

The Indian Lake Conference in Retrospect

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In August, 1949, Regions V and VI of ASCD, which include the Middle Western states, sponsored a work conference at Indian Lake, Michigan. Participants went home from this workshop stimulated and eager to put their newly acquired ideas into practice. Barbara Anthony, Elementary Supervisor in the Port Huron, Michigan, public schools; Lillian C. Paukner, Director of Curriculum in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, schools; and Nelle Wright, Director of Instruction, Waynesboro, Virginia, public schools, describe the activities of this successful regional conference.

"TO THINK THAT I SAW IT HAPPEN and that I had a part in it!" These were the words of a young teacher who had just had her first camp workshop experience. What happened? In what did she have a part? Who were the people? No account can very adequately tell what took place at the Indian Lake Work Conference, for words cannot convey what must be seen, felt, shared, and participated in."

A Look at the Pre-Planning

Any meeting of a week's duration must be preceded, of course, by a period of planning and organization, and the planning for this conference covered a period of almost two years. This does not mean that the committee was active all this time. The idea grew from a meeting of the Committee of Twelve and was presented to the Michigan members of ASCD early in 1948, but was not acted on

very vigorously until the New York meeting the following February. The steps taken are boring to look back on, make dull reading, and should be reserved for other planning groups.

At New York, Region VI was asked to join with Region V in sponsoring the workshop. They accepted. Other regions were then invited to send delegates, with certain limitations in numbers. These limits were set because the committee felt from the beginning



that such a group should be widely representative of all groups in the educational field, insofar as possible. They wanted delegates from cooperating agencies. They wanted a good representation from the minority groups. They wanted local, state, national, and international representation. They wanted teams from cities and counties, from urban and rural areas, from the North and from the South. Since the camp had facilities for a limited number, a flexible quota plan was tentatively set up.

We Found the Perfect Spot

Michigan has many camps suitable for summer workshops. Indian Lake was chosen because it is in the center of a celebrated vacation land, rich in natural resources, settled by peoples of vision from many lands who retain evidences of their cultural past. It is far from cities and telephones. It has a delightfully cool summer climate—"Covered are we now with gooseflesh," a group of participants said later in a parody of *Hiawatha*. There are many choices for recreation: hiking; fishing; swimming; excursions to copper or iron mines, to great springs or beautiful falls, to a couple of the great lakes that lie on our borders, or to the mountains.

The committee scheduled only a small part of the week in advance. The community of Stephenson, Michigan, was invited to spend a day and tell us about the remarkable progress that has taken place through community-school cooperation. Local enthusiasts whose interests lay in conservation, Indian lore, mining, lumbering, or in the many national groups that make up

the Upper Peninsula, were invited to speak to the group.

What Took Place

The months of organizing for the conference brought results. People came to Indian Lake singly, in groups of two's, three's, and four's; they came from rural and urban areas; they came from fifteen states and three foreign countries. There were parents, teachers, superintendents, supervisors, directors of instruction, university and college professors, specialists in several fields, and laymen. And there were children, too. Interest and eagerness to work cooperatively on the problems of leadership in curriculum development brought this group to Indian Lake's Camp Batawagama.

The workshop began on a bright Sunday afternoon in August, when those invited to act as resource people met for a short planning session. There was just enough done that afternoon to give the participants a sense of direction, a feeling that there were rich resources to be tapped, and that there would be activity. Where it was necessary to have a consultant assume responsibility for a task or for a phase of the week's work, that was done quickly. One of the significant decisions made at this session was that the consultants or resource people were not to be identified by introduction or announcement. This established a kind of peer relationship not always achieved in conferences and workshops.

Were the resource people identified at any time during the week? Of course they became known; that was inevitable. But it happened after fine friendly relationships and a permissive atmos-

phere had been established. Then one heard such remarks as this: "Do you know who . . . is? I would never have expressed myself so freely on that problem had I known earlier."

An informal buffet supper and "campfire introductions" at the lake shore later on Sunday started the group on the way to the feeling of groupness which prevailed throughout the conference. The tall pines, the beautiful lake, the rustic cabins all helped, but most of all it was the people who made for friendliness.

The first general session on Monday morning was devoted to identification of problems which the members of the workshop wanted to attack. There had been several problems stated in the announcements and on the application blanks, but these were merely for the purpose of motivating thinking. Problems were more clearly defined that morning, and a committee of three lost no time in tabulating them.

Results showed interests in the areas: democratic human relationships, child development and the curriculum, in-service program development, and public relations in education. Participants of this workshop knew why they came; they had a purpose, they were interested. After the busy first day a parent confided to her cabin mate, "I never realized that you people were so concerned about the welfare of our children—all of you, from teacher to university professor. It was worth the trip to find out about this concern."

