

Returns on a Year-Round Investment—

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The city of Rochester, Minnesota, where Maurice J. Thomas is superintendent of schools, has put a twelve-month program into effect, and the teachers' enthusiastic comments attest its practicability. The plan, as it is outlined here by Mr. Thomas, provides adequate time and opportunity for professional growth while increasing learning experiences for the children and youth of Rochester.

THE GROWTH and development of children is a year-round process. Communities, and particularly public schools, can no longer be satisfied with an educational program which is concerned with children and youth for a period of only nine or ten months each year. In our complex society today, it is imperative that our public schools make available their resources and professional personnel for the entire year.

To implement this philosophy of education, which accepts the principle that educational services are chiefly concerned with the development of the whole child, it is only reasonable to organize a complete educational program.

MANY THINGS TO CONSIDER

When a community decides to accept a year-round educational program, a heavy burden is placed upon educational leadership. Administrators particularly will find very few charts to guide their procedures in inaugurating this type of service. Boards of education, superintendents, and principals will find it necessary to make many adaptations and will be forced to innovate as they move along in promoting and developing a program of year-round education.

It must, first of all, be kept in mind that what is being done in one community in this regard will not of necessity be valid or adaptable in another community. Year-round services, particularly those provided during the summer months, must be suited to the particular community in which the program is being inaugurated. This principle is valid, of course, for the regular educational program, but its validity is even more apparent for a year-round program. Neither should this additional service be identical in nature to that provided during the regular school year. The philosophy and specific objectives of such additional service may be somewhat different, and, in the estimation of many, must be broader in concept than is usually found in most public schools of America.

PLANNING FOR TWELVE MONTHS IN ROCHESTER

When the faculty and administration of Rochester, Minnesota explored the possibility of developing a complete service for youth on a year-round basis, they were motivated by several compelling factors. Of primary consideration was increased service to children, youth, and citizens of the community.

Of compelling importance, also, was the desire to raise the status and compensation of teachers. It was felt that these purposes could be achieved only by utilizing the service of teachers for a full year.

Total Community Support

The development of a comprehensive service to the community by educational personnel is far from a simple task. In the first place, the community must be convinced that such a course of action will bring benefits commensurate with increased educational costs. There will always be some in the community who will remain unconvinced.

However, when one starts with parents in developing a campaign of community information, the chances of securing approval of policymaking bodies is made easier. Parents are quick to grasp the importance of a year-round educational program and become the most ardent supporters of such a plan when it is finally put into effect.

The greatest difficulty is with groups primarily concerned with costs. The first reaction, a natural one, is that if the educational program is extended, the community will have to provide a much larger sum of money in order to carry educational service on a complete-year basis. And it is admitted that it has been more costly to have such a program for this community.

The chief factor, however, in insuring the success of such a venture, is the whole-hearted support of the professional staff. A step of this nature cannot be imposed from above and succeed. The willingness to provide year-round service must be strongly

felt by the professional staff. In Rochester the acceptance of the philosophy of a year-round educational service stems from the teaching body itself. To them must go the credit for inaugurating such a program in Rochester. Details were worked out cooperatively, with the primary responsibility resting upon educational leadership.

Many people have asked just what is done under such a program; what types of services are expected of professional employees; how is it possible for teachers from time to time to return to college and university campuses if they are employed the year-round? In Rochester there are five specific services which are performed under this program.

Summer Recreation Service

The schools of Rochester have always had the responsibility of managing and directing a summer recreational program. Under guidance of the professional staff, they rendered this service for a number of years. Previous to the inauguration of the twelve-month program, approximately thirty teachers were employed to work in the parks and on the school playgrounds and recreational centers during the summer months. This service has been continued. In fact, it has expanded as a result of the inclusion of all staff members in the year-round educational program.

Special Summer Classes

Many school systems have made available special courses for students desiring to secure enriched experiences not available to them during the regular

school year, accelerate their program, or participate in remedial work. Again, these classes have been continued and, in many respects, opportunities extended.

Local Departmental Workshops

It is impossible in many communities for teachers to have sufficient time to evaluate their past procedures, to plan new courses, or to participate in programs of curriculum improvement. During the regular school term of nine or ten months, teachers are so busy carrying on the routine of their regular jobs that study of procedures and problems is pushed into the background. Every school system should afford its staff opportunities to carry forward experiments, to make complete evaluations of techniques which are in use, to study the educational literature relative to any particular problem, and to develop suggested curriculum materials.

