

### Youth Needs Take Precedence

As a concluding remark, the central importance of the adaptive needs of youth should be re-emphasized. This takes precedence over professional convenience, or the preservation of tradi-

tional mores, or the preservation of traditional subject matter and practices. The senior high school is not likely to furnish effective help to young people today unless it reconstructs its program, and this will inevitably mean the remaking of its culture.

## For Whom Are High Schools Designed?

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In this brief review of three of the "basic studies" in the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program, Harold C. Hand, professor of education at the University of Illinois, focuses our attention on the question of the provisions today's high schools are making for *all* the children of *all* the people.

THE ILLINOIS Secondary School Curriculum Program (hereafter referred to as the ISSCP) is a cooperative enterprise instituted by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and sponsored by over thirty statewide organizations variously representing agriculture, business, industry, labor, and the State Congress of the PTA, as well as all of the identifiable state professional educational organizations in any way concerned with secondary education. All of the state colleges, the state university, and most of the private colleges and universities are assisting in the program on a cost-free basis.

The Illinois Association of Secondary School Principals was the "spark plug" which "touched off" this organization.

### The Scope of Activity

The ISSCP is entirely permissive in character. Any secondary school in the state may participate or not as it sees fit. In the first year of its existence (1947-48), nearly 150 of the state's recognized high schools were participants. Principally, there were the medium- and large-sized schools, though several member institutions have enrollments ranging from less than fifty to one hundred pupils.

Six types of inter-related activities are promoted in the name of the ISSCP.

- The conducting of locally based research studies basic to curriculum development
- The encouragement of developmental curriculum projects
- The conducting of curriculum workshops
- The development of publications
- The facilitating of a state-wide organization for curriculum development
- The sponsoring of consultations with institutions of higher learning looking to the modification of college entrance requirements.

This discussion will limit itself to brief descriptions of some of the "basic studies" referred to in the first item.

Four such studies were put into the field in 1947-48; a fifth was being instituted as these lines were written (December, 1948); and still others are in prospect. The four studies which were conducted during the first year are known, respectively, as the Holding Power Study, the Hidden Tuition Costs Study, the Participation in Extra-Class Activities Study, and the Guidance Study. The one now being launched (December, 1948) is the Follow-Up Study.

#### Questions of Merit

Questions of "Who?" "What?" "When?" and "How?" simply cannot be evaded if a functional curriculum of genuine validity and real vitality is to be provided by the public secondary school. The present and prospective basic studies of the ISSCP are variously designed to enable local school groups to secure useful *local* evidence which can be put to practical use in working

out the *local* answers to these key questions. Three of the investigations which shed light on the question of "Who?" are discussed in this article.

#### Emphasis on "Who?"

*Who* should be served by the American secondary school? We support the public high school out of tax funds for the central purpose of maintaining and strengthening our way of life. Since our way of life is based on the ethic which holds that *all* human beings are of supreme (hence of equivalent) moral worth, we Americans are dedicated to the ideal of full equality of educational opportunity. This means that *all* the children of *all* the people should be equally well served by the public secondary school.

There is a second basic consideration bearing on this "who" question, the logic of which is inescapable. Except for that tiny fraction of one percent who must be institutionalized because they are idiots incapable of buttoning buttons, attending to the voiding of bodily wastes, etc., *all* youth are variously destined to become husbands or wives, fathers or mothers, employees or employers, neighbors, drivers of automobiles, spenders of income, users of leisure time, readers of newspapers, "consumers" of radio programs and motion pictures, formulators of public opinion, or voters in our communities. Hence, if the community and the nation are to be strengthened to the maximum, *all* of the sons and daughters of *all* the people must appropriately be educated by the secondary school.

Consequently, any American public secondary school must be regarded as a failure precisely to the degree that

it is not attracting and holding all the youth of the community not otherwise enrolled in private or special-purpose institutions. In this quantitative sense, data reported by the U. S. Office of Education reveal that the public secondary school is typically a fifty percent failure, for only about half of all American youth of secondary school age complete high school.

What is true in the country as a whole may or may not be true of the local situation, however. It may be about average—or it may be much better or much worse. Nobody can know except on the basis of a careful *factual* study of the *local* situation.

