

The Curriculum Commentator

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Trends in Curriculum Development in the New England Region

AS YOUR curriculum commentator for this month, I find myself in somewhat of a quandary. I have undertaken the task of reporting to you the significant developments in curriculum and supervision for the New England region. Numerous materials and letters have been sent to me by my colleagues in New England. I know about other important developments for which I do not have the details. I know best of all what is going on in my own state. How can I possibly give you a complete picture of the many excellent programs being conducted by the school systems, by the individual school units, by universities and colleges, by state departments of education, and by educational organizations?

It would be more accurate to subtitle my comments "As seen through the eyes of one commentator," for I know that I include here only samples of what is happening. For others, you will have to wait until someone else reports to you another year, read the back numbers and coming issues of *Educational Leadership*, or—better yet—come to the ASCD Convention in Boston next February when you can visit our schools and talk with school leaders from this region.

The choice that I have made in this dilemma is to comment on some of the broader trends that I see in this region, illustrating each with only a few examples from the various states and emphasizing the cooperative working relationships through which curriculum improvement is achieved. More

illustrations are included from some areas of the region; this merely indicates I know less about the others. The same is true of illustrations from state-wide programs as contrasted with descriptions of local school unit curriculum study, the most significant type. My colleagues from New England will tell you about the rest at Boston.

Cooperation of Many Groups in Curriculum Study

I believe that one of the most significant trends in this region is the teamwork of public schools, state departments of education, universities and colleges, community and other organizations, and even states in curriculum study. They help each other to get the job done, sometimes at the initiative of one group, sometimes of another. You can find the same idea running through the examples under the other trends discussed. I have selected a few examples to illustrate my point.

- In this region, we are of course proud of our New England ASCD with its stimulating annual summer conferences. This regional cooperation in itself is a trend, as noted by the newly-formed vigorous New England Reading Association to add to the growing number of such regional groups.

- In order to assist youth who are going into the military service, the state department of education in New Hampshire, in cooperation with the public schools, community agencies, and the Reception Center at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, has developed

an orientation program for secondary schools. One of the first steps was a workshop at Fort Devens, where teachers and administrators went through the induction process themselves and planned together what could be done in the schools. A set of slides which portray the induction process has been developed. Tape recordings of interviews with inductees, Korean returnees and Fort Devens personnel have also been made available through the state department. Out-of-school youth and parents are reached through the 4-H Clubs, Kiwanis, the PTA and other community groups. To assist teachers, there are units of instruction on the processing of inductees, new citizenship responsibilities, the Armed Forces, and the individual's emotional adjustment to military life, published in a bulletin, *A Guide for the Preparation of High School Boys for Military Service* (State Department of Education, Concord, New Hampshire, 1951).

- The state department of education in Maine and the University of Maine are old hands at working together for curriculum improvement.¹ Next summer the curriculum staff of the state department will join with the university in conducting a three-week's curriculum workshop for teachers from the primary grades through high school. The workshops held annually on the campus of the University of Maine have included as consultants many outstanding educators from other institutions.

- At Wellesley, Massachusetts, a workshop was conducted the past year as a cooperative effort on the part of teachers and administrators of the local schools assisted by consultants from Boston University and other institu-

tions. The group clarified their thinking regarding the whole school program and made investigations into specific subject areas.

- A regional center for training teachers in citizenship education has been established at Teachers College of Connecticut, New Britain, under the direction of the state department of education and of Teachers College, Columbia University. Teachers from cooperating schools meet for a week's orientation conference and make plans for developing in their schools some of the laboratory practices of the project. Meetings are being planned with such community organizations as the American Legion, PTA, and League of Women Voters.

