program.

11. The law provides for the first time minimum qualifications for a four-year college degree for all county superintendents, to become effective in 1952.

12. All counties are now required to have five-member, non-salaried, policy determining boards elected by direct vote of the people.

13. All special tax school districts are to be consolidated into one county-wide district effective January 1, 1948.

14. A seven-member state advisory council of education has been established.

15. A teacher education advisory council comprised of a representative of each of the state teacher training institutions, representatives of the State Department of Education, and an equal number of persons connected with the public schools shall be appointed by the state board on the recommendation of the state superintendent of education to aid in developing desirable standards and assist in the improvement of teacher and administrator training in the state.

16. The state scholarship program for college students preparing for the teaching profession and for teachers who wish to improve their qualifications by additional college training is greatly expanded.

17. In the field of higher education a university system was established, all institutions being made co-educational, and the name of the former Florida State College for Women was changed to the Florida State University.

Florida has been concerned with improving its educational program for many years. Educational specialists and consultants have been brought into the state at various times. The present and past governors have been actively interested. Under the leadership of the state superintendent a lay committee has been organized. It is made up of fifteen of the ablest lay citizens in the state. This committee has made a very intensive study of the schools and their needs and have made recommendations to both the 1945 and 1947 legislatures. Florida's recent legislation reflects the interest and concern of lay and professional groups alike throughout the state. The legislation just passed was truly a result of citizen interest and concern about securing better schools for children and youth.—*J. M. Leps, College of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville, for the ASCD Legislative Committee.*

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