

Scientific Data Gathered

Some scientific data have been accumulated in our several schools. In progress is a follow-up study of students in senior high school and beyond. We have some comparative figures on achievement tests. All of these things we are doing in terms of individual school situations. This is the only course if we are to develop a program of education tuned to the needs of individuals. Our curriculum work is increasingly the product of efforts of local school personnel and consequently our

evaluation is pointed in the direction of local situations.

Those of us who teach, supervise and administer in public school programs have the responsibility of facilitating the development of those educational experiences which will best meet the needs, interests and abilities of the children whom we serve. Organizations and patterns of programs are means to that end. The core organization which is six years old in our junior high schools is, we believe, providing a sound, workable framework for us as we move in the direction of our goal.

Evaluation in the Oak Ridge Schools

R. H. OSTRANDER

A "continuing cooperative program of evaluation" has evolved in the public schools of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, under the leadership of Superintendent R. H. Ostrander.

EVALUATION of the total school program, as might be expected in a school system organized for cooperative action, has developed in the schools of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, as an outgrowth of their democratic organization.

This organization includes an administrative council composed of teachers elected from the eight elementary schools, one twelve-grade school and two secondary schools, and the administrative and supervisory personnel. It is this body, meeting monthly, that decides upon general policies, within, of course, the legal framework of the school organization. The members of the administrative staff, which includes all principals, also meet monthly to formulate administrative policies.

Further opportunities for participation by all the professional staff in evaluative activities are afforded in the workshop program conducted in August and June and on one Saturday morning a month throughout the school year. All regularly scheduled workshop sessions are held on time for which the staff receives remuneration. Two workshop groups are composed of both laymen and teachers. Their activities include a continuing program of evaluation.

Need for Evaluative Program

It was in the August 1948 workshop that the administrative staff undertook a searching examination of educational accomplishments. It was agreed that

evaluation should be in terms of goals and objectives previously accepted. Chief value of these sessions was the stimulation to further study and action. One of the most critical problems encountered was how to begin. After further consideration of evaluation had been crowded off the agenda of regular meetings, the staff decided to devote a special meeting to the topic in February 1949.

In this discussion as in previous attempts at evaluation, the complexity of the problem tended to overwhelm the group. Because it appeared necessary to make a frontal attack on some specific phase of the school activities, the decision was reached to focus attention first on an area of immediate concern to some laymen, the teaching of reading. One committee agreed to prepare a set of principles to be used as a general guide for future evaluation. Another accepted the task of preparing for a special meeting to be devoted solely to an appraisal of methods of teaching reading.

Principles Developed

Upon recommendation of the first committee,¹ the following principles were tentatively adopted:

1. Evaluation is a constant process of the consideration of the degree to which the results and by-products of the education program reach the stated and implied objectives of the program.

2. Evaluation is concerned with more than end products; it must be seen as a continuing process. Therefore, it is

¹ This Committee acknowledges its indebtedness to a mimeographed report, "Evaluation-Research Committee Report to the Faculty—June, 1946." University School, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

concerned both with means and ends.

3. All who are concerned in any experience will inevitably make judgments upon it; therefore, it is part of the responsibility of the schools to provide such information and such leadership that the community's evaluations shall be intelligent. This means that evaluation should be cooperative. It includes administrators, teachers, pupils and parents, and any others who are concerned with the schools.

4. Evaluation should start out as a means of discovering group and individual growth rather than of determining merely whether children possess or do not possess certain abilities.

5. Evaluation should determine how well the school provides conditions of growth and the experiences which make learning economical and effective.

6. Children learn more effectively when they take part in evaluation. The objective should be self-direction and self-evaluation.

7. Evaluation is concerned with all aspects of the school curriculum—administration, buildings, grounds, equipment, finances, community relationships, and so forth.

8. A long-range evaluation program should be so planned that no one year would involve the school in a complete study of every aspect of its work. Time should be so budgeted that specific items of the program will be evaluated.

9. Research studies should be carried on in the schools when they contribute to the best interests of pupils and the schools, to the professional improvement of the teachers, and to the development of a better program in the schools.

10. The collection of data and the keeping of records in the schools have no value in themselves. Only as records aid in evaluating the true functions, the true objectives, of the schools do they attain value.

11. Any evaluation program should be subject to revision. It must be responsive to changes in the curriculum and to conditions outside the school which affect children. It should be flexible so that it can be modified in accordance with advances in the techniques of evaluation.

Teacher Interest Aroused

Discussions of the administrative staff, devoted to a report from principals as to reading methods in use in both elementary and secondary schools, were under the direction of the special committee previously chosen. Teachers in the individual schools entered this phase of study both prior to and following the administrative staff session. Faculty meetings in the various schools were the sources of preparation for the principals' reports. The process became a two-way matter when the administrators reported back to the teaching staffs.

