

A Functional Program for Michigan Youth

ROLAND C. FAUNCE

That a concerted attack on removing the blocks to desired college-high school relationships may produce results is evidenced by this account of the Michigan College Agreement by Roland C. Faunce, associate professor of education, Wayne University, Detroit.

CONSIDERABLE INTEREST has been expressed during the past two years in a new plan for college admission which has been experimentally undertaken in Michigan. Such interest has been manifested by college and university admission offices and by curriculum workers in secondary education. In this article we shall trace briefly the story of the Michigan College Agreement and describe the efforts at curriculum development to which it has given impetus.

Requirements Strait Jacket the Curriculum

For many years efforts to improve the high school curriculum have been hampered by existing requirements for college admission in Michigan. These requirements, applicable to all university accredited high schools in the state have, since the early thirties, included the satisfactory completion of two majors of three units each and two minors of two units each. The majors and minors had to be selected from approved sequences in five fields. Changes in the courses approved for the sequences were difficult to achieve.

These subject requirements had various effects upon efforts to improve

the curriculum of the secondary school. In large high schools the college-bound students were conventionally herded into a sort of sub-school with a special curriculum beginning at grade nine and a special diploma which provided the magic key to the college doors. In small schools the effort to provide for a very small number of college-bound students resulted in the entire curriculum being strait jacketed. Studies conducted even in recent years show that the majority of small high schools required all their graduates to satisfy college admission sequence requirements.

The effect of these requirements has been even more restrictive than can be explained by their actual limitations. There seems to be a psychological hazard stemming from the prestige of the colleges and universities which causes high school faculties to reject the possibility of change. At numerous curriculum conferences held in recent years, fears have invariably been expressed that "the college will not let us make such changes." It should be added that many university and college staff members have not sought such influence and power but have, on the contrary, deplored the restrictive effect which sequence requirements for col-

lege admission obviously exert upon the secondary schools.

The Foundation Is Laid

The Michigan Secondary Curriculum Study, launched in 1938, obtained for its fifty-five member schools an Agreement from Michigan colleges and universities admitting the graduates of the schools of the Study without reference to the pattern of subjects pursued for the years 1940 through 1950. Under the protection of this Agreement many new courses and programs were experimentally launched. As the terminal date of the Agreement approached, teachers and administrators in the schools of the Study began to wonder what would happen to their programs when the College Agreement lapsed in 1950. Follow-up studies indicated that the graduates of these schools were attaining as much success in college as were the graduates of more conventional programs.

A New Agreement Comes Into Being

In the fall of 1945 the Michigan College Association invited the Michigan Secondary School Association to establish a joint committee on college relations problems. This committee of fourteen members met regularly during the school year 1945-46. As a result of their deliberations and examination of research evidence the committee proposed in the fall of 1946 that the following basis for college admission be proposed to their parent organizations.

"The college agrees to disregard the pattern of subjects pursued in considering for admission the graduates of selected accredited high schools provided they are recommended by the school from among more able students in the

graduating class. This Agreement does not imply that students must be admitted to certain college courses or curricula for which they cannot give evidence of adequate preparation."

The following footnote was also proposed. "Secondary schools are urged to make available such basic courses as provide a necessary preparation for entering technical, industrial, or professional curricula. It is recommended further that colleges provide accelerated programs of preparation for specialized college curricula for those graduates who are unable to secure such preparatory training in high schools."

High schools seeking to come under the new College Agreement are to be required to assume responsibility for initiating and conducting such procedures as the following:

- The building of an adequate personnel file about each student, including testing data of various kinds, anecdotal records, personality inventories, achievement samples, etc. The high school staff is to assume responsibility for developing a summary of these personnel data for submission to college.
- A basic curriculum study and evaluation of the purpose and program of the secondary school.
- A continuous follow-up study of former pupils.
- A continuous program of information and orientation throughout the high school course regarding the nature and requirements of certain occupations and specialized college courses, and during the senior year special emphasis on the occupation or college of the pupil's choice.