- State-wide committees under the direction of the state departments of education generally include representatives of the schools, teachers colleges and the state university. Committees operating in Connecticut include one to consider the education of gifted children and youth; one on citizenship and morals that has developed a bulletin, *The Task of Citizenship Education* (Connecticut State Department of Education, Hartford, Connecticut, 1951); a Connecticut Committee on the United Nations which is planning for improved education about the United Nations and world problems and which issues from time to time a bulletin, *Connecticut U. N. News*; a Life Adjustment Education Committee; and a committee to plan for motion pictures on Connecticut—under way at present is a film on Connecticut during the revolutionary period. Likewise the state department has assisted the University of Connecticut in its summer workshops in elementary and secondary education, which include demonstration classes as an integral part of the six-week's workshop.

¹See Harland A. Ladd. "Down East Experiences in Curriculum Change." *Educational Leadership*. 8:203-207, January, 1951.

- Labor, business, industry, public schools, the state department of education, a teachers college and the state university are all participants in the Greater Hartford Council on Economic Education. Each year the Council holds a series of meetings centering around local economic problems. Two three-day conferences have been sponsored; a committee has developed criteria for selection of materials dealing with controversial issues and a list of representative pamphlets; a pamphlet for pupil use, *Hartford's Taxes—Our Problem*, has been published. *School and Community Join Hands* is a bulletin depicting the story of the Council. In a three-week's workshop, held in cooperation with the University of Connecticut last summer, these five bulletins to assist teachers in improving economic education were produced: *Development of Plans for Studying a Local Community and Identification of Resources in the Community That Can Be Used for Economic Education*, *Understanding Taxation*, *Identifying Basic Economic Issues and Problems To Be Studied in High School and Developing Plans for the Use of a Problem Approach to Teaching*, *A Resource Unit on Connecticut's Resources*, and *A Summary of the Workshop's Contribution* (Greater Hartford Council on Economic Education, Hartford Public Schools, Hartford, Connecticut).

- A story of international cooperation for in-service education of teachers comes from Northeastern Vermont, where fifty teachers and administrators with the assistance of the Vermont state helping teachers participated in a ten-week's workshop in conjunction with Stanstead College, Quebec, Canada. The group centered its study on "Canada, Our Neighbor." Resource people were drawn from lay persons

in Canada, Stanstead College faculty, members of the Vermont state department of education, superintendents and others to help teachers plan for the teaching of international understanding.

- Also in Vermont, during the past year state and federal agencies active in the field of conservation have cooperated with educators in promoting the teaching of wise use of resources. A bulletin *Opportunities for Conservation* (State Department of Education, Montpelier, Vermont, 1950) calls attention to the resources available in the state. During the last two summers the University of Vermont offered conservation workshops with the cooperation of many state agencies, and the state department of education has sponsored a number of two-day institutes on the topic, for both elementary and secondary teachers.

Expansion of University and College Campuses for Curriculum Study

Another notable trend that I know is welcomed by school people in New England is the fact that a growing number of universities and colleges regard their "campuses" as the area which they serve. Summer workshops held on the college campus are fairly common; yet, even greater in number are the courses in the nature of workshops held off-campus in the public schools, in which the higher institutions, the schools, and the state department cooperate. They are credit courses, but even more important they are vehicles for a superior kind of curriculum study. In these workshops, the administrators, supervisors, teachers and lay people of the local community tackle curriculum problems of importance to them for their own school system. I call your attention to only a few here; the Wellesley workshop and

the Peterboro workshop discussed elsewhere are others.

- For example, under the auspices of the Harvard-Boston University Extension Division, the Worcester, Massachusetts, teachers, supervisors and administrators are this year working together on problems arising from the schools and distinctly applicable to the local school system.

- This past summer a workshop was carried on in Newton by Boston University and the Newton Public Schools to give inexperienced teachers a practical type of orientation into their responsibilities and opportunities. It was planned especially for Boston University graduate students with degrees in the liberal arts who wish to enter the teaching profession at the elementary level. Experienced teachers under the leadership of the principal of the Underwood School conducted demonstration classes in which the prospective teachers could observe and work with children in the grades they would teach in the fall. Community study was made possible in this type of situation.