A lasting outcome was the formation, in response to numerous teacher requests, of a workshop group devoted to problems of teaching reading. Later developments resulted in the establishing of other study groups including one devoted to action research. Teachers increasingly have based their choices of workshop groups upon needs revealed through the program of evaluation.

Procedures Established

By the time of the June workshop the committee originally established to

recommend criteria was prepared to discharge an additional assignment. Procedures for continuing evaluation were suggested. The report included words of caution. In part, it was as follows:

In setting up procedures for evaluating our schools we must be on guard that evaluation does not become an end in itself. Teaching and learning do not exist for testing, rather testing exists for the improving of teaching and learning. It should not be allowed to become an undue burden on teachers or children. With this viewpoint we can make evaluation an integral part of our total program.

During each year we should collect, organize, and interpret information about changes taking place in our students. The basis for this study should be not only our statement of objectives but also a means of measurement of efficiency which is concerned with a comparison of potential ability and the degree of achievement attained. We should collect the following information. . . .

The information listed was separated into grade level groupings:

- Intelligence test scores
- Reading readiness scores (in kindergarten and first)
- Achievement in reading
- Achievement in tool subjects
- Achievement in subject-matter areas
- Achievement in library skills
- Identification of attitudes and values
- Identification of interests and aptitudes.

Progress Reported

The same committee extended its work to a listing of progress made in the total evaluation program. The report set forth this progress in terms of

(1) information gathered; (2) teacher growth; (3) use of community resources.

The committee of seven originally selected to prepare a statement of principles had gradually become, in fact, by request of the administrative staff, a committee on evaluation. The committee became the coordinating group but emphasized that each teacher and principal had the responsibility of continuing to carry out evaluative procedures in the classroom and in the individual school.

The venture continued on a cooperative level with wide participation. It was in meetings of the administrative council that some of the choices were made as to priorities in phases of the program to be studied. Workshop groups followed the pattern that was already well established, that of apprais-

ing their own group work and the degree of attainment of expressed goals in the specific areas of their study.

A bit of good fortune came to the evaluation committee when Arthur Linden, Director of Field Relations, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Jerome Disque, also of Teachers College, were able to spend two weeks in the fall of 1949 in Oak Ridge visiting classrooms and meeting with the various faculties. The committee drew heavily upon the observations of the two consultants. Their assistance was especially valuable since Dr. Linden had worked with the Oak Ridge staff on a considerable number of previous occasions. This included the August 1948 workshop in which a major forward step in evaluation had been taken.



*Oak Ridge (Tenn.) Pub. Schools
Oak Ridge teachers participate in evaluation program*

Meetings of the administrative staff held under the auspices of the evaluation committee have been devoted to (1) elementary and secondary achievement test results; (2) success of former students; (3) teaching of spelling; (4) work of special teachers; and (5) how to help teachers evaluate. These meetings provided the necessary initiative and leadership, without assuming the full responsibility of the total evaluative program. Each of these sessions was preliminary to more intensive study by the separate faculties.

Among the special projects undertaken by the individual schools was one which involved the testing and re-testing of students in the tenth year to determine the effectiveness of a core program.

Lay Leaders and Former Students Evaluate

A highlight of the administrative staff workshop of June 1950 was the evaluation on two separate occasions by three laymen (two women and one man) and six former students. The laymen chosen were elected leaders of school advisory and study groups.

The former students chosen to assist in evaluation included:

(1) A graduate student, holding an A.B. from the State University

(2) A student in a liberal arts college of the more "liberal" type

(3) A graduate of the Oak Ridge High School, locally employed, a former football star

(4) An enlisted man from the U.S. Air Force, home on furlough, a dropout at the tenth-grade level

(5) A graduate of the class of 1950, student council president and scholarship winner

(6) A student in a liberal arts college of a large university noted for high academic standards

The former students were given in advance a list of questions the staff particularly wanted to have discussed. They were encouraged, however, to express any views they considered pertinent.

Neither former students nor lay leaders "pulled any punches." They were, however, objective and constructive in their observations and recommendations. Their participation definitely forwarded the evaluation program.

A Continuous Cooperative Program

An examination of the cooperative undertaking described suggests a number of conclusions:

1. Cooperative evaluation of a total school program is a complex undertaking. It is an on-going process concerned with changes in pupils and methods of determining such changes.

2. While all concerned, staff, pupils and public, should be included, the administrative and supervisory staffs of a school system are in a strategic position to initiate such a program.

3. Teachers should be brought into full partnership at an early date.

4. Laymen should be included as soon as the professional staff is willing to accept them.

5. Pupils should be included, but teacher acceptance of pupils as partners in evaluation is slow.

Throughout this study the emphasis has been on evaluation of the total program rather than of individual classrooms. As the groups find better practices, the individual classrooms tend to improve.

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