Not only should this study be designed to find out *how many* are and are not being held by the school; it is even more important to find out *who* the pupils are who typically drop out. It must be presumed that about the same proportion of the same types of youngsters will continue to drop out if the school remains substantially “as is” in reference to its program and practices. The school must first discover the characteristics of its typical drop-outs before it can possibly know what changes need to be made to make itself durably attractive to *all* the children of *all* the people. The Holding Power Study of the ISSCP was designed to enable secondary school faculties to secure the *local* answers to the questions of *how many* and *who*.

### A Study of Holding Power

Over seventy schools undertook the Holding Power Study in 1947-48. The data for only about half of these schools had been analyzed (in all basic studies data were centrally analyzed and col-

lated without cost to the local school) at the time this article was written.

The plan of the study was simple. In the group of pupils who had entered the school four school years prior to the 1947 commencement, it was noted how many and “who” (sex, age, grade, location of home, race, economic status, school marks, and so on) had dropped out. Two schedules, one in which to record the data for each withdrawn pupil and one containing explicit pre-tested directions, were centrally supplied by the ISSCP.

Schools were found to vary widely in their holding power, ranging from but 0.6 to as many as 8.0 withdrawals per every ten pupils who continued on to graduation. Size of school was not found to be associated with holding power; the five largest and the five smallest schools averaged almost identically the same number of drop outs per each ten graduates. Except at the eleventh grade level, appreciably more boys than girls withdrew. Only four percent of the drop-outs had been enrolled in the college preparatory curriculum; over half (fifty-four percent) were registered in what their schools called a vocational curriculum; the remainder (forty-two percent) withdrew from the general curriculum. Had the pupils who dropped out continued on to graduation and received the same school marks, about eighty percent would have wound up at or near the “bottom” of their graduating class. Seventy-two percent of the pupils who withdrew came from lower income families.

Designing a curriculum which will appeal to the interests of the “below average” pupils and which will be

within the range of their capabilities is thus seen to be one of the two major curriculum problems in most of the schools in question. The other is that of making it possible for children from lower income families to participate more nearly on a par with their more fortunately born schoolmates.

### An Investigation of Hidden Costs

The Hidden Tuition Costs Study was the second of three investigations which bore on the "who" question. The persons who structured and supervised the basic studies of the ISSCP were acquainted with findings which, over the past quarter of a century, have consistently revealed that it is the accident of birth in an economic sense (the size of the family purse) which in major part seems to determine who shall and who shall not get as far as high school; and, once in the secondary school, who shall and who shall not continue on to graduation. They were also acquainted with the findings of a dozen or so studies which revealed that the average cash cost of attending the supposedly free secondary school was about \$125 per year per pupil (food, clothing, shelter, transportation excluded), and that these costs had been found to rise sharply from an average of about \$95 for freshmen to a little over \$150 for seniors. They believed, however, that the only way for any faculty to find out what financial burdens pupils were being asked to bear was to make a *factual* study of its own *local* situation.

Consequently, the Hidden Tuition Costs Study was structured, pre-tested, and offered to the schools of Illinois. This was a "price tag" study designed

to ferret out the magnitude of each and every cost to the pupil in connection with attending the local high school and participating in its life and program. Obviously, it is only as the school finds out what it is actually doing in this regard that it can possibly know whether or not it is making it difficult or impossible for the poorer children to stay in school.

About eighty schools completed the three inventories utilized in this study. One of these was designed to find out what it cost per pupil to take any given course; one copy for each course he taught was completed by each teacher in the school. The purpose of the second was to find out the cost to pupils of participating in each of the extra-class activities of the school. The faculty sponsors filled out these inventories, one for each activity in the school. The third instrument, the "General Cost of Participation Inventory," was filled out by the principal or by someone under his immediate supervision. It was designed to discover the magnitude of each of all of the other costs to pupils in connection with attending the school and taking part in "what goes on" therein (food, clothing, shelter, transportation excluded).