Attacking the Problems

Discussion groups were formed in each of the interest areas, with two groups in child development and the

curriculum. Meeting places were assigned and people began the work of attacking their problems. As is customary, leaders and recorders were chosen by each discussion group. Seven periods of approximately two hours each were spent in these small group discussions. In the relaxed atmosphere—under the trees, on the pier, in a boat, in the lounge, or in a cabin—study groups, committees, or buzz groups shared experiences and ideas and thought out loud. Problems were not always solved, but it was a learning experience for all. Letters exchanged between workshopers in the weeks that followed indicate that many ideas and suggestions from these discussions were used in pre-school planning sessions and in staff meetings at home.

General sessions served many purposes: enrichment and stimulation, inspiration and challenge, evaluation, reporting, fun and relaxation. President Walter Anderson shared his thinking with the group at the first general evening session, and everyone was challenged with his presentation of the frontiers of curriculum as he saw them. They became guiding principles in the discussions that followed through the week.

Stephenson Day was a red-letter day for everyone, when two general sessions were given over to the group from that community who came to the camp to discuss their cooperative program. The banker, farmer, school superintendent, housewife, teacher, nurse, and librarian described this community development program which operates on the philosophy that "when people share—people care." The enthusiasm with which these people presented their

program and the interest with which the workshoppers responded really demonstrated the philosophy.

Then there was International Night when the representatives from England, Guatemala, and Japan talked about themselves and about us. Workshop participants were brought closer to the problems of other peoples and there came to everyone the overwhelming realization that human relations and understanding must reach far beyond the people at Indian Lake to all the peoples of our country and the world.

There Was Fun, Too

We enjoyed a talent night with poetry, folklore, singing, and square dancing. Sportsmen tried their luck at fishing, and successful ventures were applauded and envied. Swimming, boating, hiking (with morning bird hikes for a few) helped to develop a sense of relaxation. We mixed vacation and professional experience. A trip to Porcupine Mountain on the shore of Lake Superior, with a campfire supper by the side of the road, was a big event. Indian Lake workshop had a fine balance of work and play. Yes, people saw how groups can work together in the solution of problems—and they had a part in it.

Evaluating the Workshop

An appraisal of any such experience is always difficult, yet necessary for further planning. Tangible evidences of the outcomes are to be found in the reports of the several discussion groups and from a summary of individual written evaluations. They center around the type of conference, the setting, the personnel, and the procedures.

The conference was a camp experience in comparatively primitive surroundings. It required close sharing of meager facilities. The whole group adjusted to the discomforts cheerfully and even humorously.

The environment was rich, however, pointing up the emphasis ASCD has put on conservation. The woods, the lakes with their fish, the birds, the mountain drive, all gave meaning to the 1948 yearbook, *Large Was Our Bounty*.

There was great richness of human resources. The week proved to be a real and fine experience in living and working with persons of different ethnic, religious, social, regional, and national backgrounds. A wide range of educational interests and affiliations made possible many different points of view. Everyone participated; no one dominated. The general theme, "The Role of the Leader in Curriculum Development," served as a focal point for the six discussion groups, and the widely variant personalities dealt with different aspects of the total problem.

There was no compulsion regarding attendance, nor were the subjects for discussion superimposed by the planning committee. The atmosphere was free, permissive. Each participant could follow his own choice. No group leaders were named by the committee; all were elected or chosen by the group. Five characteristics generally stood out in the procedures:

- ♦ The clinical manner of dealing with problems
- ♦ The development of group thinking through the subordination of personal to group concerns

- † The leadership that served to release creative abilities of participants
- † The outcomes in terms of better understanding of people, points of view, and directions for leadership in ASCD organizations
- † The realization that effective educational improvement must be accomplished through the cooperative efforts of all concerned.

At the last general session it was unanimously agreed that another conference be held next August at Indian Lake and that other regions be en-

couraged to promote the same type of workshop. It was hoped that these would be inter-regional in scope.

But the real test of the effectiveness of the conference will be the degree to which the participants modify actions as a result of growth. This cannot now be measured, but it is certain that it can be perceived in several local situations. The free give and take, the sharing of ideas, was expressed hundreds of years ago: "And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach," for all were both learners and teachers at Indian Lake.

A Cooperative Approach to Curriculum Surveys

ROBERT W. EDGAR

Too frequently school surveys are conducted by a staff of visiting experts who carry on their investigation quite independently of the local staff and who have no responsibility for follow-up of survey recommendations. Robert W. Edgar, assistant professor of education at Queens College, New York, reports a curriculum survey in which the visiting staff of "experts," together with the local school staff, the students, and the citizens of Great Neck, Long Island, participated in the organization of the study and in the preparation of reports and recommendations.

FEAR AND RESENTMENT often mark the course of a school survey, especially in the curriculum area. Local staff members sometimes consider the surveyors, generally members of the faculty of a university engaged in teacher preparation or the advanced study of education, idealists who are unaware of the difficulties of working

with thirty or forty children in the classroom or of the pressures under which supervisors perform their duties. These practitioners feel that it is easy enough to criticize, but quite another thing to perform. They view the members of a survey team as people who will seize the opportunity of a school survey to expose the obvious short-

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