- In New Hampshire, the state department of education, the University of New Hampshire and the state teachers colleges are cooperating in the in-service education of teachers through extension classes and local workshops. For example, at the Concord Union District a three-day workshop was held last fall centered around the contributions of the classroom teacher to guidance. The Hillsboro-Henniker Teachers-Parents-Pupils Workshop was conducted for five days last November dealing with several local curriculum problems. In all, there were twenty-one workshops for elementary teachers in 1950-51.

- During the fall, the University of Connecticut conducted twenty-nine semester courses in various communi-

ties in the state many of which dealt with the curriculum; of these, six were "curriculum laboratories" or workshops where the schools worked on their own curriculum problems. Westport teachers, for example, studied reading problems in their schools; the Suffield staff studied problems of improving general education in the secondary school curriculum, developing opportunities for pupils to solve personal problems, and communication between the home and school; and Portland high school teachers planned a work experience program, integration of subjects, the possibilities for over-all curriculum reorganization in the Portland High School, and a citizenship education project.

Local School Leadership Prominent in Curriculum Study

The real test of curriculum improvement is to be found in the work done in local schools. In the illustrations I have given, the school administrators and supervisors have played a significant role in giving leadership to the workshops and other curriculum study activities. Often teachers serve as leaders of committees. Those of us from universities, colleges and state departments of education find that the most curriculum improvement occurs where there is effective local leadership. It would be impossible for me to comment in a brief column on the many schools in which such leadership is being given. These are but a few illustrations that have recently been called to my attention.

- A city-wide curriculum coordinating council has recently been formed in the Providence, Rhode Island, Public Schools. A number of lay persons are members of the council, which has as its main function the determining of curriculum policy. A *Directory of*

School Curriculum Units: Problems Being Studied, School Year 1950-51 (Department of Public Schools, Providence, Rhode Island) indicates how the individual school building is utilized as a unit for curriculum study. Each school, designated as a curriculum unit, is a "pilot plant" which shares its findings with other schools. Enlarging children's concepts through use of the environment, improving home-school relationships, analyzing test results to improve instruction, and an experiment in social studies are some of the many problems being studied.

- In the West Hartford, Connecticut, Public Schools, a curriculum coordination committee under the direction of a curriculum coordinator is also a new development. The committee has been instrumental in establishing system-wide studies of broad scope in such fields as guidance, health, reading, testing and cumulative records as well as meetings of subject area groups, in which both elementary and secondary teachers are involved. These curriculum studies grow out of the "felt needs" of teachers. Faculty meetings in individual schools are concerned with curriculum problems of special importance to them.

- The social studies department in Aldrich High School, Warwick, Rhode Island, has conducted an experiment in the use of the problem-solving method, contrasting this procedure with the single textbook, lecture, note-taking manner of organizing learning experiences in United States history classes. The room for the experimental classes has been set up as a model social studies laboratory. A consultant from the University of Rhode Island worked with the school in developing the experiment. Among the aims of the study were these: to examine teach-

ing procedures in the light of facts concerning how children learn; and to establish the spirit of consultation among teachers and supervisors.

- The Hartford Public Schools, Hartford, Connecticut, recently established a position of coordinator of school-community relations, whose chief responsibilities will be to give leadership to various projects in which the schools and the community cooperate.

- In the Newton Public Schools, Newton, Massachusetts, a program of in-service courses is organized by the local schools, using both their own staff members and those from colleges and universities as instructors. These courses, planned to meet the needs of the teachers, include this year science projects for elementary teachers, teaching arithmetic in the elementary school, industrial arts workshop, grading the English composition, communicating with the public, and a workshop for substitute teachers. A special kind of in-service project is the science and conservation workshop, held at Sargent Camp, Peterboro, New Hampshire, the last two summers in cooperation with Boston University, a workshop which has given elementary and science teachers an ideal laboratory for studying at firsthand the out-of-doors and conservation. Cooking, making various kinds of fires, taking bird walks, hiking, taking overnight hikes, participating in arts and crafts projects—are all included in the two-week's activities of the workshoppers, aptly described in a bulletin, *The Peterboro Enterprise* (Newton Public Schools, Newton, Massachusetts, 1950).