### What Does the Price Tag Say

This study does *not* yield any one over-all figure indicating what it costs the average pupil to attend a given school; instead, it is diagnostic in character in that it enables the local faculty group to identify its specific cost-to-pupils practices; it makes each item of pupil cost stand out in bold relief so that the relative "highs" and "lows" can easily be spotted. This is precisely what

the faculty needs to discover if it is to know the relative priorities of the various reforms which may be indicated.

Consequently, the findings of this study cannot be reported in less than about fifty full-sized pages of typed material. The magnitude of this reporting job is readily apparent when one recalls that the "price tags" variously relate to each school course at each grade level (each course cost broken down into textbook cost or rental, fees, assessments, deposits, special materials, items of equipment), each extra-class activity (costs broken down into dues, fees, deposits, assessments, items of equipment, insignia, admission charges), and many other items of expense such as student body dues, class dues, student activity books, pay assemblies, subscriptions, locker rentals, towel fees, graduation costs, and many others.

—*in subjects*

The best we can do here is to sample the findings and perhaps generalize a bit. Total annual per pupil costs of taking English courses ranged from nothing to \$24 per course; mathematics from no cost to \$6.75; science from no cost to \$10.25; social studies from no cost to \$10.05; commercial subjects from no cost to \$26.35; foreign language from no cost to \$10.15; music courses from no cost to \$20.25; boys' practical arts from no cost to \$39.50; girls' practical arts from no cost to \$100.00; vocational subjects from no cost to \$39.50; art courses from no cost to \$14.80; boys' physical education from no cost to \$16.80; girls' physical education from no cost to \$14.00.

The number of schools in which the per pupil cost was nil in one or another

of the subjects was very small, rarely equalling as many as one-fourth in any subject at any grade level and usually falling far below this proportion.

Obviously, a much truer picture would be gained by the reader could the medians and inter-quartile ranges of the per-subject costs be reported here. Space does not permit, for three sets of each of the three measures for each subject area at each grade level would be entailed since the data were separately analyzed for "textbook purchase," "textbook rental," and "free textbook" situations.

In general, the median total per pupil costs in "textbook purchase" schools were two or three times greater than in "textbook rental" situations, and from six to ten or more times greater than in "free textbook" institutions. In most instances these differences were only in minor part accounted for by the price of the textbook or the magnitude of the rental charge. Principally, they resulted from the fact that "free textbook" (and to a lesser degree "textbook rental") schools tended very markedly to keep down or to eliminate altogether the charges to pupils associated with fees, assessments, deposits, special materials, and items of equipment required in connection with their various courses.

Practical arts, physical education, and vocational courses (in the order named) were appreciably more costly to pupils than any of the others. One of these is required by law: the other two represent curriculum content which economically under-privileged pupils especially need because they are usually destined to enter the labor market at an early age.

—in extra-class activities

Student body dues ranged from 40 cents to \$16.70 in that approximate one-tenth of the schools which levied such a charge. Class dues ran from 50 cents to \$5.00 per year. In three-fourths of the four-year high schools the class ring cost from \$11.00 to \$24.00.

To play on the school's "varsity" teams cost the students the following per year: baseball, 0-\$31.85, median \$12.25; basketball, 0-\$16.00, median \$2.80; football, 0-\$38.35, median \$2.10; golf, 0-\$100.00, median \$50.00; swimming, 0-\$18.65, median \$1.50; tennis, 0-\$48.00, median \$15.00; track, 0-\$18.00, median \$2.70; wrestling or boxing, 0-\$20.25, median \$1.00.

In half of the schools, boys could participate fully in intramurals at no reported charge; in one-fourth of the situations it cost the pupil from \$5.45 to \$17.65 per year. Girls' intramural costs ranged from 0-\$45.70 with a median of \$2.05 and a quartile-3 of \$4.05.

The per pupil cost of taking part in "platform" activities varied widely: dramatics, 0-\$12.50, median 50 cents; forensics, 0-\$9.00, median 0, quartile-3 \$2.30; forum, 0-\$165, median 40 cents.

The annual per pupil cost of belonging to the school's music organization was staggering (to a professor!) in some instances: band, 0-\$265.00, median \$3.50; chorus, 0-\$6.00, median 35 cents; orchestra, 0-\$165.00, median \$2.25.