In Rochester it has been found that this phase of work is the most interesting and challenging for members of the teaching staff. There is an added challenge and stimulus when such a study is done in a local environment.

In our elementary schools four workshops were organized. Each study group was headed by a classroom teacher. Experts within the school system and especially qualified persons in the community were brought in as consultants to each group.

Approximately one-third of the elementary school staff participated in the summer workshops. This third was divided into four equal groups. This division was not arbitrarily assigned by

the administration. Teachers themselves made their own selection of the group in which they would like to work. The areas were guidance and child development, health education, the skill subjects, and social learning. Each group met together every Monday and Tuesday afternoon for a period of three hours. Each Wednesday afternoon the entire group met in a general meeting to discuss the problem of coordination of subject matter and pupil handling. Thursday and Friday afternoons were devoted to individual work by the members of each committee. These workshops ran for a period of five weeks.

At the close of this summer workshop, a special committee prepared and submitted a comprehensive report consisting of forty-two pages of mimeographed material. This material was made available to every elementary teacher in the system. Excellent bibliographies concerning child development and guidance, health education, social learnings, and materials relative to the teaching of the skill subjects are a part of the report. Brief summaries were prepared on each of the general meetings held.

Each division of the system conducted similar types of workshops. The junior high school devoted its major attention to the problem of testing and guidance. Many teachers worked with the regular school counselor and obtained new insights on problems of individual pupil handling. In the junior college, departments and individual teachers prepared outlines for courses, brought bibliography material up to date, and prepared materials for use during the coming school year.

College and University Attendance

The members of the professional staff should never be restricted in their desire to secure enriched educational advantages by attending colleges and universities. Under this program there is a greater possibility that teachers will return more frequently to college campuses than before since the teacher's pay check automatically goes on for twelve months of the year.

We have found that the twelve-month program stimulated college and university attendance. Our teachers were in the unique position of having a monthly pay check available to them while they were away at school. Such a monthly pay check was not the prorated share of a nine-month teaching salary, but one just as large as that which they had received when a nine-month program was in effect.

Approved Travel

A limited number of travel approvals are granted each year. Several of Rochester's teachers made extended trips last summer. Some went to foreign countries and many to areas in the United States entirely new to them.

Tasks for All

There must, of course, be some administrative direction as to which particular responsibilities teachers shall assume during certain specific years. If the summer recreation program and the teaching of summer school classes are vital in a given community, then sufficient professional personnel must be retained in the community in order to render these services.

A plan of rotation of opportunities has been set up as the result of attempting to render this service to the community. Each teacher is expected to have, within a period of five years, three to five of these experiences.

It is true that individual needs and aptitudes must be considered and adjustments made. However, with the broadening of the concept of summer recreational service, practically every teacher can be utilized within the framework of this specific part of a twelve-month program. After all, recreational service, broadly conceived, is much more than just playground service.

As has been indicated above, the plan of assignment is not arbitrary but made in cooperation with the administrative staff and the classroom teachers. In cases where differences arise relative to assignment, a teacher committee for purposes of appeal functions. In addition to appealing to their own professional body for re-examination of the assignment, teachers have the privilege of appealing to the Board of Education for a change in assignment if, in their estimation, their assignment has not been fairly made. In the main, however, teachers understand that a smooth functioning program is dependent upon administrative direction. Assignments in the summer have been accepted in the same spirit as assignments made during the regular school year.

Such a plan places a heavy burden upon the administrative officers. Principals, supervisors, and directors have always been employed on a full-year basis. The inclusion of teachers in this program has added to the fairness of this arrangement, but it has also added

to the burden on school administration; for, in our situation, this is a new assignment and one which must be carried over and above regular duties as conceived under the old program.

Problems for Solution

No innovation runs smoothly at first. It is not contended that what we did in Rochester was ideal. We know it was sound, and with more experience we can make it an even more effective instrument. There are weaknesses in our year-round program.

