

### *An Expanding Program*

THE IMPORTANCE of a research approach to improving instruction is increasingly being recognized in supervisory and curriculum work and in the program of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The most persistent and widespread advances in improving instruction are those based on careful analyses of problems, exploration of possible solutions, and collection of evidence. The areas of greatest difficulty in instruction are those in which adequate research is lacking. Hence it seems altogether fitting and timely for this issue of *Educational Leadership* to be devoted to curriculum research.

Occasional issues of our journal which deal with research and experimentation constitute one of several ASCD activities designed to promote and assist research efforts and interests. A number of ASCD publications have made some techniques and results of research available to persons interested in improving instruction. For several years a "Research Column" in each issue of *Educational Leadership* has reported significant research projects and suggested needed research. A new pamphlet series on the implications of research for instruction was initiated this past year by the Association's publication of *What Does Research Say About Arithmetic?* Other materials to help promote research efforts and disseminate research findings are in process.

During the past two years the Association has taken even more direct and vigorous steps to assist its membership in the use of research techniques and evidence. In 1951 and again in 1952 the Association's Research Board spon-

sored a national ASCD Conference on Curriculum Research. Sections of the 1952 and 1953 annual conventions included study groups on curriculum research, and other groups in these conventions also gave attention to the problem of improving instruction through cooperative research. Definite plans were formulated in these various conferences for the initiation or further development of research activities under the sponsorship of state and regional ASCD organizations.

Perhaps more important than the national ASCD research conferences and publications are the variety of research projects being sponsored by state and regional ASCD organizations. During 1952-53 these projects have been assisted in their organization and development by an ASCD Coordinator of Curriculum Research, J. Bernard Everett, employed for this period as a result of recommendations from the 1951 Research Conference and the Research Board regarding the need for ASCD staff services. One of these local research projects is described in this issue of *Educational Leadership*. A more comprehensive progress report of activities under way in other states will be made in the "Curriculum Research" column of the May issue. The significance of these projects and the general interest of the membership in curriculum research is causing the Research Board and the Executive Committee of the Association to make further plans for continued staff services to assist state and regional organizations, and, particularly, for sponsorship of an increased number of work conferences on research. Such plans will give more ASCD members an opportunity to

study and share techniques of planning and carrying on cooperative curriculum research.

Certain generalizations seem justified by the research interests and activities of ASCD members and local groups. First, curriculum research, cooperatively planned and developed, is one exceedingly important approach to improving instruction. Second, sound curriculum research for this purpose needs to be of a "grass roots" type—oriented in the problems of a particular school or system or of a group of cooperating schools or systems. Third, technical assistance in carrying forward curriculum research is needed and should be provided, in so far as possible, by the resources of our schools, teacher education institutions, and ASCD organizations. Fourth, the role of the Association in furthering a research approach to improving instruction includes assistance in the identification

and development of leadership in the states and regions, dissemination of information about research projects under way, and provision through conferences and publications for the exchange of experiences and findings in research projects.

The foregoing generalizations are to some extent clarified and developed by articles in this issue. It is hoped that these articles will meet in part the need expressed by many ASCD members for materials on the "know how" of curriculum research. It is further hoped and expected that this issue of *Educational Leadership* is another step towards the more complete development of research activities whereby ASCD members and groups may help to bring about better instruction in American schools.—WILLIAM M. ALEXANDER, professor of education, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, and *chairman*, ASCD Research Board.



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