State Consultant Services Assist Curriculum Improvement

In the foregoing examples, I have pointed out that state department of education staff members work coopera-

tively with higher institutions and school systems in workshops of various kinds. The practice of state supervisors or consultants stimulating curriculum improvement in various ways on a service basis is one worthy of mention by itself. State-wide committees, area meetings, conferences, cooperative school evaluations, and consultation are other media through which state supervisors give leadership to curriculum study. A few examples will suffice.

- In the state of Maine, when supervisors are requested to work with a school, the local community provides a substitute to teach in different classrooms in rotation, freeing each teacher who desires a conference with the consultant on any question of concern to the teacher. Two-day work conferences on local curriculum problems are often held, in many cases for elementary and secondary teachers together. An additional service provided by the state department in Maine this year is a secondary school supervisor whose responsibility is primarily to work with beginning teachers.

- Ten regional conferences on citizenship education were sponsored in Connecticut last year by the state department of education. A total of some twenty consultants from the state department, teacher education institutions and public schools participated. A summary of the conferences is contained in the *Report of Regional Workshops on Citizenship Education in Connecticut* (State Department of Education, Hartford, Connecticut).

Under the direction of the state supervisor, Connecticut teachers of business education have been meeting in seventeen regional areas in the state to discuss mutual problems. In like manner, home economics teachers have been working together on a regional basis within the state, conducting in

eight regions a study of identifying the needs of youth in home and family living. A report of the Home Economics Education Service in the state department indicates how the different regions have used check lists, inventories and personality ratings to collect data concerning pupils' problems and needs, parents' reactions toward the needs for instruction in areas of family competence, and teachers' ratings of the emphasis given in their classes to various phases of family living. The findings are used as a basis for discussion at the annual state conference of home economics teachers and for future curriculum planning.

Curriculum Guides Cooperatively Produced To Assist Teachers

Many curriculum bulletins from New England have been called to the attention of readers of *Educational Leadership* through previous issues. In addition to those already mentioned in this column, a few of the more recent ones are noted here. They are the joint work of many people, to be used as guides to curriculum improvement.

- For example, the production of curriculum guides in the state of Maine is a cooperative undertaking of the state department of education, the public schools, and teacher education institutions. Teachers and administrators on released time from their local communities work under guidance of staff members of the state department. The University of Maine's facilities are also used for the production of guides: one for primary teachers was recently developed in a workshop conducted there. Guides recently produced are *Business Education for Maine Secondary Schools*, *Physical Education (Secondary Level)*, *Science Education for Maine Secondary Schools*, and *The What and Why of Social Studies* and *The How of Social*

Studies (for elementary schools). (State Dept. of Educ., Augusta, Maine.)

• From a study of the physical education curriculum in New Hampshire, comes the bulletin *Guide to Action Programs in Physical Education, New Hampshire Public Schools* (State Board of Education, Concord, N. H., 1951).

• In a series of workshops on aviation education held in various parts of the state of Vermont, a curriculum bulletin *Aviation Education* has been developed for use in grades 1 through 12. (State Department of Education, Montpelier, Vermont, 1951.)

• The Home Economics Education Service, State Department of Education, Hartford, Connecticut, has published eight resource units and a curriculum guide, developed through the cooperative efforts of home economics teachers. The resource units are *Home Management*, *Consumer Education*,

Health and Home Nursing, *The Home and Its Furnishings*, *Personal and Family Relationships*, *Child Care and Guidance*, *Foods and Nutrition*, *Clothing and Textiles*; and the guide is entitled *Connecticut's Curriculum Guide in Home Economics Education Including Home Economics' Contribution to General Education and the Specialized Field of Homemaking*.

• In Newton, Massachusetts, the development of curriculum materials is closely related to the in-service education already mentioned. Some recent bulletins include *Conservation Field Trips*, *Arithmetic in Newton: A Teachers' Guide*, *Kindergarten-Grade 3*, and *Communications: Toward Better Spelling* (Newton Public Schools, Newton, Massachusetts). —*Vernon E. Anderson*, director of the Curriculum Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

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