The salary, especially for those on the recreation program, workshop participants, and summer school teaching, is not high enough. It is true that our teachers attend summer school and travel and are paid their regular salaries. This helps to compensate for the lack of complete salary differential when compared with other systems paying high salaries. But our teachers should receive salaries comparable to what other cities pay their teachers, even as much as is paid in large cities. The new salary schedule recently adopted by our Board of Education will go a long way in correcting this inequality.

There are only a limited number of staff members qualified to serve on the city-wide recreation programs. There will be increasing difficulty to secure sufficient personnel for this phase of our program. It requires as many people as we have employed in this type of service during the school year to staff our summer activities. We will have difficulty assigning school personnel to the playgrounds, especially our large recreational areas, when our physical education men and women return to college for additional work.

The abilities of staffs vary. Some teachers can handle many things well; others have limited talents. As is true during the regular year, some are much more valuable than others for this year-round service. As a rule, those who are outstanding during the regular year also make the best contributions during the summer months. Perhaps teachers close to retirement age, above the age of fifty-five, who have served fifteen years or more, should be granted six weeks vacation, if requested, instead of four weeks.

The twelve-month program places a heavy additional burden upon the administrative officers. In addition to what has been required during the summer months previously, our principals and other administrators must direct a full summer program. Extra help will have to be made available to carry this additional load.

COMMENTING ON HOW IT WORKED

The following quotations from teachers' reports concerning the new plan in Rochester are significant.

After a year of working in the environment of the twelve-month plan, I find myself firmly believing that it is a privilege to be working in a system which had foresight to adopt it.

I am satisfied that our summer program has proved itself a necessary and valuable part of our educational plan for Rochester. My own area, the reading clinic in junior high school, I can speak for most heartily.

Aside from the many assets of giving Rochester children many advantages and making teaching a real profession, the thing that has impressed me most is to be a part of a system that is out in front, leading in educational practices.

In a class in counseling I learned much that can be adopted in a classroom which will make for the development of happy and effective personalities.

I like the twelve-month plan. I like the professional feeling, the stability and singleness of purpose that it gives to me. I like the extra time I have had this summer for planning and preparing for classes.

I certainly like the twelve-month plan we now have. Some of my reasons are:

1. Places the staff on a sounder financial basis.
2. Puts teaching in the class of a profession—not a teacher nine months and a tramp three months.
3. Gives the school a chance to utilize the materials they have and to be prepared to give the students the best. After all, a surgeon studies his case before he operates.
4. Why close a business institution three months a year—or a two or three million dollar plant? For a bit more money the plant can be functioning twelve months, and the returns on the extra outlay more than take care of it.
5. Chance for study in summer.

I have put down just a few reasons, but the plan hasn't been in operation long enough to evaluate it fairly. I did enjoy my work this summer.

The twelve-month plan is, I believe, preferable to our previous one for these reasons—which I have experienced and observed:

1. Better understanding of other faculty members and their work. Opportunity given for exchange of ideas.
2. Time and facilities for preparation and accumulation of materials needed for year's work, for making outlines and handbook to take the place of those usually purchased and not always entirely suitable for our procedure here.
3. Opportunity for more acquaintance with the library—especially with the new books ordered.

4. By correcting standardized tests a chance was given to discover certain weaknesses that will need special emphasis.
5. Time to re-arrange files, book cases, desks, and to discard useless materials and find and make that which is valuable and easily accessible.

One of the features of the Rochester plan is to have all new teachers to report August first, if possible. The three weeks before registration of children were devoted to a study of the philosophy of learning, curriculum bulletins, and the preparation of plans. Some of the principals and supervisors assisted new teachers in the induction processes. The teachers reacted very favorably to the idea. Here is what some of them said:

I would like to dwell upon my impressions of the city's system of education for I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities it has offered me thus far. Here one is not restricted by a definite course of study which emphasizes subject matter, but the teacher is given freedom to do the things she has always wanted to do. As a matter of fact, the children grow in phases of development which make up his life.

The summer program has been of great value to me. This last summer I had only four weeks of that work. Even that was a great help. I worked on the playgrounds and in the orientation workshops.

I gained the greatest value from the several workshop meetings which I attended. We not only gained a better understanding of the Rochester system and how it works, and of the available facilities and how to use them; but most important of all, I believe, we were given a feeling of confidence and assurance by our work with one of the understanding, helpful principals.

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