Local Workshops

The use of local workshops for planning curriculum improvement and for carrying forward a program of in-service education has grown by leaps and bounds during recent years. It appears from reports available that more school systems than ever conducted workshops this past summer. Usually these workshops are conducted by the local school system for their own teachers, but under an arrangement whereby participants may earn college credit in some university or college which cooperates with the local system in administering the workshop. The problems which receive consideration in these summer programs are usually defined by teachers through a census of teacher problems and interests made during the preceding school year by a workshop committee or by a curriculum council. The workshop staff is usually composed of qualified people from the local system, as well as expert consultant service supplied by the local school or by the cooperating school of education.

School administrators and curriculum directors in school systems in which local workshops have been conducted in the past feel that this procedure is an exceedingly valuable one for helping teachers think through educational problems. Also, it provides a stimulating experience in group living and group planning for the teachers. Some of the workshops have set up this opportunity for group experience as one of their important functions. This type of workshop has also proved invaluable as a method of acquainting newly-employed teachers with the program of the local school.

Some examples of local workshops held during the summer of 1948 are:

Philadelphia. The workshop conducted by the Philadelphia schools included both a two-weeks program and a five-weeks program. In the two-weeks program, teachers spent two hours in small study and discussion groups. Following this, the workshoppers attended a general meeting at which outstanding national authorities in the field of education addressed the group. Afternoons were devoted to some type of activity. Those wishing to spend five weeks in the workshop spent the entire forenoon of the remaining three weeks in working individually or in groups on problems of their choice. This work could be an extension of study initiated in the first two weeks. The afternoons were devoted to an activity program in studio arts and recreation. College credit could be obtained through either Temple University or the University of Pennsylvania.

Cincinnati. This workshop operated for the four days just prior to the opening of school. Following a general session each morning the Cincinnati teachers separated into about forty different groups for two two-hour work and study sessions. The school system had thirty outstanding educational leaders present as consultants and leaders for the work study groups. Types of study groups include: current issues (a consideration of important issues in American life with special reference to their historical development and to their ap-
lication to the 1948 presidential election); teaching current affairs; discussion techniques; mental health; teaching slow learners; evaluation; and a number of groups in subject matter areas.

Denver. The workshop extended for a five-week period and was conducted in cooperation with the University of Denver. Because of the great interest which has been developed among Denver teachers in the work, registration was limited to 300 persons. Two laboratory classes for observation purposes were held. In addition to work groups which studied local problems relating to the elementary and secondary education, there were opportunities for special study in child growth and development, education in intercultural relations, radio education, air age education, and family life education. In addition to general consultants from the Denver schools, a staff of outside consultants was available for use by the various study groups.

Clinton, Iowa. The Clinton workshop was held just preceding the opening of school and extended for four days for teachers new to the system and three days for other teachers. General meetings were held in which speakers discussed various broad aspects of the educational program. During the remainder of the time sectional meetings, organized around curriculum areas, were held.

Battle Creek, Michigan. The Battle Creek workshop offered not only a stimulating in-service education program but an enjoyable camping experience as well, for the workshop was held at a nearby camp which is operated by the Battle Creek schools on a year-around basis. The workshop extended for a period of two weeks just prior to the opening of school. The staff was composed of faculty members of the University of Michigan, which cooperates with the Battle Creek schools in conducting the workshop, staff members of the local systems, and outside consultants.

Virginia Aids the Visiting Teacher. One of the recent developments in public education in Virginia is the Visiting Teacher program. The program was established on a state-wide basis in 1945, and since that time a number of conferences have been held by the State Department of Education to clarify the functions of visiting teachers and to help formulate plans for organization and operation of the program. In addition, the state department has recently published A Handbook for Visiting Teachers. This bulletin is the outgrowth of the various conferences and reports of the work of successful visiting teachers throughout the state. The handbook gives suggestions for working with children with various types of special needs or with various behavior problems. It is particularly helpful in listing resources which the visiting teacher may use in finding special services for these children.

Guide to Group Living. Several school systems are doing significant work in carrying forward programs designed to improve the quality of group living, with special reference to development of better relationships among pupils of various racial, religious, and ethnic groups. As a part of these efforts several school systems have prepared excellent guides for teachers. Such a recent publication is There Are Ways of Living Together prepared by the Committee on Living Together of the Philadelphia public schools.

This committee was appointed in 1944 and since that time it has been active in carrying forward efforts in the Philadelphia schools to improve the quality of group relations. The present bulletin represents an effort to analyze the problems of group living and to offer suggestions to teachers for ways of improving the quality of group living. The bulletin is in tentative form and the committee expects teachers to analyze it critically and offer suggestions for its improvement before its publication for general release.

The committee expresses the goal of its endeavor in these words: That every child on every day, Have equal chance to learn and play; Not color, creed, nor place of birth, Prevent his fullest life on earth.