The Machinery Is Set Up

The new College Agreement was adopted in the fall of 1946 by both the

Michigan College Association and the Michigan Secondary School Association. Under its terms a state committee was established in March of 1946 for the purpose of receiving and evaluating applications for admission under the new plan. The committee consisted of the State Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction as chairman, one superintendent of schools elected by the Michigan Association of School Administrators, three high school principals representing the Michigan Secondary School Association, and four representatives of the Michigan College Association. The secretary of the State Curriculum Planning Committee also served on the committee as ex-officio secretary.

In April, 1946, a description of the plan was mailed to all university accredited high schools of Michigan together with an invitation to apply for admission. Admission was to be accompanied by detailed descriptions of the plans developed cooperatively by each local faculty for meeting the four criteria of the Agreement.

These Are the Results

A little over one year has passed since this invitation was extended to Michigan high schools. There are now ninety-two high schools which have been accepted under the Agreement, with new applications continuing to come in each month. Meanwhile the universities and colleges of the state have almost unanimously endorsed the plan by official action on each campus.

The Michigan College Agreement has already produced a number of interesting developments. The more active members of the former Michigan Sec-

ondary Curriculum Study have been accepted among the member schools, thus insuring continued protection for the curriculum innovations developed during the past ten years in these schools. In addition, a number of new courses and guidance programs have been developed by these ninety-two high schools as a direct result of the stimulus and protection of the Agreement. Follow-up studies are being launched, counseling programs initiated, guidance files examined and improved. Perhaps most significant of all, an active evaluation of the programs of these ninety-two high schools is now underway through organization for cooperative curriculum study by the entire faculty of each school.

Regional curriculum studies are being established which will involve nearly all of the signatory high schools and colleges. In southeastern Michigan twenty-six high schools and eleven colleges and universities have joined in an on-going curriculum study. An effective steering committee provides leadership for such activities as weekend conferences at Waldenwoods and at the St. Mary's Lake Camp conducted by the Michigan Education Association. Six study committees provide the means of intensive program development by teachers and administrators from various schools and colleges. The committees so far established are: a Guidance Committee, a Committee on Follow-Up Studies, a Committee on General Education, a Committee on Curriculum Development, a Committee on Evaluation of Pupil Growth, and a Committee on Teacher-Pupil Planning.

Reports of developments in the schools are published and distributed in

mimeographed form through the office of the Metropolitan Bureau of Cooperative School Studies, which is actively assisting in the work of this Southeastern Michigan Association. The house organ of the Bureau, *Action*, and the *Bulletin of the Michigan Secondary School Association* have also been used to publish reports of developments in the schools. The eight colleges and universities are participating actively through representation at working conferences, on committees, and through the conducting of special research studies on their own campuses.

Elsewhere in the state the signatory high schools and colleges have formed similar study groups—in southwestern Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula schools, and in the north central area in the lower peninsula. The remaining schools, located in the south central part of the state, are considering the formation of a similar study group.

Experimentation Has Its Offspring

It appears that the Michigan Secondary Study, which terminates its official period of existence in June, 1949, will not disappear without offspring. Instead, the Study appears to have prop-

agated a number of lusty infant studies which will have the advantage of being organized regionally and are thus closer to the member schools. There has, so far, been much more active participation by the colleges and universities in these regional studies than ever was characteristic of the Michigan Secondary Study.

A renaissance seems to have occurred in the curriculum development program of Michigan high schools. Spurred on by the challenge offered by the colleges and protected by the assurance that their graduates can now be admitted without regard to the sequence of courses which they have pursued, the faculties of these ninety-two high schools have launched a real attack upon the problems of guidance and curriculum revision. Educators of colleges and high schools alike are watching this experiment with considerable interest, since it may develop into an exciting state program of life adjustment education. Many educators are doing more than watch the experiment; they have rolled up their sleeves and waded in to help in this effort to develop a more functional program of secondary education for all Michigan youth.

A New Bibliography

It's new this month—*Bibliography on Secondary Education and Related Fields*. You'll want a copy of this annotated bibliography in your school and professional library. Order from the ASCD office—price 50 cents.

Copyright © 1949 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.