Although the cost ran as high as \$4.25 per pupil in some instances, in three-fourths of the schools it cost a boy or girl nothing to serve on the staff of the newspaper or yearbook.

Thirty-five types of clubs (Biology, Radio, Future Homemakers, etc.) were reported. The annual per pupil costs of belonging to these ranged from nothing to as high as \$71.00 (cheer leaders) per club. Median costs varied from \$1.00 to

\$19.30 in connection with nineteen types of clubs.

The school yearbook cost up to \$3.50 per copy; the newspaper up to \$2.00 per year. Activity books admitting students to home athletic contests ranged from \$1.75 to \$10.00 with a median of \$3.95. Only forty percent of the schools followed this "cut rate" practice: admission costs were generally higher in the remaining schools.

Going stag to one's class dances cost from 25 cents to \$17.00 per year; to parties, 10 cents to \$5.10; to picnics and banquets, 25 cents to \$12.00.

Graduating from high school was found to be an expensive proposition in most schools. The per pupil costs reported were these: announcements, 50 cents to \$8.00; name cards, 50 cents to \$2.00; pictures, 50 cents to \$20.00, median \$8.00, quartile-3 \$10.00; cap and gown rental, 0-\$2.75; other graduation expenses, 25 cents to \$10.00.

### Research on "Who" Participates

This brings us to a brief characterization of the third and last investigation to be presented here—the Participation in Extra-Class Activities Study. This was an investigation in which each pupil was queried to discover "who" (sex, age, grade, location of home, school marks, socio-economic status) belongs to what, "who" goes to what, "who" gets what. Only thirteen schools (size, 81-2700 pupils) were admitted to this study because of the magnitude of the data analysis involved at the ISSCP "research headquarters." Any school, however, can do this or any other of the basic studies for itself if it wishes.\*

\*Bulletins giving the inventories, techniques, step-by-step directions, etc., for each of the studies discussed in this article are now in press; copies will be mailed to every high school in Illinois.

The only factor that was found to make a difference was the socio-economic status of the pupil's family. But what a difference this made!

The extra-class activities of the school were divided into three categories: "primary group" activities (being on a team, in the cast of a play, in a club, etc.); "secondary group" activities (going to a game, seeing a school play, getting the yearbook, etc.); and "leadership" activities (captaincies, chairmanships, presidencies, etc.). Pupils were divided into upper, middle, lower socio-economic groups and the relative numbers of each who "belonged to," "went to or got," or "led" were noted. Were the size of the family purse in no way associated with who "belonged," "went to or got," or "led," the ratios obtained by dividing (a) the proportionate number in the top by (b) the proportionate number in the bottom family-income group who participated would, of course, approximate 1 to 1.

These ratios were computed for each of the three categories of activity with the results as shown in the chart at the bottom of the page.

These findings make it only too apparent that the pupils from the lower income families are relatively but very little "in the swim" in most of the schools. When one remembers that twenty-eight percent of all American families are now living beyond their income and recalls the magnitude of the hidden tuition charges associated with "belonging," "going to," or "getting," this unpalatable finding is not too surprising.

Is it possible that the unhappy experiences mirrored in these ratios bear some casual relationship to the finding that seventy-two percent of all the pupils who withdrew from school came from the lower income families? This relationship cannot be "proven," but who in his right mind could help being suspicious?

#### Ratio of Top to Bottom Family Income Groups

<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>	<u>Leadership</u>
1.1 to 1	1.1 to 1	1.4 to 1
1.7 to 1	1.2 to 1	1.7 to 1
2.2 to 1	1.2 to 1	1.7 to 1
2.2 to 1	1.4 to 1	1.7 to 1
2.4 to 1	1.5 to 1	1.8 to 1
2.9 to 1	1.6 to 1	1.8 to 1
2.9 to 1	1.7 to 1	1.9 to 1
3.0 to 1	1.7 to 1	2.1 to 1
3.1 to 1	1.8 to 1	2.5 to 1
3.6 to 1	2.4 to 1	3.1 to 1
3.7 to 1	2.4 to 1	5.0 to 1
6.5 to 1	2.5 to 1	5.7 to 1
Infinity	3.1 to 1	6.5 to 1

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